



Building for Health

Life Journey of a Kurdish Architect

Alan Dilani

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Foreword

Professor Dr. Alan Dilani shows himself a pioneer in addressing architecture as the framework for well-being. As an overarching presence in all our lives, architecture has the capacity to function as a source of dis-ease—or to artfully improve our quality of life and health. Professor Dilani opts for the latter.

In the twenty years since I first encountered Alan and his work, I've witnessed his research expanding from case studies in Sweden to a global exploration of the life-giving impact of spatial design on health. Well recognized and globally honored, his findings today attract ever more interest and practical application.

Born in the mountains of Iranian Kurdistan, Alan spent his childhood there. A natural talent for the spatial, built environment emerged early on. Leaving his country in the midst of its period of political upheaval, Dilani followed his dream to become a world-class architect by settling first in Italy and later Sweden for his higher education. As an immigrant, Alan navigated the obstacles all newcomers confront upon entering a new culture—and then ventured far beyond the norm. Establishing an international network, he brought together colleagues in academia, business, and government to rally around a union of healthcare with architecture that promoted genuine health and well-being—a concept he has now expanded to better the quality of life in nations worldwide.

Salutogenics is a concept about the way we come to understand the context of the spaces that surround us as human beings. For example: Take a moment to become aware of the room where you are reading these words right now. How does this space impact your well-being? What are the beneficial design factors that you can identify here?

Initially this idea was first brought forth by A. Antonovsky and others in research related to stress. Environments, it became clear, might be associated with situations of terror—or might equally create context for a “rescuing space.” A built space might create an opportunity for rest, for the experience of inspiration, harmony, and joy.

Today, from this research, we know the direct effect that environments can have on stress hormones; we know from research on brain and behavior how environments actually impact us. For the employer and the employee, the student, the patient, the imprisoned, or the city dweller, the design of workplaces, urban spaces, and every kind of self-enclosed facility is critical. We know the productive power of music for students, especially in learning. This has been called “the Mozart effect.” This begs the question: what might be “the Dilani effect”?

A restaurant guidebook recently published in Stockholm addressed where one can locate a quiet restaurant—a place with comfortable sound levels, where friends can actually hold a conversation. In Stockholm, sixty-five such quiet, salutogenic places have been identified. In Tokyo, there is ongoing research partnering the tire and rubber industry with urban planners to address the need for healthy sound levels where traffic meets road surfaces. We're no longer living in the old days, when hay was strewn on the streets in exclusive enclaves to reduce the noise of clapping hooves or rumbling wagons. The times move on, the human needs remain—and the possibilities for improving our environmental contexts are infinite.

The quest for salutogenic qualities might seem commonsensical in the creation of spaces for humans, but conscious recognition of this need has developed only recently. It was only in 1997 that Skandia Future Center in Stockholm started a prototyping lab for intellectual capital by creating stimulating work spaces. Fifty similar prototypes would follow in Europe, and fifty more in Japan. The integration of our five senses with the workspace would become very evident: not only sound and sight, but scent, light, and feeling conspire to generate the sense of what we call “good vibrations.”

Such a space is a place that gives us energy —beyond the level required for the work we do there: a space we leave after a day's work with more energy than we had upon arriving that morning. For me, it was the experience of the Skandia Future Center that triggered me to start asking: Why has this occurred? What is the secret recipe here I need to more deeply explore and share?

The research from Dr. Alan Dilani and his colleagues at Karolinska Institute has verified such experience, inspired further development, further prototyping of harmonious, innovative built spaces. In ongoing research today, we may speak of such spaces as *Future Senses Centers* —a way of describing the impact of the personal or work environment directly upon the senses.

This book celebrates Professor Alan Dilani's journey from a young man in Kurdistan to the present day, his research around the globe, in the developed world and in locations still exploring the opening phases of deepening insight into the importance of architecture for a healthier tomorrow.

This is a groundbreaking book. May its inspiration spark partnership in the tangible creation of a world dedicated to well-being and our collective future.

Leif Edvinsson

Professor of Intellectual Capital, Lund University

Preface

Speaking about the life work of Dr. Alan Dilani is to find oneself in the midst of the well-publicized marriage between the complexity of architectural design and its unlikely spouse—the ever-burgeoning topic of human wellness worldwide. Health is a buzzword playing on the lips of millions of people, of all ages, from all walks of life, cultures, and nations. The search for better health, increased wellness, strength, and stamina has become the holy grail of the entire planet.

No one imagined that a key to the puzzle lies in our edifices themselves.

Dilani has quietly but persistently made his mark for the past three decades as an architectural guerrilla. Taking on nothing less than the built environment of the very places people go to restore their failing health, he proposes that healthcare facilities themselves need to become a part of the solution by embodying elements of the health they seek to deliver. The way hospitals, facilities for elderly care, public institutions, and other buildings need to change shape would grace them with the power to promote health and not diminish it.

As an ardent scientific researcher, Dilani has investigated the psychosocial effect of much-needed transformations to the way hospitals look—and subsequently act upon the myriad of people within them. He has been adamant and persuasive. The shape of hospitals, both outside and within, does impact those struggling to regain their state of vibrant health.

It's a simple concept—yet Dilani has met with opposition from many angles to his innovative idea. More traditional industry professionals, academicians, and even government ministers have been skeptical and obstructive. Hospitals, the thinking was, were meant to look a certain way, as they have for decades.

There's been a lot of work on the clinical-care environment in the past twenty-five years, moving toward a healthy environment via the design of the built world. It has been a progression that continues.

So Dilani has created a movement, bridging healthcare and architecture, two massive silos. He began to create space where no space existed. The statistic he has cited in his international symposiums and the Design & Health World Congresses is this: that 93.5 percent of the money spent in the world on health is spent on pathogenic care—care for pathogenic infections. Yet only eleven percent of world mortality is the result of infection from pathogens. The flip-flop is that 73 percent of world mortality results from what he coins salutogenic factors and only 2 percent of the world budget is spent on salutogenic care. It follows that hospitals that look and work differently are a crucial piece of the puzzle.

Alan has pulled more and more people from industry, government policymaking, and academia into these international gatherings. Sharing the latest research and practical experience, testing these in a convivial yet professional and rigorous high-quality environment, more people have not only taken notice: they have begun to take action and push for change.

As medicine forms the arena for the health professions, architecture is the ground for the professions focused on the built environment—with doctors and architects at the apex of their respective fields. Other professionals, including engineers, urban planners, and lately environmental and sustainability experts, have come on board. The army Dilani envisioned has begun to manifest and its scope and range continue to broaden. A growing focus on the issues of public health has emerged because of the International Academy for Design and Health. It is now an interdisciplinary and global contingent intent on conveying one message.

That message is now trending.

A global network of people advocating change in the buildings we live and work in will help to change the world. It is a cause worth supporting. It is a vision with tremendous potential in the most developed cities and nations, as well as in those still emerging. Health is everyone's business because without it, our complex life is not sustainable.

The story of Alan Dilani, from humble beginnings in a small Kurdish town to global citizen— may it serve to inspire young and old alike to pursue and manifest a better world for us all.

Carol Prunhuber

Part 1

Kurdish Beginnings

Prelude: May 2009

The silvery 747 soared over the Arctic Circle that morning as one swarthy, well-dressed passenger in first class continued to scan the assortment of papers spread before him. Sunlight flooded past the partially drawn shade as, for a moment, Alan Dilani gazed out at the clouds below. The week ahead promised to be filled with new possibilities, given the international dignitaries and array of accomplished colleagues set to gather for a series of groundbreaking discussions and meetings in Singapore.

He recalled his words from a recent magazine interview: “This sickness of our society is a challenge for every scientist in the world. Nothing is more important than health. Whatever we do, we must focus upon our individual health, and health worldwide. We can easily prevent the burgeoning ill health so prevalent globally if people are educated. It takes two decades—one generation or twenty years—if we educate our kids.”

The 6th World Congress of Design & Health in Singapore was to begin in two days, following months of planning. It was preceded weeks before by what was scheduled to be a simple meeting with Singapore’s director of health to plan workshops about developing health-giving infrastructure for the Singaporean government to help its people. What Dilani had planned for was a simple preliminary meeting with the director and a few of his aides.

Instead when he arrived in downtown Singapore, two hundred people stood waiting for him at the Ministry of Health.

One special feature of Singapore the director explained had to do with ways they had built the country, included focusing upon their citizens’ overall health. People who came to work in the hospital were *required* to stop smoking for six months or they would not even be accepted. To be taken on as staff, they had to have healthy behavior.

These visionary, determined people from Singapore both caught him off guard and reinforced his own impassioned views that governments must take on the challenge of their citizens’ health, one hospital at a time, in one nation after another. His purview was to invite architectural, engineering, urban planning, and medical professionals and governmental colleagues to join planned and targeted forums on every continent and change paradigms, creating buildings that enhanced greater health for millions of people.

This was in 2009 and Alan Dilani was well on his way to becoming an international citizen, holding these forums in Europe, Asia, and North America.

As his plane began its descent to the Singapore Changi Airport, Dilani gathered the stacked folders into his briefcase in preparation for disembarking before heading to Customs. There was a time



Ritz-Carlton Millennium Hotel in Singapore

when a bus ride from Mahabad to Tehran in his homeland of Iran had been monumental for the Kurdish boy. The scope of his life had expanded in ways he could never have imagined from the days of his childhood.

In downtown Singapore he stepped into the lobby of the Ritz-Carlton Millennium Hotel, glancing over its prestigious and light-filled, high-ceilinged lobby, feeling pleased with this as a suitable venue for the Congress. It was then he noticed British Parliamentarian Lord Nigel Crisp checking in at the front desk, courteously greeting the health minister who would be attending the forum. Alan turned to go and greet them both.

1. A Kurdish Childhood 1957-1976

It was a cool September afternoon when Hamid's¹ mother Rabia began her birth contractions in their one-room home. Mama—so each village called its midwife—accompanied her. Outside, his father Rahim nervously paced back and forth, sipping a cup of dark, steamy tea, which melted the sugar cube he had placed in his mouth. His sister Malak, who was two years old, clung to her father's legs while his twelve-year-old brother Ahmad played outside with his friends.

As the sun's crimson rays filtered through the window, Hamid Mahmoudi slipped into the world in the warm and loving hands of his aunt, who took him by his feet as she slapped his first cry of life. Hamid had just been born in Sadr Abad, a small village in the Kurdish mountains. In a journey through time and space neither he nor his family could have imagined in that moment, Hamid would come to his life's work years later and two thousand miles away as Alan Dilani.

Women for the first time were going to school, he recounted. Kurdish was taught in schools for the first time.



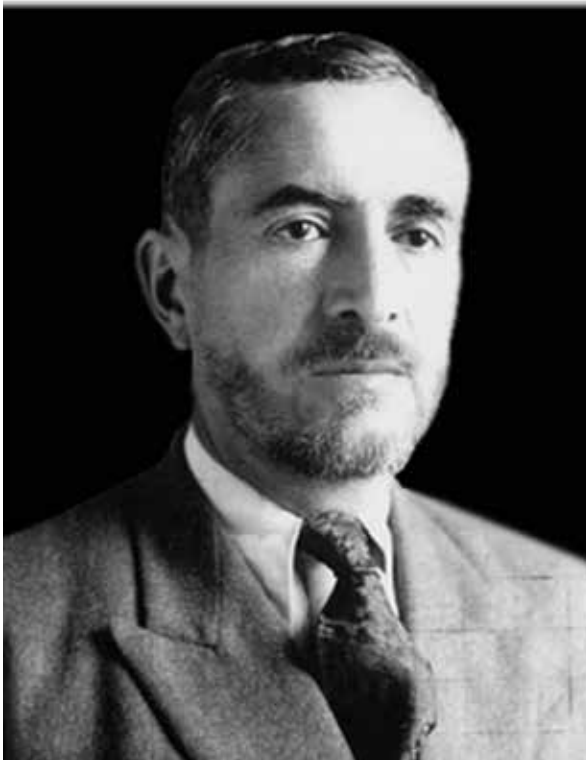
Map of Kurdistan and Mahabad

Soon after, the family would move to Mahabad, the capital of Kurdistan in Iran, known as the “city that represented the pride of our identity.” Ahmad, the newborn’s older brother, had finished his elementary school but in Sadr Abad there was no high school and Rabia wanted her eldest son to continue his education.

The Mahmoudis found a place at Showghi Alley in Jame Jam street, which was then considered remote from the city. They rented one room in a large house, which was common at that time as living conditions were very poor. There was a very small window, and the room itself was also very small—about three by five meters. At night, the rolled-up bedding was opened out for all to sleep on.

Rahim worked hard to keep his wife and children. Rabia worked as a housekeeper and baked bread for the wealthy people of Mahabad to help support her family. At home, she would sweep the floors and the few carpets they owned and keep the place tidy.

Rahim Mahmoudi was a kind and patient man who wore his turban tilted toward the back of his head with tassels over his wide forehead. He always wore his baggy Kurdish trousers. Rabia was an intelligent woman and very social. She had black hair and brown eyes. They were from two different villages—Rahim from Sadr Abad, a village near Mahabad, and Rabia from the region of Mangur, southwest of the Kurdish capital. Rahim and Rabia had met in Mahabad and then returned to Sadr Abad, where they began their family life.



Qazi Mohammad president of the first republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad

A History of Hamid’s Home

The rise and fall of Mahabad had left a profound imprint on Kurdish society. It became a reference point of their hope for future independence. And for Hamid, it was close to his heart. However, when he was young, his interest lay in boyish activities like athletics, having fun with friends, and being with his family. Though his destiny led him to Europe at quite an early age, his ties with the people of his youth remained strong and meaningful.

When they were young, Rahim would tell his son stories of the Democratic Republic of Mahabad. Women for the first time were going to school, he recounted. Kurdish was taught in schools for the first time. Amine, the wife of Rahim’s older son Ahmad and twelve years older than Hamid, had been fortunate to study with the republic’s president, Qazi Mohammad, at a newly open Kurdish school.

His mother was the niece of Qazi Mohammad’s minister of finance, Mam Ahmad Elahi. Rabia’s father had died when she was young, and Mam Ahmad became like a father and took very good care of her. The Mahmoudis visited him often. Mam Ahmadi owned a textile shop and he would give the children money. They called their grandfather “uncle.” He lived a very long life and many people respected him.

Rahim was also involved in the Republic and that was how he met his future wife. Rahim and his brother Ghafur had become *peshmerga* with Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the legendary Iraqi Kurdish leader who left behind the persecution in Iraq to come to the support of the Republic with his five hundred strong-armed peshmerga.

But the Republic fell, and Barzani fled into exile. Barzani took Rahim’s horse and gun when Rahim refused to follow the general to the Soviet Union. Rahim regretted that he hadn’t left with Barzani then: “If I had gone, we would have had another future, but that was God’s work,” he said later. Barzani would pressure people in those situations—and taking your horse and gun meant you had lost your dignity. For Hamid’s father, this was very bad. His father could not have followed Barzani’s men, yet he knew they needed horses and military supplies.

When the Mahmoudis’ first children were born, they moved back to the city. They lived in Jame Jam in a very old house, on the other side of Qazi Mohammad’s grave. It was close to the mountains, which were in plain view from their house.



Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the legendary Kurdish leader



Republic of Kurdistan in Mahabad

The Short-Lived Republic of Mahabad: A Spirit of Freedom

The town of Mahabad lies at the foot of the imposing Zagros Mountains and south of the salty waters of Lake Urmia in a narrow valley, more than a thousand meters above sea level. Not only was Mahabad a traditional agricultural center in a region of vineyards and tobacco fields, but much wool marketing also took place there. It was the geographical heart and soul of the Kurds' struggle for their collective rights as a nation.

The end of World War II in 1945 and the push for power between the Soviets and the West created conditions for a memorable event in the life of the Kurds. On December 17, the newly formed Kurdish Democratic Party (Iranian PDK)² led by Qazi Mohammad, respected both as a political and as a religious figure, was about to defy the Shah and his authority by declaring the Democratic Republic of Kurdistan, commonly known as the Republic of Mahabad.

Despite the cold and the bare trees of winter, the atmosphere was buzzing with high spirits. Hundreds of turbaned men squeezed in front of an arched and elegant building while others stood or squatted watching from the roofs. Many wanted to burn the building, but restraint prevailed. Instead of fire, the Kurdish flag with its flaming sun surrounded by corns of wheat, a quill against a field of red, white and green, was raised on the roof as the Kurdish coat of arms was flung over the front.

By mid-January, the town was buzzing about an important meeting that would soon be held on January

22 at Chwar Chira, the Four Lanterns, Mahabad's central square. This clarion call spread to the many tribes in the surrounding hills as well. The day before the big gathering, many notable and prominent Kurds of Mahabad secretly met in the town's largest Jame (Friday) Mosque to discuss their plan for the Kurdistan Republic and the next day's program.

Hamid's family and all the inhabitants of Mahabad woke up to the snorting and clattering of hundreds of horses' hooves as members of the Kurdish tribes rode into the city. People were arriving from all corners of Kurdistan. The streets were lined with the colors of the Kurdish flag.

A very large crowd gathered in Chwar Chira with the stark, imposing mountains as a backdrop. Qazi Mohammad, dressed in Western clothes with a white turban on his head, and surrounded by Kurdish tribal leaders and members of the Kurdish Democratic Party, stepped onto the platform emblazoned with the Kurdish flag. Qazi affirmed the identity of the Kurdish people—its right to self-determination and to occupy its own lands. In less than fifteen minutes, Qazi had proclaimed the Kurdistan Republic.

Pride swelled in everyone present as this long-awaited moment was finally pronounced. After the proclamation of the Republic, Qazi saluted and swore in the name of the almighty God, the honor of the Kurdish nation, and the holy flag and on behalf of his home, that until the last breath and his last drop of his blood, he would strive and be loyal “to our independence and make myself serve the unity of the Kurdish nation, the people of the Republic of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan.”³

In the Democratic Republic of Kurdistan, people lived in freedom in a way they had never before known in that region. This newfound expressive liberty and the dissolution of political persecution were evidenced in national publications. People could come and go as they pleased and even tune in to overseas radio broadcasts as they liked. The Kurdish language was heard in schools and public offices for the very first time; this changeover was officially declared. Unbelievably, women were allowed to join the political arena for the first time in the newly formed women's section of the Iranian PDK.

The Kurdish national anthem, *Ei Raqib* (“O Enemy”), resounded in the new democratic state asserting Kurdish identity: “O Enemy, the Kurdish-speaking people will exist. Let no one say the Kurds are no more. The Kurds live on; our flag shall never fall.”

The Kurdish language was heard in schools and public offices for the very first time; this changeover was officially declared.

The Shah
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Mahabad Surrenders

In the autumn of 1946, the Soviets withdrew from Iran in the face of international pressure and the promise of an Iranian oil concession from the Shah. Soon afterward, the Shah ordered his troops to occupy Mahabad. The city surrendered without a fight and the leaders of the Republic, including Qazi, were arrested.

Three months later on the dawn of March 31, 1947, neighbors of Chwar Chira square heard the rumbling of a truck and the sound of soldiers' boots. It was an ominous night. Qazi Mohammad, his brother Sadr Qazi—then minister of war—and his cousin Seif Qazi were hanged in secrecy and with maximum security in the square.

Hesitant and fearing the worst, people began to approach the square. There they found their hope shattered. Three lifeless bodies were hanging from the lampposts. People began to weep and beat their chests.

The Shah ordered that the bodies be left hanging for several days for all to witness. Enraged, the Kurds closed their stores and the market. The city was brought to a standstill and the Shah's regime forced to return the bodies to the people. Qazi's sacrifice and struggle for his people were emblazoned in the heart of every Kurd from that day to the present.

Family Life

As a young man, Rahim worked at a produce shop in the Mahabad markets to provide for his growing family. Having a wife and four young children meant he was devoted to his family and worked hard to support them all. Come nightfall, he worked as a guard at the markets.

Because he worked long hours, he never had the opportunity to study and pursue a formal education. But Rahim insisted that all his children attend school—a wish his second son, Hamid, came to take very seriously.

Since before Hamid's birth in 1957, Rahim had rented the single room for his entire family, where they lived until Hamid started to attend school. Rahim's two sons were to make their mark upon the world in a much larger sphere than their father had—but with the values that he and his wife, Rabia, had instilled in them both.

The family lived as one close unit, both physically and socially. The first space upon entering was for the shoes, like a foyer. It was often cold in Mahabad and they had a *korsi*, a low table with a heater underneath—a type that doesn't exist anymore. During wintertime, that single table was in the center of the room; it was all they had to keep warm, so everyone sat around it. When it got warm, the table was moved to the side. To cook, they used a container to warm food or make tea. The room was carpeted with sleeping rolls and cushions to the side. There was a common toilet outside—the most unsightly thing Hamid remembered as a child. Showers were taken at the public bathhouse.

The family ate very simple food, mostly tomatoes. Once a month, they ate meat, sometimes kebab. In the evening, if they ate at all, they had yogurt, buying one dish of yogurt per day in a shop. When Hamid was sent to buy yogurt, he usually got something to make it sweet, like molasses. This was dinner, spread atop bread, with hot tea to drink. Occasionally, Rahim bought seasonal fruits like apples and plums, which were a treat to be divided among the family. Those children who got closest to the fruit got to take more and Malak and Hamid, being close siblings and good friends, often teased one another during mealtimes.

Entrepreneurial Roots

Notably, since a very young age, Hamid had been very enterprising. “When I was seven years old, I sold cakes, *gorabhi*, made of honey and sugar. It was a kind of *shapasand*. *Sha* means ‘king’s choice.’ Those sweets were very delicious. At 4:00 a.m. I went to the market and bought them; then I resold them. I bought them cheaply and sold them more expensively. This was my first job to help the family. Every day by lunchtime, all the sweets were sold.”

School

School was a page-turning event for Hamid in every way. Since he had mental acuity, even as a young child he desperately wanted to attend. “I had been crying nonstop because I wanted to go to school so badly. My mother secured an identity card for me, and even changed my age so I could attend school sooner than I should have. I was very happy about this.



The first picture of Hamid as boy

At the beginning of his education, like most Kurdish children, Hamid could not speak Persian. The school officials announced that everyone should do so.

“My first day, I wore a pair of elegant new shoes and it was the first time I had ever worn such footwear. Mostly we wore plastic shoes. But for that day, my mother bought me fancy white and brown shoes and I was very proud of them. Not that my clothes were elegant. I was only six years old, yet tall for my age.”

The Reza Pahlavi School was close to Qazi Mohammad’s grave. It was very warm that autumn. At that time, there was only one school building and a big playground. At school the children were given food: milk, special bread and butter.

In the aftermath of the 1930 defeat of the Kurdish tribal leader Simko, who had led an armed revolt, Reza Shah, father of the Shah when Hamid was a child, had forbidden the Kurds to teach their language. In its place, Persian was to be imposed on all minorities and all other languages were to be suppressed. By edict in 1935, Kurdish could no longer even be written. Kurds were banned from wearing their traditional dress. The new look was to be strictly and homogeneously European.

Yet in their homes, Kurds persisted in speaking their language and often the children did not know how to speak Persian, the “official” language.

At the beginning of his education, like most Kurdish children, Hamid could not speak Persian. The school officials announced that everyone should do so. Yet on his first day of class, the teacher asked Hamid a question and he responded in the only language he knew, Kurdish. “Because I could not speak Persian, the teacher hit me and scolded me,” he recalled. “You can only speak in Persian,” the teacher scolded.

Hamid was unable to respond in that language since his family had never spoken Persian, but only Kurdish, so he was not prepared for the chastisement that followed this unexpected shortcoming. Upper-class people spoke Persian, but the Mahmoudis were not upper class.

The bullying from the teacher did not stop there. “One day the teacher brought me to the front of the class and looked in my pockets. He took out a small book I played with during breaks. I also had a small pencil I used to play with my friends, like we were fighting. This teacher took everything out of my pockets, laid it all on the table, and reprimanded me. He intimidated me and I felt very

ashamed. On top of that, this all happened in Persian and I couldn't understand a thing he was saying.”

Hamid was not the only one; many children did not speak Persian and were similarly called out. Finally, in his second year of school, his teacher Khalili, an older man, out of compassion began to teach him this language.

An Adventurous Spirit

As a child, Hamid was in constant motion. The seasons brought change and a new sense of daring and adventure. Each summer, he went back to his father's village in Sadr Abad. He loved spending time with the farmers picking tomatoes and cucumbers in the green fields and with his cousins who lived there; his father had three brothers and one sister. Those were memorably pastoral times.

The seasons were quite defined in Mahabad. Winter was bitterly cold and in spring, the snow melted and flowers bloomed. The seasonal vegetables grew. Hamid knew all their growing times because since the family were very poor, they depended on them; some grew at one time and others later. Summer brought blazing heat that rose out of the sandy soil in waves each day.

It was then that Hamid and his friends went down to the river or to the farmlands. The fruits had ripened in the gardens. Sadr Abad was paradise for the children. They would eat abundant fruits and vegetables given to them by the farmers.

Land Rights

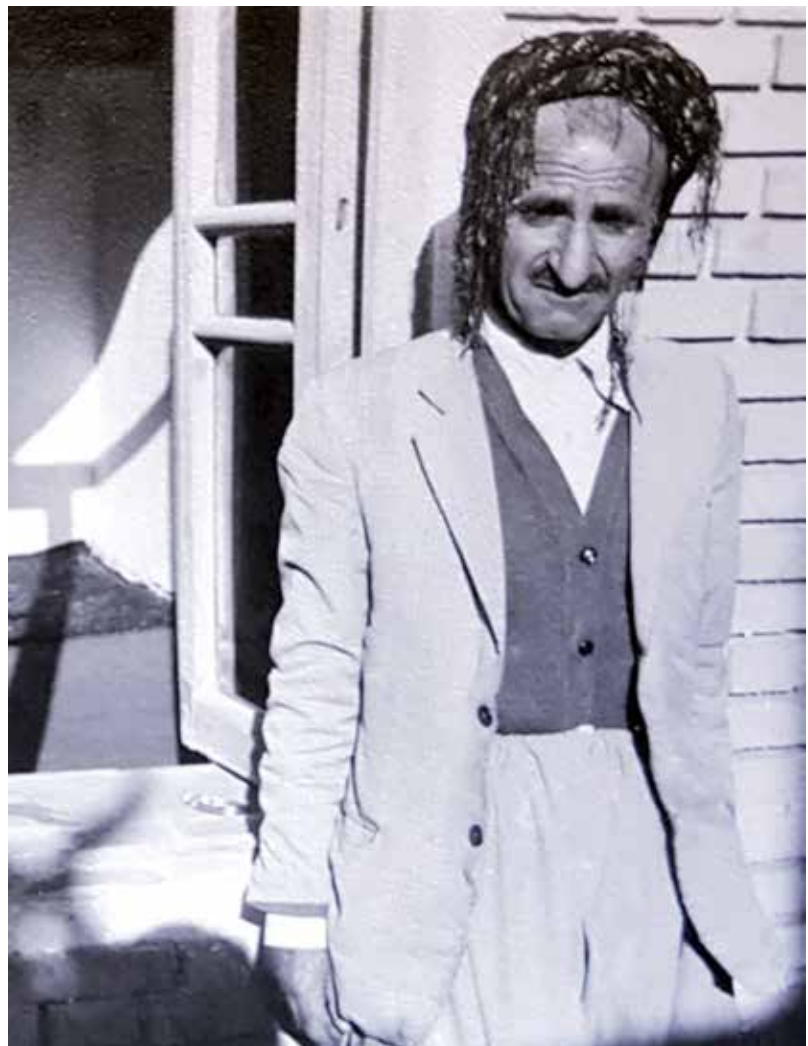
In the 1950s agriculture in Kurdistan was primitive. The land was in the hands of a small number of landlords or *aghas*. In every village, there was one agha—who owned it. The tenants were almost slaves or serfs who worked for the agha and gave the owner a percentage of the crops they raised. Some of the produce went to the workers and Rahim and his son Ahmad would receive this distribution.

As far as Hamid could see, “The rest of the people were slaves. For instance, my father was slave to the agha. And all the aghas were Kurdish, as well. People owned large parcels of land and then had

The rest of the people were slaves. For instance, my father was slave to the agha. And all the aghas were Kurdish, as well. People owned large parcels of land and then had many people working for them.

many people working for them.” The social differences were marked and strictly maintained. “Many of the aghas had several wives and many children. Even though Toba, my cousin, married Jafar Agha Elxanizade, my family did not visit her because he was an aristocrat.”

Interestingly enough, even though Omar Elxanizade was a leader of Komala, a Marxist-Leninist party, he was also a Kurdish feudal landlord. But as for young Hamid, who came from the city and loved to play football, he cast aside all concerns of class or politics and every summer engaged in this sport with the children of aghas.



His father Rahim Mahmoudi

Religion

The Kurds in Iran are mainly Sunni Muslim, and Islam plays an important role in their lives. However, this was not the case for young Hamid. “My father attended the mosque, but he never forced me to go. My father was a calm person and never complained. People liked him. He never hit me. He understood me. Though we were very poor, we were a close-knit family and I was very attached to him.

“I did visit the mosque once when I was about seven years old. But the man at the mosque was arrogant and very mean to me. After that, I never wanted to go there again.”

Ahmad, his older brother, was at school most of the time. Whenever he stayed home he watched Hamid cheer up their dad with childish mischief, sometimes interrupting his daily prayers.



His father Rahim Mahmoudi, on the right, with Amineh, Malak, Ahmad, and Ahmad's brother-in-law Karim Asadi

Learning to Swim

I have always looked for opportunities because in difficulties, as well as challenges, I find openings and opportunities. I accept this and am always finding new ways to accept a challenge. It's good to do this.—A.D.

The Mahabad River, which flows into the southern end of Lake Urmia, was a favored swimming place. “I did not know how to swim and usually avoided going into the water. But one hot summer day in 1965, I strolled down to the river. Standing on the shore with my feet in the cool water, I relished the breeze that blew ashore. Suddenly, without realizing it, my head was under the water, and I was being pulled down the river by the strong current. I panicked and began to scream. Even at that young age, I thought it was the end and I was going to die.”

His mother had just walked out to search for him, sensing her son might be in trouble. She heard his screams and instinctively ran in that direction. A frail woman, she ran headlong into the water, took hold of Hamid and scolded him: What, she demanded, was he doing there? He would not soon forget his terror. “For many years after this incident, I was afraid of going into the water, until I learned how to swim.”

Others went into the river as Hamid had that day and drowned, since they couldn't swim at all. Many children perished in the Mahabad River because they would go on their own and tempt fate—not knowing the first thing about the way the water moved. From that day on, Rabia was even more vigilant in looking out for her son, who like any preteen boy craved adventure and sometimes did foolhardy things. She became his self-appointed guardian angel.

During wintertime, there was lots of snow and it grew very cold. But when the snow came, Hamid loved it. “I would go to the mountain and slide down the hillsides on metal plates for fun. I waited for the snow to begin and as soon as the first flakes fell, I ran outside. Sometimes I would come back very late, yet my mother was always waiting for me to return.”

A Political World Erupts in Hamid's Childhood

After the fall of the Republic, the Shah launched a systematic persecution of Kurdish activists that would end up decimating most of the PDKI membership. Most of the remaining Iranian PDKI Kurdish leadership escaped to Iraq.

Iran itself had been in turmoil when Mohammad Mossadegh was named Iranian prime minister and nationalized the oil industry, which had been in the hands of the British since 1913. But his term was short-lived. Mossadegh was overthrown by a coup d'état organized by the CIA and British intelligence services.

Meanwhile in Iraq, King Faisal of the Hashemite monarchy, which had been imposed by the British after World War I when the country's borders were created, was overthrown in 1958 by Pan-Arab officers. In 1961, Mulla Mustafa Barzani launched a rebellion against the central government in Baghdad. Hundreds of PDKI militants offered their support and for the next eight years, until 1966, made a

major contribution to the survival of Mustafa Barzani's movement.

The Shah, displeased by the overthrow of King Faisal in Iraq, decided to weaken the new Iraqi regime by establishing an alliance with Barzani and offering material aid to the Iraqi Kurds. With this scenario, the Iranian Kurds decided to no longer support Barzani. Many returned to Iranian Kurdistan while others continued their political work from Iraqi Kurdistan.

In March 1967, a group of Iranian Kurds—nationalist PDK militants and ex-members of the communist Iranian party Tudeh—began a limited armed resistance against the Shah's regime despite Barzani's warnings to do nothing to provoke his ally, Tehran. These Kurdish insurgents had been operating back and forth across the Iraq-Iran border. Mustafa Barzani expelled them from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Rebellion Breaks Out

In the spring of 1968 the Shah's armed forces attacked the PDKI in Iran, which began a full-on armed rebellion that would last eighteen months. There were fierce clashes with the Shah's gendarmes and military and the insurgents sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan, where Barzani's men ended up killing or capturing more than forty PDKI members. Those they arrested were handed over to the Iranian authorities, who would execute them and then publicly display their bodies. Iranian Kurdistan was drenched with blood.

The revolt and the fierce attack by the Shah's forces was a blow to all Kurds. The Mahmoudi family found themselves affected by the political events because of relatives who supported the insurgency. Rabia's brothers were supportive of the insurgents. One of them would bring food to the family from time to time. The other two brothers, who lived in the village of Mangur and became judges, were also involved.

Coming to Terms with Political Realities

When people began to be arrested, Hamid questioned his father about why this was taking place. Rahim's explanation was simplistic and acceptable to his young son. He told him that those being arrested were smugglers who had brought things to sell in the

The revolt and the fierce attack by the Shah's forces was a blow to all Kurds. The Mahmoudi family found themselves affected by the political events because of relatives who supported the insurgency.

market. But there were also politicians and militants. The atmosphere in Mahabad grew increasingly tense as the Iranian regime began to execute the upstarts as a warning example to the populace. Two PDKI members, Said Fatah and Murad Shires, were hanged as examples in Mahabad.

One afternoon in 1966 as nine-year-old Hamid was playing outside after school, he heard people saying that something strange was happening. He followed the crowd through Jame Jam Street until he found himself at the Babe Shah Plaza, named in honor of the Shah's father. There was a lot of commotion. Hamid sensed nervousness and fear around him. There were many people in the square anxiously gathering, but as a young boy, he could not distinguish what had drawn them. Hamid pushed himself through the crowd and froze. He stared in terror at a man swinging from one of the lampposts. His name was Said Fatah. Alongside him there were two other hanged men.

A stunned Hamid followed the group of forlorn people as they walked in silence down Shapur Street. A cloud of sadness pervaded every single person as they approached Chwar Chira square. About one hundred meters before the square, Hamid saw the Cinema Omid (Hope). In front of the cinema hung another body. It was a man named Murad Shires. He was very tall. He was just hanging there next to a macabre written message placed by the body: "If you are a traitor, this is your prize."

Meanwhile Rabia was waiting for Hamid to come home from school. But this afternoon he was late and she immediately became concerned. A neighbor had just informed her that a military truck filled with gendarmes had crossed the city toward Chwar Chira. The rumors were that clashes with the Iranian PDK militants had been brutal and authorities were bringing in prisoners.

Knowing Hamid's curiosity and impulsiveness, she immediately went to look for him at the square. As she came upon the silent crowd, she called out to him. Suddenly she felt her legs buckling under her. Someone caught her by the arm and steadied her. Pushing through the crowd, Rabia gasped at the lifeless bodies that were hanging for all to see.

She searched the teeming mass of people and there was her son, his face white as chalk, eyes wide open and fixed on the victim. "They have no shame, cruel dogs that they are," she thought as she held back tears of pain and rage. She crossed over to Hamid and said softly, "You must not be here. We must go home now."

At home his father told him that the regime had publicly displayed the men to instill fear. "You should not go and see that," Rahim quietly reprimanded his son. "I didn't really understand the politics taking place there." Years later, the sadness and regret in these memories would still be palpable. "All I remember is people were not expressing their emotions. Because of this, I sensed a deep grief. No one told me that these men had been hanged because they were criminals."

The regime had sought to implant fear in the populace, and the people's response was stoic. The public display of cruelty did not have its desired effect. The next day, none of the victims; bodies were there. They were gone.

But this image would be etched forever in the young boy's memory, giving him nightmares as a child. As Hamid grew, he learned that these men had been fighting for their freedom and cultural rights.

Passing of Hamid's Mother

When Hamid was nine years old, tragedy would strike: his mother's sudden death. Abruptly, the comforting presence of his mother would be gone.

Rabia, as did all Kurdish women, took care of the house and the children, cleaned and cooked with the help of her daughter Malak. At times, however, whether she was sweeping the floor or preparing flour for bread on her earthen stove, her head ached. Her problems began in earnest about a year after the birth of Hamid's younger brother, Aco. She complained more and more frequently of headaches. Ahmad brought Dr. Shafeie to see her, but there was no clear diagnosis. No one in the family realized she was very ill. She simply went on with her duties; no ailment would keep her away from her household chores.

Without any special warning, one hot summer morning, she felt too weak to get up. This was the beginning. Twenty-two-year-old Ahmad took his mother to the Shiroxoshid Hospital, where she was receiving care. But still there was no definitive diagnosis. Ahmad cared for her at the hospital while his wife Amineh took over all the household responsibilities. A few days later, Rabia was told she needed to go to the main medical center in Tabriz to get the care she needed. That same day, Ahmad carried his mother's small suitcase while Rahim and Uncle Said, Rabia's brother, helped her walk away from the hospital.

In the street, Rahim looked at his frail wife with tenderness as his son helped her into a taxi for the trip to the bus depot. Rabia gazed upon her husband as he said goodbye. Then he headed to the house to pick up the children. She did not know this day would be the last time she would see them.

When Rahim entered the house, intense sadness and grief overtook him. He called Malak and Hamid, who had just returned from school. Holding back the tears, in a trembling voice he told them, "We have to go immediately to see your mother. She is going to Tabriz. We have to go to the bus station now and say goodbye."

The family hurried toward the hot, noisy terminal. People rushed to catch their buses, while children with trays of food called out, trying to sell their . When the Mahmoudis reached the station, Rabia had

"They have no shame, cruel dogs that they are," she thought as she held back tears of pain and rage. She crossed over to Hamid and said softly, "You must not be here. We must go home now."

already taken her seat aboard the bus. The bus was about to leave. The moment she saw them, Rabia steadied herself and moved slowly to the front of the bus. Ahmad stepped forward and held out his hand to support his mother. With tears in her eyes, Rabia took her children one by one in her arms and kissed their foreheads. Rahim embraced his wife and lovingly kissed her goodbye. Ahmad hugged his father and siblings as he led his mother back into the bus. When the bus pulled away from the station, Hamid saw his mother lean against the window and wave. "I would never see my mother again," he says now, quietly.

After the four-hour bus ride, Ahmad and Rabia arrived at the Tabriz terminal, and headed straight for the hospital. "My mom could barely stand, and I had to carry her at times," says Ahmad. Rabia was in Tabriz for a month. Ahmad came to visit her several times. Ahmad still was not aware that she was on her deathbed. Most probably this was unconscious denial from a sensitive twenty-two-year-old.

One day, Ahmad received a phone call from the hospital. Rabia was in critical condition. It suddenly dawned on him that his beloved mother could die. She had cancer. "When I arrived, I found her in a very bad condition," recalls Ahmad with sadness. "She passed away soon after. I was with Kak Habib, my wife's uncle, who had some friends there. He gave me some money so I could find a cemetery to bury my mom. Since I couldn't afford the cost of bringing my mom's body back home, we had to bury her in Tabriz. The cemetery was Vadi Rahmat, which is now a residential area."

One afternoon not long after, Hamid opened the door of the family's home to welcome his big brother Ahmad and his uncle Said. They had just come back from Tabriz. But his mother was not with them. A sinking feeling overtook him; he was afraid to ask where his mother was. Ahmad sat down and looking at his siblings said very sadly, "Our mother has died."

Hamid's world came crumbling down and he began to cry. He would never again feel the warm embrace of this sweet and loving mother. It was a devastating reality for one so young. But where was she? He dared not ask why they had not brought her back or why they left her dead body in another city, far away from those who loved her. "She must be cold and lonely," he thought. To this day, he still does not really understand why they didn't bring her body back to Mahabad to be buried.

Ahmad Leaves Home

One or two weeks after Rabia's death, Ahmad moved back into his family's home. For Hamid, "That was a very sad period. I remember going to school and feeling something missing in my life, a gaping hole. The teacher told others that my mother had died and they should behave in a kind way to me."

Ahmad had left Mahabad two years earlier in search of a job in Tehran. He had begun to work as a cartographer and study road engineering. It was after Ahmad left home that Rabia had become ill and died. His presence in the family was sorely missed.

With the onset of his mother's illness, Ahmed, now married for two years, returned to Mahabad with his wife. His wife Amineh's family name was Jadidolislam, "new Islam"; they were converted Jews. Ahmad and Amine lived in a small room rented close to family, where Hamid often visited them.

While Rabia was still alive, she had been able to give her grandmotherly love to Ahmad's first child. She would sweetly cradle this treasure in her arms. Sadly, this baby died six months after Rabia's passing. Amine and Ahmad then had a second child, Shahab. When the child turned one year old, Ahmad moved back to Tehran and his wife and child moved in with Amine's mother, Morvard Jadidolislam.

When Ahmad left for Tehran, the Mahmoudis too moved in with Amine and Shahab at Ahmad's mother-in-law's house. Ahmad would stay in Tehran alone for a while, working, until he was able to bring his family to the city. Ahmad and Amine would later have another son, Shahram, born in Bokhan, and their daughter Shirin, born in Tehran.

Rahim at first stayed home to take care of young Aco, his youngest child and the last child Rabia had borne, who was only a year old. Malak and Hamid both continued in school.



His brother Ahmad at work

Changes in the Family Landscape

Everything about the family dynamic changed with Rabia's passing. Malak stopped attending school and dutifully stayed home to take care of the house and Aco, her infant brother. Rahim had to continue working to care for his family, and Ahmad had left to study road engineering in Tehran; he was working and studying at the same time, learning about the science of engineering roads and becoming quite accomplished.

Whenever a road was to be built, it was Ahmad who was called upon to study the contours of the land and then map out the shape of the new thoroughfare. He passed his research findings on to the government. Ahmad was extremely clever; he took various engineering jobs and moved around Iran. People had a lot of respect for his engineering expertise and skill.

First Trip to Tehran

Hamid had long desired to visit Tehran. He dreamed of new horizons, and the allure of traveling to the capital of the country was strong. Yet they were so poor, Rahim did not have the money to even buy a bus ticket. It was thanks to a family friend that Hamid received a cheap ticket in 1969 and planned to take this long-sought-after journey himself. Rahim accompanied his son to the terminal. He had been adamant that twelve-year-old Hamid travel to the capital. This was to be his son's first trip alone.

Hamid traveled at night and could not shut his eyes the entire way. The next morning, the bus entered Tehran as the sun was rising. Hamid's first view of the city was the bright snow-covered mountain peaks of Alborz as the sun's rays cast a golden sheen over them. Though it was early, the road was already filled with cars honking as the bus churned in and out of traffic. The bus arrived at the Terminal-e-Gharb, the busiest bus station of the city.

The terminal was buzzing with people as Hamid stepped off the bus and immediately hailed a taxi to Ahmad's home in Nezamabad. He arrived unannounced and everyone there seemed shocked that he had come alone. Even Ahmad's wife Amine was stunned—and not happy he had come.

Hamid's brother-in-law Saleh Asadi was a very nice man and offered to show him around. His son Manaf was Hamid's age. He took the boy to the city, where he had a shop, and for the first time, Hamid rode a double-decker bus. Atop the bus, as the wind blew, he felt free.

Even though he had an idea of what Tehran was like from the Iranian films he had seen, that trip was filled with firsts. The buildings, the shopping centers amazed him. On the first day, he saw an escalator in a mall. He was astonished to see a moving staircase.

Ahmad was off somewhere working in southern Iran, and not in Tehran. After two weeks, Ahmad's wife Amine said he must return home. Hamid sadly packed his small bag to leave. "That trip was an eye-opening adventure for me. I went to movies; I collected pictures of the actors in those films. I even went one day to the Coca-Cola factory. Once I returned home, everyone commended me on what an intrepid adventurer I had become." Later, Ahmad would bring members of his family to Tehran to visit and meet his family, including his three children.

For years, Ahmad would take care of the entire family. He had a good job and earned a good wage. He would soon offer his whole family their first home. When Ahmad returned to Mahabad with his wife and children after seven years in Tehran, Hamid, now in the first year of architecture studies at the gymnasium level of school in Mahabad, designed what would become the new home for both families

For Hamid, this was a memorable event. "When I was thirteen years old, Ahmad bought a home for my family, the first and only real home we had. My father, my younger brother, my sister and I all lived there. By modern standards, it was a simple building. Yet it had a garden and much more space than the one room we had rented earlier in my life. The house was located on the outskirts of what is now central Mahabad, near the beginning of the road to Urmia. At the time, this was a very poor area on the limits of Mahabad. It was called Mahmoudkan; kan means 'where the water is,' 'the source of the water.' The toilet was outside, but there was a shower in one of the rooms. We could borrow water to bathe. It had three rooms for the family and two additional rooms we could rent out. Though this house was more spacious, ours remained a very simple life."

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Rahim began to stay home while Malak cooked, cleaned, and did the laundry as Rabia had done. Yet Malak, like Hamid, yearned for more out of life. She longed to continue her studies at night, but had to sacrifice her dreams because it was not safe for a woman to go out in the evening. Hamid lived there with his family until he began secondary school and moved away.

Progress in School

“I felt the workings of society and it was very hard for me to see the ways that people struggled to earn money. Those factors brought me to develop key values in my life and society in general. I felt I must work and strive. Because I pushed myself, by the age of twenty, I had experienced the challenges of people in their thirties—experience of work, knowledge, life experience, and the stresses society impresses upon people. I also felt alone because I had lost my mother at an early age.”—A.D.

Throughout his early school years, Hamid spent all his carefree summers in the villages having fun, playing sports. In the winter when it grew very cold, the young men wore wool socks and would play with a small ball. It was a very creative game. Since they were so poor, they had nothing else to play with.

In elementary school, Hamid also enjoyed theatrics. In fifth grade at the age of eleven, he performed the part of teacher in a school play before all the parents, sporting a big moustache and glasses. This was typical of a role he often played with his classmates during his school years. At that time he was advanced in many subjects and would help his classmates in their studies and exams.

“In my formative years, my avid interest in athletics—basketball—and the theater grew. Mainly basketball was my greatest passion at that time. I went to school in the morning but all afternoon into the evening, I played basketball. It was my great hobby.” Hamid was an avid basketball player and many of his teammates became close friends, playing important roles later in his life. Most of the team would later come to join the Iranian PDK.

Ahmad Sherbagi was one. He was a nice person who later became the radio announcer for the Iranian PDK. It was he who would announce the death of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the popular humanist Kurdish leader. Ahmad’s voice was very powerful and everyone knew him.

Everyone’s destiny would unfold: some would die, some would go into exile, and others to prison for many years. Hamid would come to know what happened to all of them and where they ended up. Two of them are now in Sweden. Another currently lives in Switzerland; a fourth, Azim Afsar, lives in Canada. Jaffar is in Stockholm. Another, Amir Waziri, is now a taxi driver in Stockholm.

Even then, Hamid wanted to explore new areas, experience more things in his life. Ahmad bought jeans from a free market in the American styles at that time. “When I was ten years old, I went to my brother’s in the summer. I was interested in theater and culture. People would say to me, “You’re not of the upper class. What are you doing?”

As he moved into his early teens, Hamid cared less about school. “In the eighth grade, I had to redo four subjects because I had failed them. I only wanted to play sports—volleyball and basketball.”



With his basketball team in Mahabad (Hamid, sitting, second on the left)

Ahmad was bitterly disappointed and vocal about Hamid's poor grades. He insisted that his younger brother *do* something, *make* something of his life and stop fooling around. Ahmad chided him, "You must come with me and focus on your studies." So Hamid went to Tabriz, where Ahmad was general director of road infrastructure.

His Brother Grows Hamid's World

Not doing well in school turned out to be fortuitous: Ahmad was so displeased with his grades and his having to repeat those courses that it moved Hamid into a new phase in his life. It was very trying for Hamid to be around his brother's displeasure—the brother who unconditionally supported him. So Hamid resolved to focus upon studying in earnest. Ahmad would have him come work with him during the summer months and that in itself became a source of great learning. Hamid enjoyed being with his older brother and looked up to him.

Hamid continued to develop his prowess in basketball and at the same time received very high marks in school—a complete turnaround. Ahmad's influence was all-important at that stage. He pushed his brother to see what was worth pursuing to make something of himself and his life.

Road Building as a Teenager in Tabriz

At that point in my life, work and studying became my main activity. My brother insisted upon more discipline—and told me I must go work with him in Tabriz and later in Baneh. This opened new regions to my developing sensibility and a curiosity and interest grew within me to meet new people and experience engineering concepts on a practical level.—A.D.

Working with his brother, Hamid's horizons began to expand even more because of the people he interacted with. Ahmad paid him for his work and the trip there was very expansive for him. Many years later Alan would reminisce about these journeys that led him toward becoming who he would later become.

“During the summer of 1973, I studied intensely for this reason: I loved engineering. My brother taught me a lot very quickly and I absorbed it eagerly—like the calculations for bridges and cartography. From him, I learned many aspects of his work in a concrete way.

“For some unknown reason, I was highly qualified in things like road cartography and learned its intricacies in only one year. Cutting through the mountains was very dangerous and the job of the cartographer was essential. People used to ask me, ‘How can you do these things? You have no academic qualifications.’ But that wasn't completely true. I was learning everything directly from my brother who was *very* knowledgeable and highly skilled; Ahmad constantly explained the concepts and ways of executing them to me.

“For example, I would do the mathematical calculations to establish points where a road needed to curve. This required a type of advanced math to design a road, taking into account the direction of the cars and their speed; these figures supported each other. My brother was masterful and I was his eager student.”



With his brother Ahmad during his summer job

The Dangers of Driving

Though Hamid was now sixteen, he didn't yet have a driver's license. Despite his protests, Ahmad pushed him to learn to drive and take his car out to practice. It was a Jeep, with a manual transmission; when Hamid turned the key the first time, it jerked forward and stalled out in a sudden dead stop. Ahmad was furious.

"But I continued learning to drive. One day the old accountant at my brother's office asked me to drive him to a bank that was just a hundred meters away. My brother was away administering an eighty-kilometer road project. They didn't use asphalt and he directed crews of three hundred, four hundred people on these jobs; I often worked alongside my brother but this time I was not with him.

"On the way back from the bank, I crashed into a door and one side of my brother's car got badly dented. The man was incensed. 'Why did you do that?' he shouted. Luckily, the car ended up alongside stacks of building material in such a way that I hoped no one could see the dents in my brother's prize car.

"When the engineers returned that afternoon to the office, someone asked, 'Who crashed the car outside?' One person said I had done it. In front of all those people, he struck me. Later that night, they spoke about how nice I was. I had no reaction to his admonishment and everyone had noticed this."

Hamid encountered many people on the job. Everyone was focused on building the roads to expand commerce and develop oil and resources in the Tabriz area. His brother's focus on the local infrastructure brought about a huge economic shift in that area.

And an equally large shift in young Hamid's experience and awareness. "Socially and culturally, my brother was more like my father. He had three children of his own in Mahabad and Tabriz. While helping at my brother's office during the summer, I met an Iranian student from Montreal who worked there. Just spending time with those from a culture so different from my own affected and inspired me in very positive ways. All those people were Persian and none were Kurdish. This experience opened up a new world for me."

At sixteen, I'd learned the basic ground rules of politics. It was quite fashionable to be a political student. I was inspired by meeting students from Canada and from any country outside of Iran.



With other staff at his summer job

Politics at the Oil Refinery Opening with the Shah

In the early 1970s, the Shah attended an opening ceremony at an oil refinery that would prove memorable. This event took place three years into the White Revolution that sought to secularize and modernize the country. This push to development included connecting Tehran and provincial capitals with roads and railways.

“At that time, my brother was constructing a two hundred–kilometer road, and partly to the refinery. Men from the secret police came by constantly because there were many students working there—among them Mohammad Shahrabi, who was progressive and had influence both politically and socially.

“I was close to my brother and spent most of my time with him. I ate with him and the engineers and workers and listened. Engineers came, as did students from the university in Montreal and others from the University of Tabriz. They were communists who said they had to leave because the Shah was coming to that area.

“These people were politically active, while I was just waking up to politics; Mohammad Shahrabi’s brother was in prison, he was a political activist. At sixteen, I’d learned the basic ground rules of politics. It was quite fashionable to be a political student. I was inspired by meeting students from Canada and from any country outside of Iran. I had a passion for this and an avid interest in expanding my horizons in all directions.”

2. From Mahabad to Tehran: An Avid Learner, 1970–1977

Inherent Talent

When Hamid began to study at the technical school in October 1974, he was one of the first local Kurdish boys to achieve that distinction. This was the first technical high school established in Mahabad for a three-year electrical, mechanical, and architecture course. Students either went to study literature, biology, or mathematics, or attended technical studies during the last three years of high school to choose the university related to the desired career. A stellar student and number one at this school, Hamid took to technical construction, more simply known as architecture, like a duck to water.

It was in this three-year school that he first learned to design houses. The year he entered that school, Hamid was among the first generation of Kurdish youth to even be able to attend that technical high school.

The tall, gregarious and outgoing Hamid had a positive disposition—one that drew people to him. His brother Ahmad recalls, “He always had friends coming over and they would all sit and laugh together. My brother brought much joy to the family. Our relatives used to call him ‘the tall guy’ because of his height, and he sported an enormous Afro.” Strong-minded, Hamid always had to be right about things—a trait he carries to this day.

Other traits also served him well. “I have simplicity and honesty, and believe I am honest despite the many twists and turns in my life. If I were to go back and do it again, I’m sure I would do all the same things. Somehow, I was never too diplomatic, and held the belief that diplomacy binds you to ideas.

“Instead, I sought opportunity and welcomed this. Even in difficulty, I like to find new openings, as well as challenges. If I accept the



At the age of 15

status quo, then I remain there. So, my quest is to find new ways to approach a challenge—always. It’s good to do this and I have lived my whole life with this guiding principle.”

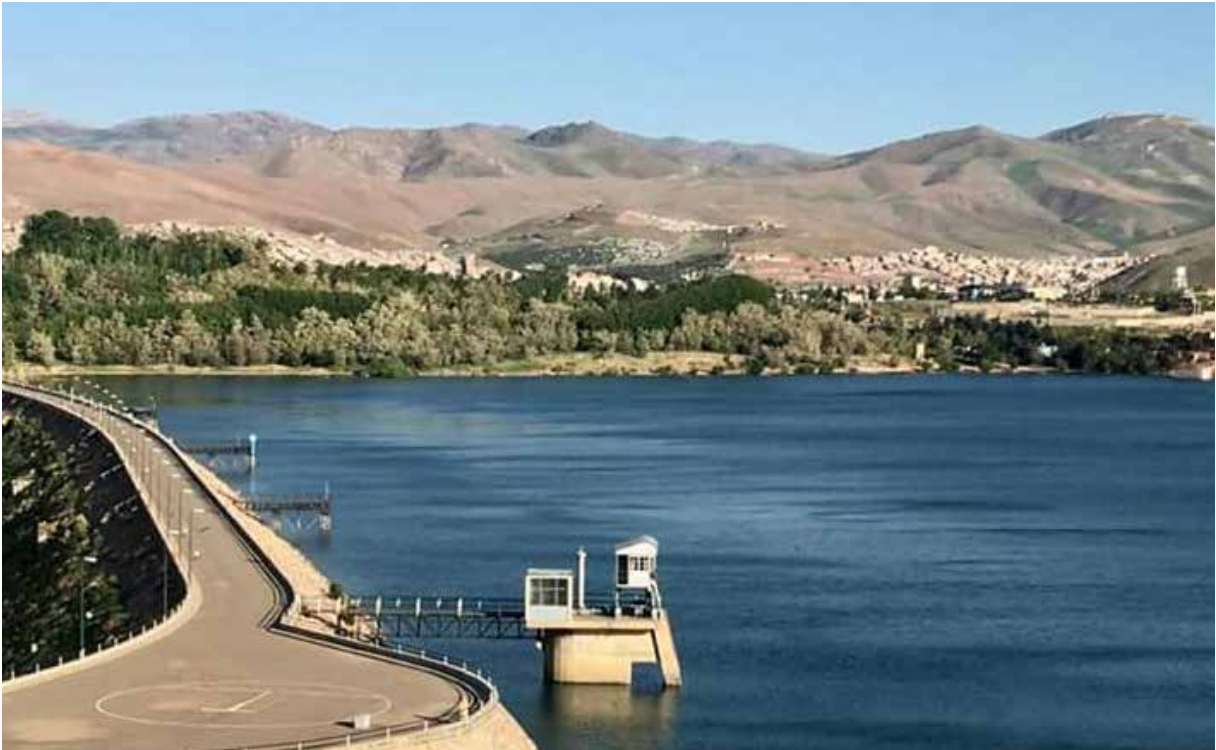
The technical school was housed in a small building near Golke Karan, “Donkey Valley,” which was close to the river. Early each morning, farmers would travel to the city from surrounding villages to sell their produce. Their boys would pass by as they unloaded their buckets of milk and handmade cheese, leaving their donkeys near the school. Hence the name for the area, Donkey Valley.

For such a young man, Hamid was unusually clear about his choice of subject. He chose that field because his older brother was an engineer and a skilled one. Ahmad had mentored him a lot, helping with both the theoretical and the most practical aspects of learning this science. Therefore, Hamid could design buildings and roads very easily as well. He was able to distinguish the necessary elevation and critical sections of building design.

His teachers never asked him how he did this—but they did ask him to do the top projects and those he calculated very easily. His teacher would tell him to design a building and Hamid could calculate the dimensions of the columns and the building with ease. At that time, this subject was called the science of construction. With characteristic determination, Hamid decided to focus on architecture and not merely engineering.

School was a stellar time for young Hamid. He enjoyed receiving top grades and was proud in his accomplishment. Ahmad’s influence cannot be overestimated; he affected his younger brother’s life during that time and for decades to come by encouraging Hamid to strive to learn and achieve mastery in his field. Hamid was a favourite with his friends; they loved him because they all wanted to learn from him. When it was time for exams, they all wanted to sit close to him and receive his help.

Sometimes late at night, Hamid’s father would come to him at 2:00 in the morning because his son studied a lot. Rahim would bring him a pitcher of water saying, “You must soon sleep, my son. It is so late.”



Dam at Mahabad where friends swam during the summer

Basketball and Swimming at Mahabad Dam

Hamid wanted to be the best in all he undertook. Aside from school and his studies, Hamid's second love was basketball and every spare moment of free time he had, he could be found playing. During the summer, school finished at 1:00 in the afternoon so he and his group of friends would inevitably be found on the basketball court or swimming late into the evening at the Mahabad dam. At the other shore of the dam lay the tuberculosis hospital with its enchanting grounds and gardens, the Mikael Garden, filled with fruit trees. This was his much-loved place near the dam.

The dam lay nestled in a surrounding bowl of vast, arid peaks—amidst an endless range of majestic mountains rising toward the clear blue sky. Closer to the water, soft slopes encircled the enormous lake which most often shimmered with bright sunlight. In the summer, the rock-filled shore near the water, dotted with shrubs and small trees, was filled with excited youths diving into its cool waters.

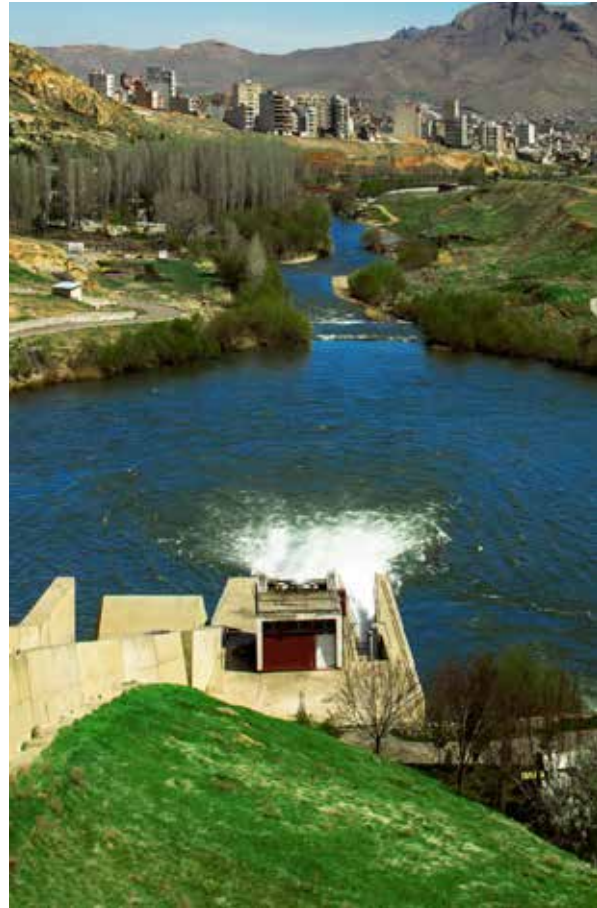
The young men found it challenging and rewarding to jump into the deep water of the Mahabad dam. Hamid and his friends always found a place near the smoothest part of the shore and would spend hot summer days swimming and lying in the sun. In the sweltering heat, Hamid's preferred activity was to dive into the clear, pure water to cool down.

Having learned how to swim at the river when he was fifteen, Hamid fearlessly dove into the water, pushing himself to swim ever-increasing distances. No one had even instructed him in endurance swimming. But one day, he decided to swim to the other side of the dam—several kilometers across and therefore a very real physical challenge. The water the lake formed by the dam was not particularly cold. The big challenges were to find a swimming technique that did not tire him out and the distance itself—since it took between three and four hours to swim across. Suddenly when you arrived at the other side, at the Mikael Garden, glacial cold water would rush upward from the bottom of the dam. And at this point it became very dangerous to swim the last thirty meters in those frigid waters.

Hamid's younger brother Aco, too, remembers the danger. "It was dangerous because it was a very long way. Many boys died because they couldn't actually swim well and after a short while, they got exhausted and weak. Even so, Hamid chose to attempt it because he was so strong-minded. Exercise fuelled his vibrant nature and he loved to keep fit. He also wanted to prove to everyone that he could do this. He would say 'I can do it'—"and 'I will do it.'"

Hamid relished the challenge of swimming across the lake. "At times while crossing, I was afraid as I swam to the other side. But I was also exhilarated by it and enjoyed being in the water. Every summer, we would come to hear that someone had drowned," including one of his good friends.

"The first time was the most frightening. A group of us swam across together and it took us



The Mikael Garden, across the lake at the Mahabad dam

a very long time. When we arrived at the other side, some of my friends were afraid to swim back, so they chose to walk along the three-kilometer wall of the dam while I and several others swam back. We even had to wait for them to saunter back."

Some days this marathon was harder and if he felt tired, he would simply pace himself by rolling over onto his back, relaxing as he backstroked, taking the time he needed. It was an exercise of endurance. It was about getting to the other side, no matter how long it took.

School Manager from Outside the City

At the gymnasium school, Hamid had one teacher who was also a manager of a company that designed homes for ordinary people. Hamid would help him in his design work. This was significant because usually these managers came from outside Kurdistan. They did not know the local culture or the language. In general, these managers were “connected,” or were members of the secret police, SAVAK. Their role was to control students and prevent their getting involved in politics before they entered university. In this way, the government preempted political activities in such cities. Later, Hamid found out they had brought the head of the school from Tehran or Tabriz, and so these officials were not actually at all familiar with the city.

Death of a Beloved School Teacher

Soleyman Belurian was one of Hamid’s teachers in Mahabad. He took his responsibility toward his young students very seriously. For two years, Belurian taught the boys. Tragically, he died very suddenly in a car accident between Mahabad and Mindoab. When this happened, Belurian’s uncle, who had been a political prisoner for many years, felt responsible to come back and teach the young men. The teacher’s students held a three-day ceremony in a mosque to honor him.

The feeling of brotherhood among Hamid and his friends was apparent in this memorial to their teacher. Not only did Hamid excel in his school grades; it always seemed to fall upon him to organize such things—a quality he holds to this day.

Technical-School Afro

Though Hamid lived in a city far from the world of Western fashion, he sported a huge afro while attending the technical gymnasium school. One of the time’s well-known woman singers was named Ramesh, so this school manager used to call him “Ramesh” as his friends chuckled good-naturedly.

Before he left for Tehran, Hamid’s hair was more traditional. But even in Kurdistan, the young people emulated what they could

The big challenges were to find a swimming technique that did not tire him out and the distance itself—since it took between three and four hours to swim across.

"I must tell
you because I
can't write it.
It is forbidden
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forget."

see of Western styles. During that time, the Black Panthers were often in the news. Even in Mahabad, afros were fashionable. Azim and Omid, Hamid's friends, sported one as well. Even at that time, this put them in the vanguard.

Hamid's friends from the basketball team would go to play in other cities during the summer. But as he got older, Hamid was not able to join them. For two summers in his late teens, instead, he was in Tabriz or Baneh, working alongside Ahmad. Because his brother had work in both places, he accompanied him.

A Significant Poetic Mentor

During his summer work, Hamid continued to encounter people who expanded his awareness in many ways. The major influence politically came from Khosrow Rashidian, from the city of Sanandaj. He was Ahmad's accountant in Baneh. Khosrow was very revolutionary and became a major influence in Hamid's political bent and life.

Late into the night, Khosrow shared revolutionary poems with Hamid, explaining details about the revolution in Kurdish cultural self-awareness and the particularities of the Kurdish language.

He would often say to Hamid, "I must *tell* you because I can't *write* it. It is forbidden and if I don't tell you, I will forget." It was through Khosrow and his mother that Hamid came to understand the subtleties of the rampant political repression placed on his people, and the ways of the valorous Kurdish fighters. Khosrow would repeat poems from many writers and even some of his own writings.

During the 1980s, this learned man, born to the Kurdistanis, a wealthy family in Tehran, was very well respected in Sanandaj. He was Ahmad's business partner in the capital. Khosrow became a peshmerga in the 1980s and would take part in the first uprising in Sanandaj against the Islamic regime. Years later, when Hamid had moved to Italy, he would hear that Khosrow had died during the war between the peshmerga and Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic regime. Khosrow had been injured during the fight; for many weeks, he was at his sister's home and then died in Sanandaj. Many people relayed this news to Hamid.



Kurdistan, the area of Baneh

Late at night, as Hamid listened to the wisdom of his erudite friend, his eyes opened for the first time to the wealth and the very existence of Kurdish literature. Delving into this material was forbidden, and that made it all the more exciting to the young man.

To the Baneh Region with Ahmad

Sometimes Ahmad would bring his younger brother to Baneh and from there, they traveled to two remote mountain villages called Zervaw and Blasan, near the Choman River at the Iraq-Iran border. There they performed topography work, since there were no roads in this area. This trip would take them across soft green, sloping mountains covered with red poppies, and chestnut and fruit trees. In the summer, the villages seemed to merge with the mountains, disappearing against the dry brown hills.

The summer offered memorable experiences of picking grapes, and pears and apricots from the surrounding fruit trees. No one seemed to “own” these trees. People could come and take what they needed. There was a tacit moral tradition that people would only take what they needed for the family but not sell the fruit.

Beyond the beauty and simplicity, Hamid got a glimpse of the gendarmerie’s control and abuse of power on the villagers whom they ordered around. Ahmad and Hamid were the first official envoys

to come to the area and do something for these poor people. There were no schools; people were illiterate. They had never traveled away from their village. It was truly another world.

Ahmad helped many people at the time and was in charge of a phalanx of machinery to do this job. Hamid was constantly at his side, working and learning how to build roads. They were the first to go into remote corners of the world where people had never even seen a car. There people would call the car a “metal room.”

When the two brothers drove up the mountain in a bulldozer, the villagers said, “This is the work of God.” The driver of the bulldozer that day was a big, powerful Yazidi, and that impressed them even more. His name was Karim Jandar and he was well known among his colleagues for being courageous, experienced, and daring, for his willingness to work in the formidable Kurdish mountains. Ahmad liked to help the Kurdish people he knew by giving them work. After doing the cartography, he told Karim, “You must accompany me and go with the bulldozer for the first time to raze the mountain. That altitude is very high and dangerous.”

People respected Ahmad a great deal and they liked Hamid as well, who felt privileged to be amid the pristine nature and mountains. The local people would bring them cool watermelon and other home-grown fruits as they worked.

Hamid always showed a good face, especially when he was with his brother, because he wanted to prove that he was strong and capable. But one day in Baneh, Ahmad saw Hamid fall. “I noticed when he fell badly while working heavily and I realized he had injured his knees. However, he didn’t want me to know he was injured. He was limping while he was working but as soon as I looked at him he stopped, so I would not notice that. I told one of my coworkers to take him to get emergency aid; however, I never told Hamid himself.”

Borders Do Not Exist

The borderland was not a safe area because of the trade in illegal contraband that took place there. But in fact, for the Kurds, borders do not exist. Since ancient times the Kurds had been crossing the mountains to trade with tribes on the other side of the Zagros range. Now, however, they were considered smugglers, carrying their tea and produce back and forth through the mountains along dirt paths, on the strong backs of donkeys.

Other people from Tehran sometimes came to work on this project. Typically, the Kurds were very clean, disciplined, and hardworking people. You never saw any drug users. Once, however, a drug addict showed up on the team; he was smoking hashish. His face had a yellow tinge and he was constantly searching for drugs while he was there. Once Ahmad learned about his drug habit, he summarily fired him, saying, “You should not be here, especially with us.”

Hamid recalled seeing one person in the mountains who was perhaps ninety or even a hundred years old. These villagers had never had any contact with any doctor or any government. When Ahmad

came with his crew, it was their first contact with modern, urban Kurdish people. Their village, perched in the mountains, was extremely isolated.

They were all farmers, and they lived very pure, healthy lives surrounded by luscious grape arbors and fruit gardens. They farmed with honor and shared their produce with visitors, whom they invited to take a kilo of fruit. They had no roads and traveled by donkey or on horseback. Their way of life fascinated Hamid and made a deep impression upon him.

The Influence of Film

Before attending high school, when he was about twelve to sixteen years old, Hamid and his friends often went to movies. There were two cinema theaters in Mahabad, the Omid and the Aria. During the week, they showed three movies, and on the weekend they showed the same three films continuously from nine in the morning to nine in the evening. On Fridays, Hamid and his friends made a day of it, bringing food and watching three films in a row; they saved up their money to be able to do this and it was a highlight of their week. Movies were the only avenue for them to see the world. And the world of film was also exposure to a world completely different from their own. The boys relished watching John Wayne films, Iranian and Persian movies.

Once he moved to Tehran, the scope of Hamid's cinematic experience would expand to more international offerings. This would include even films that were playing in New York. More and more, Hamid would be exposed to an ever-widening world.

Life was not all amusement, however; Ahmad felt strongly that it was time for Hamid to move on. "Once Hamid was playing Backgammon with his friend Yusef Khomayezi in my house," Ahmad recalls. "I called him, and I slapped him, since I wanted to see him studying. He replied that he was always a top student and what else did I want from him! Well, if he could be top student among students in the capital city of Tehran, I told him, that would be a thing I would be proud of."

The borderland was not a safe area because of the trade in illegal contraband that took place there. But in fact, for the Kurds, borders do not exist.

He always wore his Kurdish turban, a red one. People often asked him, "Are you a Barzani?"—and he would reply, "No, I simply like the color red."

Ahmad Urges Study in Tehran

For two years, Hamid had attended the technical high school, excelling academically. He loved to study and had achieved high marks; his brother had been very proud of him. But the time had come for the next step. In 1974–1975, Ahmad told him, "Now you should go to Tehran and study there; the schools are better." The quality of teaching was far superior in the city and there Hamid would take a national exam to attend university.

Ahmad insisted upon this course of action; he wanted his seventeen-year-old brother to attend university. Hamid moved to Tehran, where he attended the well-known technical high school there, Honerestan Pische School. It was located on Ferdowsi Square, right in the center of the city near Eisenhower Street. Tehran University was on that street as well and many Kurdish residents lived there, with others regularly coming to that commercial area. Ahmad found a student *pension* or hostel in which Hamid could live, and provided the financial support for his brother's rent: "The charge was three thousand *toman* per month, which was a substantial amount at the time, and I paid for that." Hamid's roommate, Yusef Khomayezi, a youth from a notable Mahabad family, had followed his friend to the city. It was in this hostel that, for the first time, Hamid was to meet students who were politically active.

The Iran Cartography Company

Ahmad continued to support his brother unconditionally in Tehran and find work for them both at the Iran Cartography Company through an engineer friend, Mahmoud Nouri, who worked there. This was on Wasal Shirazi Street, just behind the University of Tehran. From September 1976 to May 1977, Hamid worked there in the evenings, honing his skills.

Everything was new and exciting; culturally and socially, he grew and matured. It was stimulating being in Tehran in every way. Socially, Hamid saw young men and women together for the first time. He had never experienced that in Mahabad as the sexes were always kept separated. Men actually spoke about women in Tehran—they were spoken of openly; it was a whole different

culture. For Hamid, “I felt like a villager from another planet.” He settled in, found friends, and eagerly embraced every facet of his new life.

Another First: Television

In the village where he’d grown up, the family had only radio; in Tehran, Hamid watched television for the first time. Other modern technology had not yet reached Mahabad. As he watched films and TV programs, his cultural awareness continued to expand beyond the village life of his past. In another few years, black-and-white TV sets were being sold that sported tiny screens. Of course, the wealthy Iranians were privy to new technology and loved to flaunt it.

On one return visit to Mahabad with his friend, they found telephone technology had just arrived there. Now each phone had a distinctive number. This was something new, and late into the evening, the boys played pranks on people they knew and on strangers alike by making anonymous calls, mischievously delighting in the wonders of this new technology.

There had been two or three restaurants in Mahabad where beer was sold, but Hamid never went there to drink. He never once drank beer. It did not interest him, and it was only later, as a student in Italy, that he would occasionally drink some wine.

In Tehran, the Growing Pride of Kurdish Identity

At the student dorm in Tehran, Hamid encountered many students. He had only read at that point about Islamic terrorists in the newspaper. Some, the Mujahedin, Islamic Marxists, were very religious, and others belonged to other groups on the left. Hamid was not interested at all in religious activists. He had been influenced by Komala through his teacher and Khosrow Rashidian, and he also respected the PDKI since he knew many of its members. At that time, though, he became interested in the Feda’iyan. “I could distinguish two groups,” he explained. “But I was only interested in finishing my military service and leaving the country. That was my sole focus in everything I did.”

As his cultural filters became more refined, Hamid continued absorbing the new surroundings of student life and ways of being. In the process of acculturation, he was excited to study and attend university. Though he had no interest in becoming a politician, he developed pride in his Kurdish identity. Hamid attended political and cultural discourses to learn more. People were drawn to him when he proudly wore his native clothing.

He always wore his Kurdish turban, a red one. People often asked him, “Are you a Barzani?”—the Barzani tribe used the red and white turban while other tribes used the black and white one—and he would reply, “No, I simply like the color red.”

When still a boy, Hamid was once violently attacked near Tabriz for being Kurdish; the injuries were

bad enough that he bled profusely. Despite this incident, and a growing awareness that his family and relatives shared a cultural commonality that distinguished them from Persians, Azeris, and other ethnicities, he never considered himself a second-class citizen in Iran. He always considered himself a Kurd and not an Iranian.

Looking back decades later, he mused, “I had this kind of ambition and despite my age, I had been exposed to people from worlds very different from my own. I met people from Montreal who had come to work with my brother. At the beginning stages of expanding culturally, I learned from them. From the very beginning, I worked very hard and utilized every shred and detail that comprised my early childhood.”

A Mahabad Plan to Gain University Admittance without Entry Exams

In spring 1977, one month before finishing his term at the Technical High School in Tehran University, he decided to return to Mahabad. Students from the border cities and villages, known as *navar marzi*, were allowed to enter the university without an exam if they had high grades. One of his teachers told him that since he was a top student he should return to Mahabad, and if he finished his year with the highest grades he could benefit and get into the faculty at the university without any examination.

Hamid had often helped this teacher; the instructor often gave his student complex design projects and Hamid successfully executed them for him. So Hamid and his friend Yusef decided to return to Mahabad without completing the academic year in Tehran.

Instead, they ventured back to Mahabad to take advantage of this opportunity offered to those who lived in borderland cities. “That was the system,” as Hamid had been advised, “and we wanted to benefit from it, or so we thought.”

So, he agreed: back to Mahabad again. Waiting for him there was the competition. His former basketball team was ecstatic to have Hamid back playing again. His friends were genuinely happy for him. As a group, they studied for this important exam late into the night, sometimes until midnight or two in the morning; they studied at the mosque because it was so quiet there.

The Mosque

Hamid and ten or twelve of his friends would go to the Saily Mosque in Farah Street to study. In this way, they did not have to stay at home or bother their families. And all the friends knew they would find each other there. The mosque was a large open space with soft Persian carpets. It was always open—and best of all, it was warm. It wasn’t their custom to go pray there; they never did this. But because it was so silent inside, they could study without any distraction. Everyone could come there, especially in the winter.

During summertime, they headed out into the mosque garden and other city gardens. Very early, at five in the morning, they would gather between trees in the gardens, in areas where there was no public park or passers-by. Though the boys studied there, it was not designed for public access.

That private area had plum trees and other fruits, so the young men brought food and tea, studying diligently for hours in preparation for the rigorous final exam. They had a whole month to prepare—with nothing else to do but read and discuss their material. It was a picturesque spot to study and spend time in nature.

One of Hamid's friends, Taha Karbasian, who later became a peshmerga, was fearless; in the study group, he took it upon himself to remove the vagrant snakes that wandered into the fruit groves. From his childhood, Hamid was terrified of snakes and when Taha captured them, he would taunt the others, leering toward them brandishing his writhing, hissing captives. But snakes or no snakes, this was a relatively carefree period for the young men whose destinies lay right before them, waiting in the wings.

Return to Tehran and Completing His Degree

Of the boys who studied together, it turned out that Hamid and his friend, Yusef, were the only ones who passed the national exam. All the others had to redo at least one subject when the exam was held again in September. The two boys were excited to have passed in June with flying colors. Hamid scored the top degree and Yusef came second. That summer, Hamid went to work with Ahmad again in Baneh.

Ahmed insisted Hamid enter the university. There was no problem, Hamid told his brother. He would get in because he had the highest scores in his exams. A serious Ahmad looking straight into his eyes insisted, "You must be sure."

Hamid had to wait until September 1977 to discover his fate.

An Ungranted University Degree

At the end of that summer, Hamid suddenly learned he hadn't been given a degree for his exam. "This rule," the school director told him, "is not relevant to Mahabad." Mahabad was not considered a border city; therefore its students were not considered *navar marzi*.

Hamid protested, "I came back from Tehran and didn't participate in the national exam because I was told of this dispensation." Further, he had chosen not to take the special exam for entry to university known as the *concours* because he was certain he would receive the other award.

One of his Kurdish teachers told Hamid to go to the secret service, the SAVAK, and explain to the officials that some local people hadn't granted him the award, despite his high grades, because he

As a boy, Hamid had learned a lot about politics from Khosrow. Now he was eight years older, and though Kurdistan was very calm, Hamid was becoming increasingly politically active.

was Kurdish. Mahabad students, insisted the teacher, *were* navar marzi. “It’s the best way,” he said, “to go and explain it to them directly.”

Hamid followed this advice, but still they denied him entrance to his university. That was the first and last time in his life he approached the SAVAK. They told him to write a report about the situation, which he did; but they never got back to him. Hamid was immensely disappointed.

Even at that stage, he had made a crucial decision pointing him toward a future very different from most of his colleagues and friends. He was determined to go abroad, to leave Iran and pursue his studies in Italy. But to do this, he first had to enter the military to procure a passport.

Hamid’s Entry into Politics

In 1977 the Mujahedin and the Feda’iyan, two leftist political groups, were active in Tehran, and SAVAK was keen on controlling any opposition activities against the Shah.

As a boy, Hamid had learned a lot about politics from Khosrow. Now he was eight years older, and though Kurdistan was very calm, Hamid was becoming increasingly politically active. “You could go anywhere peacefully. It was very, very safe. You would see the gendarme everywhere at the border. The young Kurds from Mahabad and Baneh knew who was with SAVAK, the secret police.”

Increasingly, during the 1960s, the Shah began to be confronted by the traditional clerics of the country who saw the White Revolution and Westernization of the country as an attack on Islam. Soon an unknown cleric in the holy city of Qom began to publicly condemn the Shah for spreading moral corruption and submitting to the United States and Israel. His name was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He wore a black turban, a privilege granted only to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. With his thick white beard and carbon black eyes, Khomeini berated the Shah in his speeches at the madrassas as a “wretched and miserable man.”

Toward the end of 1964 Khomeini was arrested and soon after sent into exile.

The SAVAK began a systematic repression of the Shah's critics. From exile, Khomeini was speaking to the masses through cassette copies of his lectures smuggled into the country. These were passed on from hand to hand. By 1977, Khomeini had become the spiritual leader of an emerging revolt against the Shah which now included Islamic reformists and secular Iranians—mainly intellectuals and academics.

Iranians were disenchanted with the Shah and his administration. Even though there was an oil boom and the country were receiving enormous amounts of dollars, it was not trickling down and the inequality was flagrant. Students and professionals organized themselves and began to protest.

In Kurdistan, always seen as a rebel stronghold, the SAVAK became very active. When Hamid returned to Mahabad in 1977, SAVAK had been arresting many of his young Kurdish friends. While Hamid realized that the youth had become politically active in the city, he was so engaged in his studies at the time that he didn't get involved in politics. His focus was on being accepted into the university in Tehran.

The Necessity of Moving Beyond the Country

In the end, Hamid was assigned to Urmia University, which was *definitely* not his preference. His friend Yusef had been accepted at Tehran University; for the sake of his education, Hamid desperately wanted to leave the country.

He declined the assignment to Urmia: "Urmia—I do not accept this!" Because his scores had been so high, one month later he was accepted for his military service. But by then, he had moved on with a different vision for his future. He realized one thing: he needed to procure a passport—to get out of the country. To go study abroad, Hamid had to complete his military service. This became his sole focus.

He informed Ahmad of this decision. "I want to get out of Iran; I won't study any more here. I want to go outside the country." But Ahmad wanted his brother to stay in Iran. For the first time, they did not agree, and Hamid disobeyed his elder. He would not listen to him or take his advice. This not only deeply saddened Ahmad; he was extremely vocal about his brother's decision.

Ahmad came right out and said he was devastated, so unhappy that his brother was headed into the military. Ahmad didn't comprehend what was behind his brother's apparently rash and unbending decision. For the first time, they grew apart, and Hamid did not speak with his brother for six months.

Hamid knew what he wanted. "I didn't accept going to university in Urmia. I found that my brother was very much against me and said I must attend there. But I believed that would not have been good for me. I had a very high ambition, even then. My brother was quite upset. Yet I remained very focused and was clear I must go further. I was absolutely determined I must move on."

Due to his excellent academics, he received a sergeant's rank, one level higher than a simple soldier.

His father also did not want him to leave; he wanted his son close by. "You should stay in Kurdistan and like your friends accept to be a teacher," he pleaded. For Hamid, this was one of the saddest times in his life, as he felt torn between his love for his father and family and his burning desire to make a life for himself. Little did he know that when he left, he would never see his father again.

A High Military Degree Paves the Way

After registering for his military service in Mahabad Hamid got his things ready to travel. The day Hamid left Mahabad, Yusef's father, who owned a well-known candy shop, brought the departing young man two kilos of sweets as a farewell present.

Traveling with Yusef, Hamid arrived in Tehran by overnight bus in December 1977. As the bus entered the city early the next morning, his excitement grew. But this time, the excitement was due to the step he had taken to pave his way to future travel abroad. The friends were taken directly to the military *caserne*, the barracks where they would spend the next three months in basic military training.

Hamid woke early the next day to a balmy spring day and began his military service. Because of his high examination scores, Hamid was assigned with soldiers who had already finished university. Due to his excellent academics, he automatically received a sergeant's rank, one level higher than a simple soldier. He was sent to the military's engineering section. In addition, he was to be paid for his work—an added boon as he made his way forward.

While at military school, Hamid and his fellow students learned to use, clean, and maintain the weapons of that time. There were several officers from America—Persians who had lived in the United States. They spoke Persian with an American accent and were kind to the recruits. None of them stayed overnight but left every evening to return to their families.

"Every day the general came to inspect our rooms at six a.m. The quarters had to be immaculate. After breakfast, we began our exercise. There was a lot of exercise in the military and it was challenging in the dead heat of the Iranian summer."

The students who had family in Tehran were allowed to return to their homes for the night but those who were not married had to stay in the barracks.

Transfer to Engineering Section in Ahvaz

Once he finished basic training, Hamid was summarily transferred to Ahvaz in southern Iran, near the border with Iraq. Ahvaz, an oil-producing city in Khuzestan Province, lies on the banks of the Karun River. On November 13, 1977, in recognition of his engineering background, Hamid began a specialty learning phase in the engineering sector.

Hamid was ecstatic: he would not have to be in the military barracks. Nor would he have to stand guard all night, like his friends Ahmad and Azim, or do any of the chores soldiers were required to do. But more than this, instead of sequestration for three months in the very elementary training most young recruits faced, Hamid went for engineer training for three entire months—to build bridges and other tasks.

At the same time, he unequivocally decided to study English at night.

All this training helped to lay groundwork for a future that awaited him and to which he sought entrance. In the military, Hamid basically became a full-fledged engineer. Never was he a night watchman. His rank exempted him from those duties.



White Bridge, Ahvaz, Iran

3. Political Awakening in Iran: Tremors 1978-1979

The political situation was becoming increasingly agitated. On January 6, 1978, in the daily newspaper *Ettela'at*, an article appeared accusing Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of being a corrupt British agent; the clerics were designated “black reactionaries.” The whole thing provoked a backlash. The next day, four thousand religious students and supporters of the city of Qom responded by taking to the streets. The riot police answered with gunfire, killing seventy people and wounding over five hundred. This unleashed a cycle of dissention, violence, and mounting protests throughout the entire country.

An Engineer's Military Training

By the end of January 1978, Hamid had finished his initial military orientation in Ahvaz. There was no training with guns for him; rather, he learned a series of engineering tasks and specifics on how to build bridges over the river in thirty minutes and then see cars and other vehicles cross. Just being in Ahvaz was educational for the young man. It was the first time he had traveled south; it was dry, very warm, and he marveled at the palm trees and at everything he found as a tourist in that place.

After his six months of training in Tehran and Ahvaz, in April he was transferred to Kermanshah, where he would stay for eleven more months to continue to study and apply principles in more complex engineering tasks. There he was also given administrative work, like typing orders for the different departments in the engineering area of the military.

After getting oriented his first couple of days, Hamid traveled back to Mahabad for a two-week holiday during Nowruz, the Iranian new year celebration. Being cut off from his family for six months had left him feeling isolated and unhappy. “I had no contact with my family, as there was not yet a telephone at home. I never contacted my brother because he was very displeased with me. For the first time, I refused to listen to him and he was not speaking to me.

“In our culture, what I had done was considered disrespectful. My father wanted me to be a teacher because my best friend had gone that route very happily. Everyone in Mahabad wanted to become a teacher. That was the easy road and what most people aspired to. But not me. My destiny was calling to me in a different way.”

Life in the military had changed Hamid already. Even his brother Aco thought so: “He was thinner and leaner. All that hair was gone, but he still wore a moustache. He was lighter in some ways, but also more serious.”

That area was very fascinating because there were very high mountains and the houses rested like stairs upon them.



Kurdistan, the area of Paveh

For Hamid, returning to Mahabad also meant moving toward the schism with Ahmad. “It was early spring and the first time I’d seen my brother after our disagreement. I spent a few days with him and promised that upon my return to Kermanshah, I would continue to study English at the American Society School to prepare for my studies outside. This calmed the waters.”

Hamid left Mahabad by bus but decided to get to know the region better. “I went traveling through southern Kurdistan. I visited Sanandaj, Paveh, and this trip was exciting for me. That area was very fascinating because there were very high mountains and the houses rested like stairs upon them. The roof of the one house was the garden for the other. I had never seen anything like it before. It was such a strange city and harsh in the wintertime. On the same trip, I went to Dalahu There I found forests with extremely tall trees. Nature was exceptional and in direct contrast to what I had known in my childhood.”

Hamid arrived in Kermanshah in April on a crisp spring day. He had found a place to stay away from the barracks. “I had my own room in the center of the city. I was in the military; at the same time, I wore my Kurdish clothes there. I attended school to learn English. Our teacher was an engineer who taught at night and I openly told him my aspirations: ‘I’m in the military and I will go to the U.S.A. after my military training,’ I told him.”

Secretary in the Military

Though Hamid was now trained to build bridges and other engineering projects, mainly he worked as a secretary for a general in the main office. The top military personnel worked there as well, and it was time well spent. All his acquaintances who had taken the university exam returned from Canada and the U.S. wearing one star, and Hamid was decorated with seven.

“Our tasks were basic—to write letters and fulfill engineering tasks. We did not engage in military activity at all. Though I was working in a top-secret engineering area, as a secretary I was not often privy to confidential material. But I did see semi-secrets from time to time. For instance, once there was a confidential mission at the border that few knew about.

“My office had contact with everyone. We prepared the orders, and that I liked. I learned how to use a typewriter there. My boss would give me handwritten notes that I would then type for him. While the days and months passed as I worked in the main office, my friends began night guard duty, which carried risks.”

In the military, Hamid came in contact with many people who liked him very much. His boss, before becoming a general, had won three stars for military valor. He was from southern Iran and socialized with Hamid in his home, sharing moments from his career. It was a time when men were joining the military from all over Iran.

On one home leave, Hamid traveled back to Kermanshah with his sister Malak and Aco—his youngest brother was now eleven years old—to show them how he lived there. In the morning, they arrived by bus and went straight to Hamid’s place. He lived in a large, one-room studio apartment with white walls and with a small kitchen. Hamid slept on the bed while Aco and Malak used typical Kurdish mattresses rolled out on the floor. Everything was very tidy and organized.

During their visit, Hamid worked all day and then came home to take his siblings sightseeing. Hamid’s neighbor’s daughter spent time with Malak during the visit. They would cook together and do other domestic tasks.

Aco and Malak also visited Hamid at his workplace. The building was very old; given the private nature of his work, they waited outside for him to appear. All this was exciting for Aco, whose life had been spent in Mahabad. “I was young, so I didn’t think much of it, but it was something new and therefore exciting for me. Our brother cared for us, took us around the town and treated us to ice cream.” While in Kermanshah, many weekends Hamid traveled back to Mahabad. In July 1978, before returning to his military service, he took a bus to Tehran to secure his driver’s license.

As the first news came out, suddenly the revolution was arising everywhere. Even in Mahabad there were demonstrations.

The Ayatollah

It was there that Hamid heard for the first time about the fiery cleric who was standing up to the Shah, the Ayatollah Khomeini. From his fourteen-year exile in southern Iraq, Khomeini's words circulated within Iran, from hand to hand, through audio and videotape cassettes, exhorting the population to revolt against the imperial regime.

That summer Hamid witnessed the unfolding of the Iranian revolution. At night, he and his friends would follow current events on the radio by listening on either Israel radio or the London BBC. As the first news came out, suddenly the revolution was arising everywhere. Even in Mahabad there were demonstrations.

Unrest was spiking in that hot summer in Iran. Strikes, protests, and riots had virtually paralyzed the country. Attacks by leftist guerrillas and Islamic radical groups grew fiercer while police and soldiers gunned down the ever-growing protests. On August 19, a cinema in the working-class district in Abadan in southwestern Iran was set on fire. On that warm summer night, 430 people sat watching a politically controversial Iranian film, *Gavaznha (The Deer)*. More than four hundred men, women, and children died in the blaze, trapped inside the theater.

Some suspected the Islamic radicals who had been condemning cinemas, and even attacking them, for contributing to the lack of morality in the country. Others blamed the SAVAK for torching the movie house as a way to point a finger at the radicals as merciless extremists. During the months to come, the burning of cinemas by mobs of Islamic fanatics would become a symbol of their fight against the Shah. The demonstrations that followed carried one clear message: "The Shah must go."

On Friday, September 8, despite martial law decreed by the Shah the day before, demonstrators took to the streets, defying authorities in different sectors of Tehran. The response of the regime was brutal. In eastern Tehran, thousands gathered in Jaleh Square. Unable to disperse the crowd, soldiers shot to kill. This day became known as "Black Friday" and paved the way for a radical revolution.

Revolution in Mahabad

In Mahabad, demonstrations had started in September when classes began. With all the unrest, school was closed down for a year and the students were cramming for the most important segments of their courses and exams. As a result, they completed a year's worth of schooling in only three months.

For Aco, the memories still flood in like it was yesterday. "I was fifteen and in school. Everyone talked about the well-populated demonstrations and even women attended them. They usually began around ten a.m. and lasted until four p.m.

"Suddenly someone would shout, 'It's starting!' and we would run out of our classrooms. Everyone wanted to be outside and there were so many of us that the teachers couldn't stop us. But soon after, even the teachers followed us. The whole country got involved."

Aco usually wore his Kurdish clothes at school. But then they received orders from the government that these traditional outfits should not be worn there. One day before the protest started, the teachers tried to warn their students that they couldn't wear Kurdish clothes—but the kids had already dashed out and nothing could be done.

“One day we were in the streets marching toward the municipal buildings. Many were throwing stones, but I did not. It was so chaotic. People were shouting ‘Down with this regime!’ when suddenly soldiers in tanks rolled out of the military barracks straight toward us and began to shoot. People were screaming, and I was terrified. I followed the crowd and ran for my life. Many people were killed that day.”

Religion versus Freedom

Ahmad often visited Hamid in Kermanshah. He worried about Khomeini and shared his concern that the Shi'a/Sunni divide was becoming more intense. “I remember my brother told me, ‘This is Shi'a. We are Sunni and there will be a problem with them.’” Ahmad worked with many Azeris, Shi'ites, and was wary with the turn the revolution was taking.

In fact, in stark contrast to the turn the Islamist revolution was taking, Ahmad enjoyed the freedom to decide how he chose to live. Like many Kurds, he appreciated strong alcohol and was leery of the attacks on Western activities and symbols by angry radical demonstrators. Ahmad painted the picture very clearly for Hamid: “All the bars will be closed. We will be like in Qom. They will force you to go to the mosque and pray when none of us have ever prayed. This guy is not better than the Shah. With the Shah, we have a few thousand political prisoners, but still we have freedom. But with increasing religion . . . our freedoms will become limited.”

Hamid's goal remained the same: to become a university student. His brother was happy about that because he had been increasingly concerned about his younger brother getting politically involved. Some of Ahmad's own friends, he told Hamid one day, had already disappeared. At the same time, a group of Hamid's Mahabad friends were arrested by the SAVAK.

People were shouting 'Down with this regime!' when suddenly soldiers in tanks rolled out of the military barracks straight toward us and began to shoot.

Ahmad pleaded with him, “Please, you’re in a very sensitive position. Never contact these people or speak about them. The government has ears everywhere. They are in prison and we don’t even know where they are now.”

In this way, Hamid saw life changing all around him. Khomeini’s photo began appearing and the behavior of his own military friends began to shift as well. “The high-ranking Muslims who before were never seen praying, now would very calmly begin to do so. Overnight, they were more religious and went to mosques. Partly, people changed because they were afraid. They knew the truth because they were in the system. For myself, I was neither particularly aware nor interested. I was a foreigner there and just wanted to see what was going to happen.

“Though events were life-altering, my mind was not focused upon these changes. I was simply observing whether the coming change would be good for us. In my mind, I was one-pointed. I wanted to get permission to be able to leave and pursue my education elsewhere. I was completely focused on this as I doggedly pursued my English studies and moved inexorably toward leaving my country.”

All the young boys who had once played together on the Mahabad basketball team were now serving in the military. They lived in their own apartments and would often spend the weekends together.



With friends in Kermanshah, in Kurdish dress

When the demonstrations ramped up in Kermanshah, Hamid would watch from the sidelines. He and the other soldiers were not permitted to go out on the weekend. As a military man, he was not fearful, because he never wore a uniform. But he didn't really know how to act appropriately either. His friends had to wear their uniforms and lived fearing attack if they were even spotted in the streets. Because Hamid was an engineer, he wore plain clothes and could stand outside witnessing the demonstrations. Once he even walked out in his Kurdish clothes.

Before he had left the military, Hamid returned to Mahabad with his friends. For Hamid, the possibility of danger was not a concern but that was not true for his friends. Danger was around every turn, yet he was somehow exempted from much of it. He tempted fate by even wearing Kurdish clothes at a time when that was foolhardy. One time he went to the military and they asked, "Why are you dressed in those clothes?" "These are Kurdish," he retorted. "What is wrong with that?"

1978: The Revolution Begins

There was unbearable tension throughout the streets of Tehran. At the end of October 1978, news that Mostafa, Khomeini's eldest son, had suddenly and mysteriously died in Iraq began circulating within the country. From his Iraqi exile, Khomeini continued to oppose the Shah fiercely and people blamed the SAVAK for the young man's sudden death. Seething rage against the monarchy, barely contained, was echoed literally in ceremonies of mourning, and in no time, protesters began to fill the streets.

At the beginning of October, Khomeini was expelled from Iraq and found refuge in France, where he settled in the outskirts of Paris, in Neauphle-le-Château. With access to international media, telephones, and an audio recording studio, the Ayatollah launched his message globally. His daily interviews and attacks against the Shah were dispatched to Tehran, rousing millions of his countrymen to revolt.

Masterfully manipulating the Western media, Khomeini presented himself as a moderate man who wanted to end the Shah's "tyranny and corruption." He gave assurance that with

Danger was around every turn, yet he was somehow exempted from much of it. He tempted fate by even wearing Kurdish clothes at a time when that was foolhardy.

him, Iran would be free and there would be equality and rights for all, even for women. He deceived Iranians and foreigners alike, telling them what they wanted to hear.

Meanwhile massive protests in Iran turned into widespread riots with police fighting against protestors and religious fanatics attacking and, as widely reported, “setting afire foreign banks, luxury hotels, liquor stores,” cinemas, and other symbols of Western presence and influence.

Ayatollah Khomeini was fast becoming a symbol of deliverance for the masses. His followers used a messianic language to speak of him and hinted that he was the one foretold in a Shi’ite prophecy of the eighth century: “A man will come out of Qom and he will summon the believers to the right path.”

By November of that year, a rumor began to spread like wildfire. Believers had seen Khomeini’s face on the moon and millions confirmed the miracle. The savior had returned to break the imperial chains. He had become the leader of the rebellion against the Shah and his demonic allies.

With fury and passion, discontent spiraled in response to his call. Street violence, riots, general strikes, attacks against American and British embassies and Western interests wobbled the Peacock Throne. The Shah was incapable of controlling this revolt. Soldiers refused to fire upon their countrymen, heeding Khomeini’s call to desert the military. “Leave in small numbers, singly or in twos and threes,” he urged. “You are soldiers of God. Take your weapons with you, for they are God’s weapons.”

Hamid and six of his friends from Mahabad heard Khomeini’s call and decided it was wise to leave the army. They were no longer in control and it was becoming increasingly dangerous to be seen in a military uniform. One cold morning in November, Hamid and his friends abandoned the military to return to Mahabad.

Hamid Meets Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou

Meanwhile Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou had returned to Mahabad. He was the secretary-general of the small nationalist Kurdish party, the PDKI. Upon his return, Ghassemlou was still unknown in his own country. He had been in exile abroad for twenty-one long years.

The party had been debilitated, with many of its members in exile or in the Shah’s prisons. Many had been executed throughout the years. Ghassemlou and his colleagues began to covertly organize the party. They had to be prepared for the change of regime they were sure was about to happen.

The PDKI had set-up an office next to the Mahmoudis’ house. One night someone knocked on the door. Hamid answered and to his surprise, there stood Ghani Bulurian, a former member of the Tudeh and a well-known PDKI leader who had spent twenty-seven years in the Shah’s dungeons, and Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the charismatic rising star of the party. They had no electricity and had come to ask for help.

Hamid was in Mahabad. Everyone was fearful, but in Mahabad the atmosphere was very normal. Though there were demonstrations, Hamid never went because his older brother told him not to. “There were demonstrations everywhere. My brother was very worried about me. I told him I was looking at what was happening with the people. We were in Mahabad most of the time, though I did visit my brother in Tehran because his head office was there.”

It was very tense everywhere. Khomeini’s influence had taken hold; people were glued to the radio and listened at all hours of the day and night. Finally, the high-ranking military made a public statement. They were very kind and calm as they spoke to media coverage.

By December 1978, however, the turmoil in Tehran had worsened. Even at the student dorm, Hamid had to be careful. One day, during the Ashura celebrations, his friend Yusef, who was also studying in Tehran, accompanied him to the student house. Yusef glanced with surprise at his friend, who was wearing a red shirt and pants: “You shouldn’t wear that color. There are religious students, including inflamed Mujahedin, who are all very religious. Don’t speak about Kurdish affairs here . . . or wear red clothes,” he warned.

In the Shi’a tradition Ashura is considered a day of remembrance in which the devoted mourn the martyrdom of the Prophet’s grandson, Hussein ibn Ali, in the Battle of Karbala. This tragic event is celebrated with grief and sorrow by millions of Shi’ites, but not by Sunnis. Out of respect, people are expected to wear black.

That December of 1978 the celebration of Ashura turned into one immense political demonstration across the country. In Tehran, almost two million people, led by religious leaders, filled the streets for eight hours. The crowd acclaimed Khomeini as their leader and demanded the end of the monarchy.

The Shah Is Overthrown and Khomeini Returns Triumphant

On January 16, 1979, after months of violent protests, fifty-nine-year-old Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and his wife Farah fled Iran for Egypt. As the light blue Boeing lifted off from Mehrabad International Airport, Radio Tehran announced, *Shah raft! Shah raft!* The Shah has gone! “*Allahu Akbar*, the Shah has gone! God is great!” resounded from every corner of the country.

People were also celebrating in Mahabad. They met in cafés to discuss the tremendous events that were now moving the country. Every night there was another demonstration where people shouted “Shah Raft! The Shah is gone!”

Hamid was very happy and spent days in the streets. “I understood there were big changes but didn’t completely understand what impact they would have in Kurdistan. At the time I went often to Tehran, but in the city, I was always in the streets. I worked with my brother there in his main office and went to different activities at night. After the Shah left, I was often in Tehran. I remember seeing it everywhere on the TV.”

Young people like Hamid who were not interested in politics or religion did not necessarily even know who the Ayatollah was. They had heard of him on and off, but that was it. “For us it was very strange. People in Mahabad didn’t even recognize Khomeini.”

Nevertheless, the days that followed were euphoric. Iranians had overthrown a mighty emperor and his satanic American ally. Now they waited impatiently for the return of their savior, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

On the first of February, hundreds of thousands of ardent supporters awaited the arrival of the self-proclaimed “servant of the people.” “The soul of Hussein is coming back!” “The doors of Paradise have been opened again!” “Now is the hour of martyrdom!” resounded through the airport when Khomeini stepped off the Air France flight that had brought him back to his homeland.

Khomeini Arrives

When the pious Ayatollah stepped out on the tarmac, he knelt to kiss the land he had left more than fourteen years before. After speaking briefly to the crowd inside the terminal, he was taken in an SUV toward Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery, in southern Tehran. Thousands stood along the route to welcome the Ayatollah.

Once he reached the cemetery where those who had perished throughout the previous year in demonstrations were laid to rest—so great were the crowds that in the end, the Ayatollah had to be flown there by helicopter—Khomeini, gesturing at the masses of graves, roared that the government of the Shah “had developed the cemeteries well, instead of developing the nation.” Ironically, in the decades to follow, the political system he created would lead to the deaths of ten times the number that lay in the graves before him on that day. The revolution had arrived, and with its entrance into Iran, the moment for moderation had disappeared into the swirling currents of time.

Hamid and his friends would meet at a Mahabad teahouse and discuss the unfolding revolution and the demonstrations taking place. By the time he returned to the capital in January to study at the Tehran Technical University, Hamid was politically active. Every night there was a speech. The night before a series of massive demonstrations, Hamid was at the Technical University. One night a Democrat would be speaking on Eisenhower Street, the next a Tudeh, the next someone from Feda’iyan, the Organization of the Iranian People’s Guerrillas. Hamid was learning much from these speeches and it was exciting for him. Every night thousands of people sat on the ground, listening in rapt attention to the speeches. The Kurds living in Tehran were exposed to every kind of organization.

Within a week of February 8, 1979, marking the return of Khomeini’s return to Iran, all over the country, in towns large and small, millions of Iranians were demonstrating even in Tehran to support the Ayatollah’s new government with Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister. For just a few days that February, there were even two prime ministers in charge—Shapour Bakhtiar, appointed by the Shah, and Bazargan, appointed by Khomeini. Bakhtiar proved to be a puppet of sorts, yet his

government stayed in place for the sake of appearances and in an attempt at stability. The army was dissolving, and various units banded with the demonstrators. Khomeini thanked the entire country for supporting the interim government as his country literally burned. “The armed forces must return to the people,” he proclaimed, “just as many people and many groups have returned, and we have welcomed them with open arms.”

Meanwhile violence raged between the remains of the Shah’s army and groups of armed military. The army was literally disappearing, the process punctuated in outlying provinces by terrible violence between those demonstrating and what was left of the army. All this reached Kurdistan as early as February 1 when the valorous Kurds seized munitions and supplies from one army garrison near the city of Sardasht. Leftist extremists led the charge by occupying public buildings, freeing scores of political prisoners, and moving in on numerous military bases. On February 11, after confrontations caused the death of 229 and the wounding of more than 800 more, the armed forces decided to support the revolution. At 2:00 p.m. the radio crackled, and a very emotional voice was heard throughout the country: “*In sedaaye enghelaab-e mardom-e Iran ast—*’ This is the voice of the Revolution of the Iranian people.’ [The announcer] repeated the line, almost in tears. The Revolution had toppled the monarchy.”²⁴ On the eve of the revolution, the Kurds constituted an estimated 17 percent of Iran’s population and occupied 7 percent of the national territory. They began to be a problem to the new regime about the time that Khomeini reinstalled himself in Qom.

Leftists Groups in Tehran

In Tehran, Hamid met Sadiq Kamangar, one of the founders of the Marxist-Leninist group Komala and a member of its central committee, who spoke about Kurdistan. Every night two thousand to three thousand people attended the political discourses there. In Tehran, various leftists and radical student groups, dressed in military uniforms taken from the garrisons, ran amok fighting each other for control of the streets.

Hamid witnessed it all. “The Mujahedin, an Islamic Marxist group, occupied a big building at the front with weapons

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positioned. Each single government department had their own building. Everyone had their own version of what the government was and should be. It was utterly chaotic. Each group had their own army, making it dangerous be out in the streets.”

Takeover of the Mahabad Garrison: February 1979

Hamid vividly remembers that day. “I was in Mahabad when they attacked the garrison on February 19, 1979. This I remember very, very clearly. My brother said, ‘You should not go out. You should not go out.’ My close friends went home where they had weapons and came back with guns. They asked me to join them, but I didn’t.

“That day my cousin Osman died at the garrison takeover. He went to attack the military and they killed him. Many people died. It was not easy. We heard the news and Ahmad, my brother, was worried. Later, Osman’s brother, Suleiman Nazdari, became one of the major peshmerga for the Democrats. It was only last year that I found out where his grave was.”

Hamid also had two young uncles in Mahabad who were active in the garrison takeover. “Of my family, the only people who did not go were Ahmad, myself, and Aco, who was very young. My brother wanted to protect me.

“I wanted to go because my best friend was there. Someone told me they carried a gun to protect themselves, but I had never touched a weapon, Ahmad didn’t allow it.” For his own protection, Ahmad carried a gun in his car when he traveled alone the long distance between Baneh and Mahabad.

One hundred and thirty-eight Kurdish officers and fighting men took over control of the Mahabad garrison. The Persian and Azeri soldiers who were stationed at the base were also against the Shah and wanted to leave. They sought to join Khomeini’s forces in Tehran. Mahabad, which had been in the hands of soldiers from other parts of Iran, was suddenly in the hands of the Kurds. The military personnel were now the Kurdish people.

When his cousin died in the garrison attack in February, the reality and consequences of the growing conflict became even more real to Hamid.

Mahabad in the Hands of the Kurds

Mahabad was a liberated city; there the Kurds lived in a state of freedom they had not experienced since the Mahabad Republic. Public order in the town was preserved by many political organizations, each with their own contingent of armed men. “It was very strange because even though people walked around with guns in the street, life went on all the same. People were simply working as usual. Mahabad was completely in the hands of the Kurds.”

To all of this, Hamid was a witness. “The Democrats, who were also armed, arrested some SAVAK members, after the garrison takeover in Mahabad. Khoda Parast [his name means ‘Pray God’] was in charge of SAVAK in Mahabad. He was responsible for detaining intellectuals who had engaged in politics. Parast knew people. One day, twenty people disappeared. The PDKI arrested and tried him publicly on the court where I used to play basketball. Parast was condemned and executed. I was very against that. I felt people should not be killed.”

The city celebrated its democracy. Revolution had opened the doors to popular demonstrations. In the city of Mahabad, many different political parties came to establish their headquarters. There were Kurds and Persians as well. Komala and the Feda’iyan had a large presence and were making themselves felt in the streets.

For Hamid, there were encounters with members of the Feda’iyan, Komala, and the PDKI. The relations between all these parties and their members took violent turns from time to time. “At the same time, I saw some very well-educated people. There was a man from Austria and he started a new party. He spoke about Trotsky, but he was suddenly killed because he spoke very negatively about the Democrat Party [PDKI], saying they were bourgeois. No one knew who the killer was.”

Ghassemlou Speaks Publicly for the First Time

On March 2, 1979, Hamid and his friends attended Ghassemlou’s first political rally at Chwar Chira square. Thousands had come to listen. This was the PDKI’s first political demonstration and the party members arrived early, standing behind the podium where Ghassemlou would speak. Even though Hamid had met Ghassemlou, he was excited to be there. The anticipation from the crowd was palpable.

It was a crisp and cool morning. The sky was blue and clear. Ghassemlou walked in with his usual wide and captivating smile as he waved to the cheering crowd. He was wearing a white and black turban that showed his graying hair. Over his khaki peshmerga uniform, he wore a *peste*, a gray sheep’s-wool vest. As he stood in front of the microphones the crowd became silent, expectant.

“Maintaining democratic freedoms, ensuring a true democratic regime across the country, is a guarantee to advance the revolution and to gain permissible rights for our people,” Ghassemlou began. “Without a true democratic regime, Kurdish rights won’t be ensured completely, and without ensuring Kurdish national rights a democratic regime won’t last forever. Kurdish people, like other



Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, secretary-general of PDKI, at his speech in Mahabad, March 1979

Iranian ethnics, have the right to be assured officially that the nationwide oppression of the Shah's grim legacy will be eliminated.

"Kurdish representatives should participate in the Constituent Assembly and in drafting a new constitution for Iran to make sure the Iranian nationalities and the Kurdish people's just rights are to be included in the law. Accusing Kurdish people of separatism is an old song. While we consider this accusation as a conspiracy by enemies of the revolution and totally reject it, we declare that there is no separatist political party throughout Iranian Kurdistan. People are generally demanding their national rights within Iran."⁵

Hamid listened with full attention and a growing sense of pride. "He said the Kurds had just received news from the Soviets that our old friends would help us to establish our freedom. Ghassemlou was very clear. This was the strongest commitment he mentioned, and people applauded when he said this. He was such a charismatic speaker. The Kurds stopped him wherever he went and people applauded. I remember many people were protecting him from behind. That was a very exciting, very exciting day."

In April, Hamid and his friends were informed that since they had heeded Khomeini's call and deserted the Shah's army, the Imam had accepted them as revolutionaries. They were considered heroes, so they could come and obtain their certificate of completion for their military service.

Hamid's Growing Interest in Komala

Politically, Hamid was most interested in Komala because of the influence of Jafar Hassanpour, his favorite teacher from school. One day his teacher had just disappeared. It turned out he had been in prison and suddenly, when he came back, he'd become Komala. He was a very simple man who was always aligned with the workers in his country, and Hamid visited him often. This single man made a huge impact upon his life. Though always working, he took the time to be with the young students, to teach them. His influence was profound.

Komala's office in Mahabad was located one block from Hamid's family's house. Hamid often used to visit Hassanpour, feeling he was progressive at the time. It was inspiring for him to speak about the poor people's plight and Komala's agenda for them. Suddenly Hamid became Komala—even though all his family was Democrat. “When I came back to Mahabad, I was the odd man out politically. All my friends were Democrat. I had sympathy for the political parties now and established myself as an activist. My brother was worried about this all the time. He told me I should not be so involved.”

Vote for the Assembly of Experts, August 1979

A few weeks later, March 30–31, Khomeini's government called for a referendum for the establishment of an Islamic republic. The day prior to the vote, the Kurds announced they would not participate since the question on the ballot only allowed the vote for an Islamic republic: “Are you in favor of replacing the monarchy with an Islamic republic whose constitution will be approved? Yes or no.” The Islamic Republic was voted in by a majority of the country. Khomeini proclaimed the Islamic Republic of Iran the following day as the “first government of God.”⁶

In Kurdistan, very few voted, including Hamid. Nor would he vote on August 3 for the election of the Assembly of Experts whose mission was to draft a new constitution for the Islamic Republic. “I was not interested in this and I was in Tehran,” he stated later on.

Ahmad told him afterward that Ghassemlou, candidate for the city of Urmia, had won in a landslide; everyone in Mahabad had voted for him. Of the seventy-three candidates elected, there were only two secularists, and Ghassemlou was one of them. Everyone was hopeful that democracy and the rights of minorities would be included in the new constitution.

Political Books Available in the Streets

During this time, people were thirsty for all kinds of literature throughout Tehran, and the booksellers answered the call. You could see all kinds of periodicals being sold in the streets. They were selling political books, translated from all kinds of languages to Persian. There were also many journals and they were all politically based. For Hamid, this was an exhilarating time. “Mahabad

After violent combats with the Iranian army, one thousand armed peshmerga, Kurdish fighters, retook control of the city of Paveh. There were thousands of casualties.

was more Kurdish. I could read some words in the Kurdish language and that was exciting. It was a very new world for me.”

Meeting Sadegh Waziri

Hamid, dressed in Western clothes, attended a demonstration in front of Tehran University. It was there he met Saram Sadegh Vaziri for the first time. Vaziri would later become the leader of the Iranian Kurdish Committee which would develop a request with twenty-six points from all opposition political parties for the Islamic government regarding the future of Kurdistan.

He was a well-respected and articulate lawyer, the chairman of the Society of Iranian Lawyers, so he was a very powerful person. In Tehran, he spoke at the Kurdish Association, which held meetings at the university. Vaziri was to become Hamid’s primary mentor, influencing his life direction in many ways, providing guidance through his student days, through his educational choices and work-related choices, even to the present day.

Khomeini Becomes Commander-in-Chief

By mid-August in Kurdistan the feeling of optimism and of the new possibility that democracy and freedom might bring to Iran was fast disappearing. Khomeini demanded that the new Assembly give no attention to those who demanded a democratic republic. When he decreed that the new constitution would be Islamic, the hopes of millions were dashed with his words.

The region grew inflamed. After violent combats with the Iranian army, one thousand armed peshmerga, Kurdish fighters, retook control of the city of Paveh. There were thousands of casualties.

On August 17, an enraged Khomeini announced himself as commander-in-chief by declaring a holy war against those he termed Kurdish conspirators and *kofars* (infidels). He promised to exact punishment on the rebels.

On August 19, the Ayatollah appeared in Tehran to inaugurate the group newly convened known as the Assembly of Experts. The whole country was witness to this event via Iranian TV. In an impassioned voice full of rage, Khomeini addressed his country

seething with condemnation: “The Kurdistan Democratic Party is a subversive group, a corrupt group. We cannot allow them to continue to act as they wish. They accuse us of committing actions like those actions they did yesterday and a few days ago,” he raged, referring to events in Paveh. “They create such anarchy, and they blame others,” Khomeini rattled on. “They are subversives, saboteurs. . . . They are just a handful of traitors and hypocrites.”

With a gesture of his outstretched arm, he iterated words that condemned two men in particular: “And Ezzedin and Ghassemlou—who is not here among you—are corrupt.” Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, a popular Sunni cleric of Iranian Kurdistan, and Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, a secular democratic socialist, were now both condemned. With this action, the Ayatollah cursed them as *mofsed f’ il arz*, corrupters of the earth, an offense that was punishable by death.

Dangerous Trip Back to Mahabad

Hamid finished his studies and received his English diploma at the American Society School with high grades in August 1979. His brother Ahmad was beaming with pride at his accomplishments. Now Ahmad was certain his brother had an impressive future. Ahmad took on the mission as his personal responsibility to ensure his brother would complete his higher education abroad.

Monday, August 20, was a disastrous day for their people. The Ayatollah had declared a holy jihad on the Kurds. He had spoken, and his word was that of God. They, the Iranian people, would follow his command. The bazaar closed, and thousands took to the streets in support of Khomeini. Many young people followed the funeral homage of the men who had died in Paveh shouting, “Death to Ghassemlou! Execute Sheikh Ezzedin!” For Kurds, young and old, exposure on the street had become a death sentence.

That day Hamid happened to be in Tehran studying English in preparation for his trip abroad. He’d rented a room, right in front of the university, at a Persian family’s home. Unaware of the situation out on the streets, Hamid and his friends decided to take a stroll in the afternoon.

Past the university, they came upon a huge, seething demonstration. “When I saw slogans against Ezzedin Hosseini and Ghassemlou, we [Hamid and his friends] decided we must leave immediately. I was afraid. If those people knew we were Kurdish, they would have arrested us or done worse. We decided to contact other friends and Kurds from Mahabad who lived in Tehran and warned them of the situation. Our friends told us we had to leave immediately.

“I returned to my room, collected my belongings, and walked briskly to the station at Nasser Khosrow Plaza to catch the first TBT bus to Mahabad. The bus station was buzzing with people and friends from Mahabad. Everyone wanted to leave. No one felt safe. Terror reigned in the streets as crowds of scruffy *mostazafin*, the disinherited, zealously united around the Mullah’s call and passionate students reveled in the words of the clerics.

“That was my strongest memory from that time, because it involved life and death. For the first

time, I was afraid to be wearing Kurdish clothes.” During the revolution, that choice had been respected. But now, Hamid determined it was safer to wear Western clothes that summer, especially when he was not in Kurdistan.

“Those buses ran every day and it took us twelve hours to get back to Mahabad, nine hundred kilometers from the capital. We knew that many people had died in the armed confrontation between Kurds and the regime’s forces. We did not know if the roads were safe but nonetheless the drivers, who were from Mahabad, decided we, the twenty passengers, would leave no matter what, because Tehran was very dangerous. We all knew both drivers. One Kadir *Rash*, or Black Kadir, was always very tan or dark from the sun; the other was the son of Derwish Majid, owner of a famous kebab restaurant in Mahabad and member of the Abdullahi family, who owned the TBT bus company.

“Though it was very dangerous to travel that night we continued without stopping in any city. When we arrived early morning at Miandoab in West Azerbaijan Province, bordering Kurdistan, just fifty kilometers from Mahabad, we found out that the road was closed. Soldiers told us we could not pass because there was a raging war between Kurdish peshmerga and Khomeini’s *pasdaran*, the loyal military force he’d created, and many people had already been killed. We knew that Mahabad was still in the hands of the peshmerga, so our drivers decided to take another road east of Miandoab. He said we could go through Bokan and Saholan, which was twenty kilometers from Mahabad.

“Around noon we arrived at a mountaintop and to our great surprise we found ourselves right at the battlefield. We could see the government forces on the right side and on the left, just five kilometers from where we were, the peshmerga artillery was firing. We sat there staring in shock—we were in the middle of a battle. Suddenly one side fired and the bus shook violently as a mortar exploded about fifteen meters from us. We were all very scared but in my nervousness, I began to laugh, while the driver cried. In the midst of tears and laughter someone said, ‘That bomb came from the peshmerga—that is why it did not hit us!’

“Mr. Abdullahi reacted and told us we had to drive to the main road because the peshmerga could mistakenly think we were part of a government contingent on the way to support the *pasdaran*, the fanatic military of the regime, and would fire upon us again. We decided it was best to go back to the main road and tell the military that we were just a passenger bus. Later on, I was informed by sergeant Hamid Gawhary, who was in charge of that front, that the peshmerga were there to prevent the government forces from entering Mahabad. They had seen the bus and knew it was a Kurdish passenger bus.

“As we drove along the main road we saw cars with one man dead and other wounded soldiers coming back from the fighting. There was a lot of blood. We all just sat there staring until the *pasdar* came. They arrested and began to interrogate us. We told them that we all lived in Tehran and were going back [to Mahabad] to visit. The driver explained that he had decided to take this route to avoid the fighting. Those who were wearing Kurdish clothes were taken to one side and beaten. I was wearing Western clothes and I explained that I was visiting family before I left the

country. They left me alone. Suddenly one of the passengers, Ali Showrang, ran toward the woods. The pasdar began to shoot but he managed to escape. By now I was very scared, I thought they would kill us all.

“I saw many cars going toward Mahabad and in one I recognized an Azeri man, a butcher, who had lived in Mahabad for many years. And here he was now helping the pasdar against the Kurds! During the revolution, some Azeris were loyal to the Kurds but the majority are Shi’ite and they collaborated with the regime; they spied and helped identify Kurdish revolutionaries.

“After a few hours, they decided to take us thirty kilometers back to Miandoab as prisoners of war, even though we had nothing to do with it. It took several hours to get there. We feared they would take revenge on us. Once in Miandoab they led us in a line, one by one, through the bazaar showing us to the residents, toward the main mosque. The mosque’s ayatollah recognized Mr. Abdullahi; he also knew Darwish Majid. After he heard our explanation and that we had been arrested without a reason, he kindly told the pasdar that we were his guests and we were freed. This was a great relief but we were still worried, seeing all the wounded pasdar arriving. The situation was serious.

“All the war prisoners were kept in the mosque square, by the water fountain, without getting any food all day. We asked that the ayatollah give us a letter saying that we were free so we could use it for our safety.

“In the late afternoon, Mr. Abdullahi suggested we travel to Bokan, forty kilometers from where we were. His sister lived there and he was informed that the regime forces had occupied it, but since it was a Kurdish city we thought we would be safer there.

“We arrived at Bokan. The city streets were deserted. Government forces controlled the empty streets. Peshmerga had retreated to protect the residents. Mr. Abdullahi and his sister found accommodation for all fifteen passengers at different homes where we were fed and slept. The following morning, we picked up the passengers. Some were missing—they had been arrested. We would later find out that some had been picked up and executed by the pasdar.

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“With the ayatollah’s letter, we would drive through Miandoab toward Mahabad. Before we left we were informed that Mahabad had been occupied by the pasdaran and the peshmerga had abandoned the city to protect it and its inhabitants. We traveled slowly and were stopped every five kilometers; we showed the letter and explained our situation at each stop until we arrived at the same place we had been arrested the day before. There was much damage, burnt military vehicles and blood everywhere. It turned out we were the first passenger bus to be allowed to pass right after the conflict.

“As we got closer to our destination the brunt of the war was very present, with damaged military equipment and blood staining the asphalt streets. We were met with military checkpoints set up every twenty meters, but there were no people around and no cars. We drove into the empty TBT bus terminal. A few people came out to meet us—the news had broadcast that passengers in a bus had been arrested and executed by the pasdar.

“I left the terminal and walked a few hundred meters to my brother’s house. When they opened and saw me, alive, all of them began to cry. They thought I had been killed. My father came over and stayed with us for two days. During the day pasdaran were arresting young people and during the night we could hear the throes of war. We stayed inside the house for two full days.

“On the second day Ahmad drove me back to Tehran, where I kept low for another few days while my brother took care of the details for my trip to Rome. It was September 1979.”

The Ayatollah vs. the Kurds

There were three main reasons why Ayatollah Khomeini did not trust the Kurds. First, the Kurds demanded democracy, and Khomeini rejected this political stance as a Western model; secondly, the Kurds wanted autonomy, and the cleric did not accept the rights for nationalities, but only the unity of the Islamic community as a whole; thirdly, the majority of Kurds were Sunni, and the Ayatollah was imposing a Shi’ite-led regime. Khomeini knew the Kurds would defend their rights to the death, and they were armed.

From that day on when Khomeini had declared jihad, the Islamic regime launched its holy war against all the Kurds. This bloodbath went on for more than a decade. Kurdistan suffered an angry and violent onslaught as the air force and heavy artillery bombarded the region. The regime’s forces took control, and summary trials and executions bloodied the streets of many Kurdish villages and cities.

Mahabad Is Militarized

Aco was present that summer of 1979 in Mahabad. “Every night we were out in the streets. It was very hot during the day, so we would wait until the evening to go out. One day formations of airplanes came, breaking the sound barrier and alarming the people. After a while, they started firing randomly around the mountains of Mahabad for an entire day. The next morning when

we woke up, everything was closed, empty. We all wondered, ‘What happened?’ All the peshmerga had moved out to protect the area so the government forces couldn’t move into the city. But the government military were many more in number and much more powerful than the local forces.

“I was outside and saw everything. The skirmish didn’t last that long; around three in the afternoon, the Iranian soldiers drew closer to the city. They came with fire cover from helicopters and began randomly shooting everywhere. The Kurdish soldiers retreated, seeing that the Iranian soldiers were on a mission to take over the garrisons. When they started to enter the city, families could no longer go outside, so we remained indoors.

After a while, the grenades began and the military bombed our houses. There were mortars; even our home took a hit. Finally, by evening, the peshmerga pushed back and could do nothing more.

“Every day they [the peshmerga] used to go out of the city—shooting in the night. I was there with my sister and father, because my older brother had his own home. My father was scared for me because when the Iranian soldiers saw young men, they automatically detained them. Sometimes my father wouldn’t let me out at all. The Persians went around and looked at all the young boys, to see if they were suspicious. After the peshmerga attacked, the Persians searched every house. If they felt people were suspicious, the boys would be seized. They announced that if you had a son over eighteen, he would be taken. I was sixteen or seventeen and one night, they knocked on our door.

Luckily, I wasn’t at home; but they still searched the house and warned my father, ‘Your son is sleeping here. Where is he?’ I had gone to help another family member. My father lied, ‘No, he’s not at home. We prepared this bed for him, but he has not shown up. We have no idea where he is.’

“I don’t really remember the year,” continues Aco, “but one winter there was a lot of snow and the war continued that whole year. It was nineteen eighty-one or eighty-two. The winters in Mahabad are not like in Sweden. They usually take away the snow, so I used to go to Ahmad’s with my sister’s husband, Rahman, to remove the snow from the roof.

“When the soldiers came back, there was a bridge, and on it

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they could see from the mountains. Those men were randomly shooting people who were simply walking on the bridge because they had to cross it to return home.

"We saw that they shot and killed a dog as well. With the carnage of that night, we stayed where we were all day, until nightfall. Finally, it began to get dark. There were some peshmerga who just wanted to cross. As soon as they were in the middle of that bridge, the soldiers gunned them down. One managed to cross to the other side and two went back. The one who crossed was teasing the others who had retreated.

"The Kurdish peshmerga took off their turbans. As soon as the last one started moving, the shots began so he jumped in the waste alongside to escape. I knew two of the Kurdish soldiers; both are dead now. This night was something I will never erase from my memory."

A Persian Friend in Tabriz

"I was in Tehran for a few days." Hamid took up the story. "I didn't go to a hotel because a friend of Ahmad's and mine, Mohammad Shahrabi, a Persian engineer in Tehran, let me stay with him. I had met him in Tabriz during the summers. We often spoke about politics when visiting one another in Tehran. Mohammad belonged to the Tudeh Party and was politically empathetic, so he let me stay in his home. Sadegh, his brother, was also a good friend, and he was Feda'iyān.

"It was August 1979 and tension was excruciating among the Kurds in Tehran. His family kept me safe. They didn't even allow me to step outside before I left for the airport two weeks later.

"Ironically, both these boys said their father went to the mosque every night to plan military actions against the Kurds—and there I was, a Kurd, staying in their own home." The father was a staunch Islamist, aligned with Khomeini and Mohammad Ali Rajai, who would be president for a few days in August of 1981. Father and son opposed one another politically but in Iran, many families saw this kind of division. It was very common during those times.

One son was in prison and another son was Tudeh. Many families were divided in terms of politics, yet still remained living under one roof because culturally the family unit was so strong. Hamid's friend Mohammad worked with Ahmad, and Hamid learned a lot from him. In these Persian families in Tehran, their mothers were very kind and politically neutral.

Through Sadegh, Hamid came to know many Persians. They loved him because he was a Kurd, and leftist with an inclination to Komala. These were wealthy people, and at the time it was considered fashionable to be a Kurd and a member of a leftist party fighting for one's liberation and justice.

Hamid Leaves for Rome

It was challenging to go *anywhere* publicly as a Kurd at that time in Tehran. To reveal that you were Kurdish was to put yourself at serious risk. In Tehran, the shakedown on the Kurds was starting, and yet opposition was rampant everywhere. Many Tehran buildings belonged to Mujahedin, some to Feda'iyān, and others to various Kurdish parties on the left or right. It was challenging and perilous to even think about leaving Iran during this period. Fortunately, one of Ahmad's friends who lived close to Bazargan could secure a ticket out.

At that time, airline passengers were not required to produce a travel visa; one had only to go to the airport. Ahmad told Hamid he would send him to India, since the cost was lower. Mr. Shahrabi was going to organize his departure for India. But Hamid was clear about where he wanted to go; his dream had been to reach Europe. "When I asked Mr. Shahrabi about the preparations," says Ahmad with a slight smile, "he told me that my brother wanted to study architecture and that his destiny lay in Italy. He was very clear that it was the best place to study that subject. Even students from the U.S. went to Italy to study. I agreed but I couldn't afford it, so I had to sell my car for forty thousand toman to make the sixty thousand necessary for Hamid to fly there and commence his studies in Italy."

Because of the war, for two weeks, Ahmad could not come to the home where Hamid was being sheltered. When he finally came, Ahmad took care of the details for Hamid's trip. He boldly entered the market in Tehran to change money for his brother. He exchanged a large sum for dollars, enough for a whole year.

Tehran was active with demonstrations and political activities during the daytime, and in the evening Hamid and Ahmad would go out to eat. Afterward, the brothers would stay up until late discussing his future abroad.

The night before his departure, Hamid did not shut his eyes. On September 12, 1979, while Hamid finished packing his suitcase, Ahmad came quietly into his room and handed him a bulging envelope with \$3500—cash he would need to live on for the next twelve months. Ahmad also brought Hamid his airline ticket for Rome. Everything, all the details, was finally in readiness.

That night Hamid begged his friend Sadeq Shahrabi to leave with him. But his friend was adamant that Iran was living out a historic moment and as a member of a political organization he had to continue his activism. They said a fond goodbye, not knowing that only twelve years later in Germany would they meet again.

Ahmad and Sadeq accompanied Hamid to the Mehrabad International Airport by taxi early the next morning. As usual, congested traffic made the ride seem endless. The taxi finally came to a halt at the airport curb. When they entered the terminal, it suddenly dawned on Hamid that this was his first time flying. Gazing at the bustling activity of passengers traveling to and from faraway destinations, he realized he would soon be one of them.

Control in the airport was very strict. Bearded men observed the comings and goings with steely silence. Papers were reviewed over and over. Hamid worried he might not be allowed to leave.

Before Hamid passed into Customs, Ahmad hugged his brother with a mixture of pride, happiness, and real sadness. "He was my younger brother and I did not have anyone else near me like him," he would share later. Not only was Hamid his younger brother, but he was his closest sibling. They had spent years in very close contact. His younger brother was about to embark upon a journey that Ahmad had dreamt about and nurtured for countless years. It would be quite some time before they would see each other again.

Part 2

Europe Beckons: East Meets West

Since my early years, I was certain of one thing: I wanted to attend university, to discover the world that lay outside my country. This inspired me and I thought of nothing else.

My brother had opened my eyes and brought me to these ideas. This was his gift to me.

Alan Dilani

1. The Vicissitudes of a Traveling Student: September 1979 – July 1980

It was a warm and clear day when Hamid arrived at the Fiumicino airport in Rome on September 12, 1979. As the plane passed above the countryside, Hamid was astonished to see that every single square meter of land was cultivated. Once on the ground, he gazed at the open sky, taking in this day of freedom that had been so many years in the making.

Many Iranians fled the country in whatever way they could during those desperate times. Dr. Nasrallah Nouri, brother of Ahmad's colleague and a fellow cartographer, was to meet Hamid at the Perugia station. Ahmad had helped Dr. Nouri's third brother, a general of the Imperial army in Tehran, escape through Mahabad. A vast network of friends and family members collaborated to help their loved ones leave the despotic politics in Iran. In the process, an enormous wave of immigrants was born.

Hamid's singular determination had paved the way for his new life in Europe—that and the grace of his elder brother. What was important now was to begin anew, taking steps to actualize the future he had imagined for years. Hamid picked up his bags and headed toward the exit, searching the rows of buses to the Roma Termini Station.

There he ran into other Iranians with whom he would travel to Perugia. The train ride was two hours through rolling, verdant countryside set about with very old architecture which fascinated him. This was his first glimpse of Europe. He was headed to Perugia to study Italian at a well-known university that specialized in languages.

As his train approached the city, Hamid was reveling in the panorama before him. The city, intersected by the strong current of the Tiber River, spread out in soft green hilltops, dotted with walnut, white willow, and poplar trees. An array of cobbled alleys, historic *piazzi*, and arched stairways spread before his eager architectural sensibility. The past shook hands with the present day in this picturesque and centuries-old capital, filled with the joyful exuberance of its population.

At the station Hamid phoned Dr. Nouri, who had reserved a hostel for Hamid close to the city center. Hamid's cab took Corso Vannucci, one of the main avenues, often known as the Good Living of Perugia, and pulled up to Nouri's charming apartment in the old town. Nouri was a final-year medical student and his apartment, while well-appointed and in a very nice part of town, housed his entire family in small quarters, so Hamid went to stay in a hostel. Dr. Nouri pointed out the Università per Stranieri, "foreigners' university," known as the cultural and language school for students worldwide—and Hamid's first stepping-stone toward higher education in Europe.



In Perugia, 1979

The following day he met with his friend Walis, a Kurdish Catholic from Mahabad, who accompanied Hamid to the university. He was impressed by the intense population that circulated around the university—thousands of foreigners, many of them Iranian, but also Greek, Japanese, American, and others.

There he would meet members of the Kurdish community, including Fazel, with whom he would later share a room. His friend Kadir from Mahabad arrived soon after. The three would spend a lot of time together.

As he attended classes there during the months that followed, Hamid found many other Kurds: one was a boy named Kamal from Kirkuk, who told him about the Kurdish Students Association (AKSA). Another, Kamal Hilmi, had journeyed to Italy from Libya because it was not safe there, and he was a very active member with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK, the Kurdish party in Iraq led by Jalal Talabani). With his natural charm and his outgoing nature, Hamid quickly made many new friends.

Kurdish Politics, Italian-Style

Within a few days, Hamid left the hotel and moved to an apartment on Corso Garibaldi to live with these Kurdish students. That became the “embassy,” the center for all Kurdish activities. Anyone who moved to Italy came there. It was close to the university; there were literally thousands of Iranians in the area, a true diaspora. Because there was no need for visas, at least twenty thousand immigrants had come from Iran alone.

“I began studying Italian every day,” Hamid reminisced. “There were politicians at lunch giving news to thousands of students. I had landed in a political melting pot. All manner of party affiliations gathered under one roof, with meetings held each night; during the day, there was a different group—those who were demonstrating in support of Khomeini. It was they who aligned with Khomeini versus the Kurds.

“For almost one month, I was there with Kamal Waffa from Mahabad. At one point, I realized I had to find a room for myself with someone else. Kamal had suddenly become Tudeh and turned against us, so our friendship ended. Another friend, Kadir Kakili, who had studied engineering in Tabriz, came and decided to go into medicine in Italy. So did my friend Fazil. These were our changing times, and no one was left unaffected.”

A Lifelong Adopted Family

Soon after, Hamid found a room with a welcoming family with whom he stayed in touch for the rest of his life. “After one month, I went to Strada dei Cappuccini on the periphery of Perugia San Marco and found a downstairs room with a beautiful landscape view. My neighbors were a family who immediately took care of me.”

Franca Schioccola remembers that day like it was yesterday. “My father had constructed a big house with hard labor and much sacrifice about five kilometers from Perugia. One day he was fencing a large piece of terrain. I was helping him, when a young man who lived nearby passed by and said in tentative Italian, “Women should not do this, men should.

“He began to assist my father, who was very appreciative that someone he did not know would come offer to help him. So my father invited him to dinner. When he came in that evening, my Mamma, my sister Paola and I were very happy to have a man in the house because my Pappa had always wanted a son. From the beginning, Hamid became like a brother.”

Hamid and Pappa became close very quickly. Pappa understood what Hamid had lived through and escaped from, since he himself had lived through the war. He spoke to the young Kurd of his experiences. “Pappa shared that during World War Two, Nazis had interned him and other Italian partisans in a camp inside Kurdistan in Turkey. During that time, he survived because the Kurds fed him, so he told me gratefully, ‘You are my son.’ Thereafter every night, I joined them for dinner like a member of their family.

“Pappa died at eighty-seven in the same garden where I had met him. His wife is now ninety-four years old. They became my European family. At Christmas time, Papa gave a hundred thousand lire to each of his children and to me, also. One time I dared to say no, and he became angry.”

The relationship was so close-knit that Franca stills tears up when she shares that when her father died, she called Hamid, who by then was living Sweden. “It was three in the afternoon and the next day he showed up at the house at ten in the morning. I was very moved that he showed his love for us in that way. And as always, when we took him to the train station, Alan and all of my family would cry because he was leaving.”

The family’s two daughters, Paola and Franca, had fun with Hamid. They would drive around with him, take him to the lake, and visit with their friends. Paola was an accountant at a private clinic. Franca worked with Ellesse, a well-known fashion sports and styling apparel company established in 1959, and provided Hamid with the latest in designer clothing. He always wore the current fashion, yet no one knew how he managed to acquire such fancy outfits.

This memory still prompts a smile. “At the time, I had the best clothes at the university. The family was without a son, so I became *that* for them. Because every night they helped me learn the language, within three months I had mastered Italian.”

“I always dressed him,” shared Franca with a loving smile. “The company I worked for sponsored athletes like Bjorn Berg, Guillermo Vilas, and the Italian ski team. They had a sale for employees



With his new adopted family in Perugia



At home in Perugia

and I would invite Hamid to come as my brother. I would show him the clothes and ask if he liked them. He would say no, but I could see he really did like them, so I would ask him to try them on. Sometimes he would, and then I would buy them for him.”

Franca was dismayed when she at last came to know about his financial extremity. “He never told us he had so many money problems. He was leading a hard life and never told us. We weren’t rich, but we could have helped him financially. My father would give us money and give Hamid the same amount. We always asked, ‘Do you need money?’ but Hamid always said no, that his brother was sending him money from France. We knew he worked in a hotel and so on, but we never imagined his financial situation was so dire.”

To stretch the money Ahmad had given him, Hamid led an intensely frugal life. “At the time, I had put my money in the bank and was given a student card for the restaurant. My rent was a hundred and fifty dollars a month and my clothes were gifted to me by Franca. With all this in place, miraculously the money from my brother lasted almost one whole year. I became scrupulously careful about spending, since I wasn’t yet working. I spent only as much as I had and was in continual contact by letter with my brother about my finances.”



Kurdish cultural activities in Italy, 1979

AKSA

AKSA, the Association of Kurdish Student Abroad, was very active throughout the year, winter to summer. Politicians affiliated with this group were attending and speaking at demonstrations everywhere. There were political meetings every other night hosted by different parties, and well-known people came to speak.

While Hamid served on the central committee in AKSA, the association began publishing photos of the repression in Kurdistan. The photos from Sanandaj that depicted the public execution of political activists by firing squadrons or by hanging were very powerful.

This was during 1979, a very intense time for all Kurds. When Hamid was not delving into his new studies, he attended demonstrations on the weekends, working with the Kurdish minority in Italy.

“We went to different cities to meet with the Italian Communist Party. We sang Kurdish songs and wore Kurdish clothes. We were a nation reconstructing itself in a whole new country. With AKSA we put forward our Kurdish identity. Most important for me was the national identity and not the political one. So, my friends began to call me a nationalist.”

It was Iraqi Kurds with whom Hamid was spending most of his time. “The Iraqi Kurds were often there because at that time, this population had undergone a very injurious period under

Saddam Hussein. Years before in 1966, the government began an ‘Arabization’ program by relocating Arabs into northern oil-laden areas, most notably Kirkuk. This act was intentional on their part—as not coincidentally, Kurds and other persecuted minorities lived there. Brutal torching of hundreds of Kurdish villages took place, as well as thousands of deportations. In the end, nearly two hundred thousand Kurds were deported, against their will, to other areas in Iraq.”

A few years later in 1988 the Iraqi regime would launch the genocidal “Anfal Campaign” with chemical bombings of Kurdish villages in which thousands died. Well before that, decades of oppression had taken their toll. “Because of the intense trauma they had suffered, Iraqi Kurds like Kamal tended to band together in solidarity, spending all their time together, including attending classes in the school. There were a hundred Kurdish people in Florence and Perugia alone. But in our annual meeting, that number rose to two hundred. During those times, I spoke publicly and often about the Kurds.”

In Iranian Kurdistan, in the last months of 1979, thousands had died, and the regime’s forces carried on with their fierce offensive. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, who had become the preeminent leader of the Kurds in Iran, had begun to travel around Europe, establishing contacts and informing the media and political leaders of the Kurds’ plight in the newly established Islamic Republic. Ghassemlou visited Austria and then traveled to Rome, where Hamid and others rallied to his support in contacting the media. Some Kurds also came from France. Among them was Kendal Nezan, president of the newly established Kurdish Institute of Paris.

Hamid’s friends from AKSA introduced Ghassemlou to Mirella Galletti, an eminent specialist of Kurdish studies in Italy who worked tirelessly to make their perilous situation known to the world.

For the young Kurd and his friends, Ghassemlou’s work and contacts among European statesmen and intelligentsia was a source of pride. “Dr. Ghassemlou came just to meet journalists; but he did not speak there. It was in February to March 1980 that Dr. Ghassemlou first met with Enrico Berlinguer, national secretary of the Italian Communist Party, the most charismatic

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communist in Europe. Americans were wary of him because of the Soviet Communists, but Berlinguer was actually more like a Social Democrat.

“Dr. Ghassemlou met only with the Italian press at the time and with the Communist Party. Every newspaper he contacted met with him. But we were not able to meet with him due to his intense schedule. During that time, Dr. Ghassemlou was becoming a statesman of another caliber.”

Student Life in Perugia

Perugia’s cobbled alleys and grand piazzas were filled with university students who gathered in street cafés. The nightlife was active and enticing for a young man to spend time enjoying himself. But Hamid remained one-pointed about his purpose. He opted to simply observe the fresh new facets of Italian life, while still enjoying the beauty and culture of the city.

One morning soon after his arrival, as Hamid was walking down a street, he came across a childhood Kurdish friend who, like himself, was there to study Italian.

Because there was no regional ethnic dialect and Perugia was well-known for that distinction, this small Italian town had become a language hub for new arrivals, including scores of refugees, eager to acclimate to European culture. All the foreigners wanting to learn Italian were there; this included hundreds of Kurds. Perugia housed the only university—and a number-one school—that granted language certification valid for entry in an Italian university.

Hamid was well aware of the minuses as well as the plusses of the local scene. “But there was also rampant criminality, and many wealthy people were dealing heavily with drugs. I saw these kinds of people, but was careful to spend time only with Kurdish friends and Iranians politicians who supported the Kurds, remaining focused on my future. My goal was simple: to learn Italian and get enrolled in a university. By July 1980, I had finished my classes and done my entry exam, and then had to wait another month to see if I was accepted to continue my university education. During that time, my monetary situation deteriorated. My friend Fazel and I shared a room. We had next to nothing, so we ate homemade bread made of flour and oil. And when we could get away to the beach, we brought fruit from Franca’s garden.”

Hamid and his friends anxiously awaited their academic results. He continued living with the Schioccola family in Perugia, dining with them almost every night. They had *no* idea about Hamid’s perilous financial situation, as he had opted not to tell them. The family had been—and to this day continue to be—exceedingly kind to him.

Once he secured his language certificate, Hamid was required to return home to Iran and apply for a long-term, five-year student visa. The visa could only be given by an embassy outside Italy. “That was my goal in coming to Italy, a university education, and I was determined to do whatever was needed to make it happen. Then suddenly one day, I received the decision from the government that I was accepted at the university in Palermo. I was completely ecstatic.”



Professor Dr. Mirella Galletti, died on September 4, 2012

But soon Hamid was faced with a further, much more challenging obstacle. On September 22, 1980, the Iraqi Air Force attacked all Iranian airfields. On September 23, they launched a full-scale ground invasion in the northern, central, and southern border areas of the country. War between Iraq and Iran had begun in earnest and all outside communications were cut off.

Hamid had no way to let his family in Kurdistan know he needed to secure a student visa—his beloved family, now trapped in a country teetering on the verge of all-out war.

2. Return to the Past: Mahabad, Summer 1980

Journey Back Home

There was no way the war would deter Hamid from reaching his cherished goal. He had to return to Iran no matter what, and then get back to Italy. But it was not only the war with Iraq that posed a problem. Earlier that spring, the Iranian government had launched a fierce military campaign in Kurdistan in which countless villages and towns were destroyed. Khomeini had sent the bloody and cruel Ayatollah Khomeini, known as “the Hanging Judge,” to punish the Kurds. Thousands of men and women were executed after summary trials. Khomeini was hell-bent on controlling the region.

Faced with this intense political situation for the Kurds, Hamid needed to find a way to get to Iran. “My friend Fazel and I, we had no money and no contact with Mahabad, but we knew if we went by plane, we would be spotted, taken, and possibly imprisoned, so we decided to travel by train to Turkey and then pass through the border.” He embarked on his journey back home first by train via Trieste, Belgrade, Sofia, and Istanbul, and then by bus to Iran.

On September 12, 1980, Hamid gazed out the window as the train slowed, brakes squealing, and approached the majestic city of Istanbul. A stunning mosque atop a hill shone against the rising sun as he arrived at Istanbul’s Sirkeci Station, at the tip of the peninsula adjacent to the Golden Horn. And as it happened, that very day a military coup led by General Ahmet Kenan Evren had just taken place.

The country was under martial law; the parliament and the government had been abolished, the constitution suspended, and all political parties banned. And as Kurds defended their cultural rights in Turkey, the conflict between government forces and the increasingly militant left-wing PKK, the Kurdistan Worker’s Party, had escalated into violent clashes. The station was filled with military. Hamid and Fazel were worried. “Before I departed Perugia, a friend had told me to be careful not to show we were Kurds, and especially not to mention the name Apo (Abdullah Öcalan of the PKK) to anyone—since Apo was at the time, and still is, a Kurdish leader.” Hamid was understandably frightened by these developing circumstances in the countries through which they would be traveling.

Nervously, they asked how to get to the station and were guided to a bus. Prior to departing, he remembers that they ate some inexpensive food in the market and then promptly boarded the bus to continue our long journey.

From Istanbul, it was a three-day bus ride to reach the border. The bus took Hamid through central and southeastern Anatolia. Twenty hours into the trip, Hamid saw the green banks of the

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Persian."

Tigris River; rising in the background were the imposing black basalt walls encircling Diyarbakir, capital of Kurdistan. The bus made a short stop and then continued for six hours toward Van with its fertile oasis and the largest lake in Turkey; its deep blue salty waters lie amidst magnificent rocky and volcanic mountains. Then at last they were on to Bazargan at the Iranian-Turkish border.

Tenuous Border Crossing

The presence of soldiers around the border concerned Hamid and Fazel. Contemplating their fate, the young men grew increasingly anxious that they would not be allowed to pass. When they stopped at the Gürbulak Sınır Kapısı border, Hamid got out of the bus and looked around to see who was there. He immediately noticed a very tall man in the shadows. Hamid's heart began to race. He could not believe it. He knew this man: it was the brother of Tachaddin, a class friend from Mahabad. Hamid closed his eyes, thanking the lucky star that shone upon them.

This man turned out to be the border director. After greeting them, he led them to his office: "All the military people there were under him, so there was no problem and we felt greatly relieved." Firmly, the director warned the young Kurds, "Speak to me only in Persian."

Hamid had thought of traveling through Urmia to reach Mahabad. He had no idea what the situation in the region was like, but the director's warning had been enough to make him anxious. They had to be careful upon entering Iran; this was a new Iran in the hands of fanatical clerics with no qualms in killing Kurds. The situation was nerve-wracking. The director told them not to go through Urmia, but rather to go to Tabriz and try to contact their family so their family could come pick them up there.

Once again, Hamid and his friend found a bus at the Gürbulak border. "We went to Tabriz and I don't know how, but somehow we contacted my brother. My friend's father came to get him, and Ahmad came for me and drove me to Mahabad."

Brief Stopover in Tehran

The next few months, the Iraqi invasion forced the Iranian government to focus on pushing back the attack. This left the Kurdish people in control of their territory. In fact, in the territories they still controlled, it was possible for them to reestablish governance, create schools, and administer their people locally.

So when Hamid returned in September 1980, once again the city of Mahabad lay in the hands of the peshmerga. This was a time of hope and joy. Kurds were finally administrating their affairs. Different parties, Fedai'yan and Tudeh, lived and worked in peace. All of Hamid's friends had weapons, but he himself never even so much as touched one.

Though Hamid followed the political events in the country, his focus was one-pointedly on getting his visa. He mostly spent time with his family and longtime friends; then one day, he ran into Ismail Sharafati, a former athletics teacher. Hamid was wearing one of his Italian T-shirts and was surprised when Ismail asked him for it. Both the design and the look of his clothes stood out in the war-torn city. "When he saw my sports clothes," he said, 'Give me your Ellesse sports clothes for my shop.' Of course, I handed them to him right away."

In memories of that time, everyone was completely engrossed in political parties, with nightly meetings in the city. "It was no longer the quiet city of my childhood. In Mahabad I had heard that several people died for different reasons and nobody seemed to know why: 'Some *by mistake*,' I was told. It was an extremely strange, unsettling time."

Harbored in Tehran

After a week, Hamid traveled to Tehran to request his long-term visa student at the Italian embassy. He was supposed to stay only one week and then return to Mahabad to await his processed visa. He was told this would take two to three weeks.

"The day I left for Tehran, my father came to see me at the Mahabad bus station for only five minutes and then left. Little did I know this was to be the last time I'd see my dear father. For

so many years, he had cared for us all alone, with no wife. Despite the unexpected turn my life was taking, I continued to feel his support and concern for me in those last moments we spent together.

“In Tehran, I again stayed with the Shahrabi family. They took me to restaurants every night. I was safe there, since they lived close to the center of the city, which was a conflict-free zone. The middle- and high-class people lived there. Being a Kurd, all these politicians showed me sympathy because they knew we were in the minority. They watched out for me the two or three weeks I spent there. They even used their own contacts to arrange an airline ticket for me so I could exit the country officially.”

As always, Ahmad helped to make it all happen—bringing Hamid to the embassy, securing the visa, and withdrawing money to fund his younger brother’s education. The war with Iraq had begun and Ahmad feared his brother would not be able to leave again. “You must leave the country immediately,” he advised Hamid.

Even now, the memory of departure brings a sigh of regret. “This was to be the last time I would leave Iran. When I was finally boarding the plane with my passport and visa in hand, at the literal gateways to my new life, I knew I couldn’t go back to say goodbye to my father or anyone in Mahabad.”

Had Hamid known he would never return to Iran nor see his father again, he would have lingered in the moment of that margin of time that destiny allowed at the Mahabad bus depot before his escape to Europe.

3. Stepping Stones to the Future on the Path of Higher Education: Palermo, September 1980–July 1981

Hamid was eager to return to Italy. His mind kept envisaging scenes of what the future would hold for him. After spending two weeks in Perugia, in September 1980 he boarded an overnight train to Palermo, where he would begin his university classes, accompanied by a Kurdish friend, Ismail Kirkuki. Franca had connected them with Maurizio, a businessman who drove a red Ferrari. “I know many people in Palermo and they will take good care of you,” he said.

Maurizio had told them to call Dr. S. when they got there. They arrived in the morning at the Palermo Centrale. The station in Sicily was bustling and raucous when Hamid and his friend stepped into the street that warm, humid morning. They gazed up at the Piazza Giulio Cesare, with its green parterres, tall palm trees, and an equestrian statue of Vittorio Emanuele II, Padre della Patria, Father of the Country.

Hamid found a phone booth nearby and dialed the man who was to help him get settled. Dr. S. answered and asked where they were. “Look to your left. You see that building?” he inquired. “Yes,” Hamid responded. “That building is my office. Come directly to see me.”

A Dubious Introduction

The young men crossed the street, full of rushing, honking cars. Hamid looked up at the building, which was elegant and august. “When I rang the bell at his office, I announced myself. Ismail was accompanying me. Suddenly an enormous and heavy door opened before me. I went further and another door opened. We passed through four huge doors inside that building. The office had high ceilings and wood floors.

“We went into his office. It was luxurious, with a table, but notably it had no windows. His wife asked me to introduce myself. ‘I’m a student from Palermo and we both are looking to get established here, but we have no place to live,’ I explained.

“He rang a bell, told his assistants to take us to a pension, and said that tomorrow they would help us get registered at the university. They made copies of our passports. Unexpectedly, they asked us what weapons we had used. I was completely surprised. This was my first red flag. They drove us to the pension in a flashy blue Mercedes 500S. Ismail turned to me and said, ‘Even Saddam doesn’t have a car like this one!’”

“At that time, we had no contact with Mahabad. It was under attack and because of the constant bombing, my brother had to practically stay inside the house for six months straight.”

University Registration a la Mode

“Supposedly Dr. S was the publisher of an advertising magazine. When we arrived with his driver at the university, there were thousands of people, including Iranians and Greeks, all waiting to register. And there we were, driving right through the midst of them all. So many people were waiting. Still, we managed to make our way through the queue, straight to the front. Dr. S had called. They were waiting for us. At the university, people referred to him as ‘Doctor.’ We got our student cards for the restaurant; everything we needed to register was done in one hour. All the other students were still in the queue. I remember at one point that day he said, ‘You can help us and I can pay you, as well.’

“I later called Franca. ‘I’m a bit leery of this guy,’ I explained. ‘He brought us in a big dark blue Mercedes.’ She advised that we be cautious.

“The following morning, he called and asked us to come work with them. We were told to bring some magazines to the car and deliver them. He asked if I could drive and I replied that I had my international driving license. That day, he paid us ten thousand lire, approximately ten dollars.

“As we were driving to the location, I turned to Ismail and said, ‘I am very afraid. Can you imagine if he gives us this car and there are drugs in here?’”

That year had seen the start of the so-called Great Mafia War or Mattanza, “the Slaughter,” a bloody conflict within the Sicilian mafia that spilled into assassinations of judges, prosecutors, and politicians. “One day he invited us to the Giardino Inglese, a famous restaurant known to be frequented by the Mafia. Meanwhile the Mafiosi were murdering each other daily. Following these men, I said to Ismail, ‘The best thing is for us to take off, find another pension, and never contact Dr. S again.’ We had only worked for him on and off for a few days.

“I called Franca again and told her we were heading off on our own. This was two months later and she advised us to return to Perugia—which we did at Christmas.”

Once Hamid began classes at the university, he had no time for anything but studying and courses. He worked a bit more with

Maurizio, but the boys had no further contact with Dr. S. Later they heard that he had spoken to Maurizio and said that Hamid and his friend seemed to have disappeared. Maurizio assured him that they were both doing fine.

Making Ends Meet

Hamid had finally begun to study architecture. He had five theoretical subjects as well as design and planning.

After Christmas, Hamid returned to Palermo, but Ismail didn't want to come. "I told my friend, 'I'm in a group with you; I will present my schoolwork with you and put your name whether you are present there or not.'" But Ismail traveled to visit his girlfriend in Zurich and never returned to Palermo. Meanwhile, Hamid continued to make friends with Sicilians, Iranians, and one other Kurd who lived in another city.

But it was a difficult time, cut off from his family, and low on funds. "At that time, we had no contact with Mahabad. It was under attack and because of the constant bombing, my brother had to practically stay inside the house for six months straight." It was a very sad time for me. I was alone in Palermo and crying nearly every day. I suddenly realized that I hadn't enough money; what I did have would only last two or three months.

"I stayed at a one-room pension. It was such a simple place to live, but it was close to the school of architecture. It was an old building and my room was on the eighth or ninth floor. There was only one bed, one table, a big window, and an outside bathroom. I would step outside to the balcony just to mentally expand my horizons.



On his balcony in Palermo

It was a typical cheap pension. I paid fifty thousand lire per month and thirty dollars for the restaurant. Because my funds were so short, I decided to find work at a nearby three-star hotel in Via Roma. I began cleaning from four to eight a.m. and then at eight thirty I would rush over to attend my classes."

"At night, I would eat cheese or meat and pasta, taking the leftovers back home. I had my bicycle for transportation and wore the best clothes from Perugia. Every lunchtime I rode twenty kilometers to the beach and swam, even in the winter. Studying, eating, and exercising in nature: these were the ways I spent all my time.

“Everyone liked us because we were students from a minority, fighting against Khomeini.”

“Basically, I studied very hard and worked at that three-star hotel. It was during Reagan’s time and the hotel owner took the time to explain American politics to me. He said the best political arrangement is a Democratic and Republican party—only those two parties.

“I cleaned the hotel floors. I would first wash them with soap and then rinse them. I went there three times a week and he paid me ten thousand lire or six dollars per day. This salary provided me with one week of meals, and I was grateful.

“I was always at the university. The old lady at the pension liked me very much and I told her I had no money, so she brought me pasta on the weekends. Everyone liked us because we were students from a minority, fighting against Khomeini.”

Training by a Famous Football Player

One day Hamid met a famous player, Masih Mishnia, from the Iranian national football team, who invited him to become the goalkeeper. The athlete promised he would train him. He was very famous and he was Catholic—as well as being related to Farah Pahlavi, Reza Shah’s wife. This fellow was quite wealthy and he also studied architecture.

“He brought me to play football on the weekends. The rest of the time, we were very alone. Then Ismail left and I met a guy from Sicily, Giovanni Lacca. He was a nice man and we studied well together. He also sometimes kindly invited me to dinner at his home.”

Kurdish Brotherhood

For nearly six months, Hamid had heard no news from his brother and sister. But he had found some Persians who had befriended him; one, named Mehran, gave him useful tips on how to study. “All the Iranians liked us because they were sympathetic to how, as Kurds, we had lived there with no rights,” he said.

Hamid’s adopted family in Perugia became like his “real family” during this time. Pappa even followed international politics and knew what was happening in Iran, how the Islamic government

had launched a campaign against the Kurds, who were fighting bitterly to protect themselves.

One of Hamid's friends from Tehran, Abbas, sent him a fine drafting pencil as a gift. It was Hamid's first design pencil and so this gift meant a lot to him. In June, he completed all the exams he could, except the one for History of Modern Architecture. All his past school training at the gymnasium and working with his brother had given him an academic leg-up, a scholastic advantage most students did not have, and he was consistently receiving high marks.

Summer Jobs and Travels

During the following summer of 1981, Hamid decided to travel around the island. He had a dozen or more Sicilian friends. "Italian people are very hospitable and open. From the south they are very good, true friends, and they take care of you."

But since his finances were tight, he decided it was best to find a summer job and make some much-needed money. Ismail had a friend from Switzerland who said that if Hamid went there during the summer, he would help him find work.

"I went to the Swiss embassy and said I wanted to go for a job. I also told them I had volunteered to help the earthquake victims in southern Italy. I received a three-month work visa, so I went to Zurich and Ismail was already working there. Immediately, they found several jobs for me. One was at a restaurant where I washed dishes and another where I served beer in the center of the city. That became my work for the summer."

Hamid was racing headlong into his new life. "He lived it as though there was not a minute to be wasted," said Sadegh Vaziri, a Kurdish politician, who had met Hamid. "Hamid continued his studies in Italy and worked in Switzerland and there were never periods of inactivity. This schedule helped him to never feel financially vulnerable. He seldom had free time to get distracted and this gave him a kind of singular focus. Hamid always worked to meet his needs without complaining or blaming anyone else. He is an authentic, self-made man," Vaziri summed up. This man would later become Hamid's mentor.



With Sadegh Vaziri, Switzerland

Hamid worked as long as he could to accommodate the coming year of schooling, and it was a relief for him to have enough money.

More about His Mentor

Hamid had previously heard of Sadegh Vaziri, who like so many had fled from Iran. When Hamid arrived in Lausanne, he went to meet Vaziri at his home.

“I immediately saw that he had an enthusiastic and voracious appetite,” wrote Vaziri. “He wanted to devour life and strove to progress in every way. I felt he loved life and unconsciously aspired to greatness.”

Hamid was grateful for the connection. “That summer Vaziri became my mentor and even to this day, he remains so. He told me, ‘You are here. You must use this energy you have and study.’

After that, he contacted me every week and sent me weekly letters. He explained all the political parties to me and always guided me—through my studies and beyond. He has supported me mentally and in every possible way.”

Vaziri was impressed with Hamid’s focus. “During that period, young people mainly manifested a natural inclination to be involved in political activism. Hamid was original in the sense that he was practically the only one who positioned himself against the prevalent tendency. He did not allow himself to be taken over by an excessive and fleeting sentimentalism. He already had a lucid and realistic vision of his situation. His intention was to build a solid base for his future life.

“He shared many confidences with me regarding his private life, and especially the problems that he encountered. For my part, I tried to counsel him based on my own experience. I reminded him that Kurdistan needed people and well-formed cadres with *des têtes bien faites*, a good head on their shoulder. I told him that was our biggest gap.

“I said that a gap needing to be filled and that was absolutely necessary was the lack of knowledgeable, cultivated and erudite people who specialized in all domains of science. His unrefined enthusiasm in following his studies and his personal qualities convinced me that this young man would go far in his life.”

Vaziri would remain in Switzerland until his passing in Lausanne, on April 11, 2018, at 98 years of age. Alan would continue to keep in touch with him on a weekly basis. About the sad news of his passing, it would be his Kurdish Iranian friend Aziz Mameli who informed Alan, who was on vacation in the island of Ischia with his wife, Satu, and long-time Italian friend, Franca, prior to a planned trip to China. Alan would change his schedule immediately and fly to Switzerland for Vaziri’s funeral and to pay his respects. With Vaziri’s death Alan would lose one of the persons he most admired, a role model and friend who inspired him for almost four decades. Vaziri’s clear and profound advice had helped him understand the challenges of life. For Alan, Vaziri was one of the most pragmatic personalities within the Kurdish world, with an incredible capacity to articulate the problems and challenges of Kurdish society.

In 2014, Alan and Aziz Mameli would organize a one-day seminar in Frankfurt, Germany, to celebrate Vaziri’s life achievement. Speaking about how Vaziri had been his mentor and a source of encouragement for the future generation of Kurdish scientists, Alan would suggest the creation of an award in his name that would inspire young scientists to serve their society: “His death closes the chapter on a generation that put forth a clear strategy for Kurdistan in which science and knowledge could empower our nation for future challenges. And I promise to continue and follow his path toward progress and prosperity for Kurdish society.”

Hamid had made a lot of money while working in Switzerland. “When I went back, I was able to transfer from Palermo to Torino. Then I met up with a group of very involved Kurdish people. In Torino, there were a hundred and thirty to a hundred and fifty Kurds and the majority were Iraqi Kurds from the PUK. And so another phase of my multifaceted university life began.”

4. A Break with the Past: 1981-1982

In truth, the moment Hamid decided to dedicate himself completely toward his studies, to the detriment of political activism, he drew a preliminary sketch and created a veritable change in the course of his life and how it would develop. I advised him to only count on himself, value his work and not have illusions about others.
—Sadegh Vaziri

In the midst of Hamid's second year at the University of Torino, he was working very hard against Khomeini. Each day political news was being written and distributed by his colleagues about the current events taking place. The Kurdish students held regular meetings with visiting notables from the PUK—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—and from Komala and other Iranian parties. They met all these politicians personally. In 1982 when his passport expired, it was necessary to either go to the Iranian embassy in Italy, which—given his outspoken criticism of Khomeini's regime—was politically dangerous, or to return to his country, where the conflict was raging.

The memories of that time are still vivid. "I remember in 1982 we traveled to different cities to hold demonstrations. Now they, the supporters of the regime, recognized me. All the student spies of Khomeini were on the lookout for us. We often ended up together in the same places. At times, we were afraid because they would sometimes attack us at the university. We were targets for the Ba'athists from Saddam Hussein as well. Out of nowhere on the university walkways, they would appear and come after us.

"Once I went to distribute magazines at a restaurant and some politicized students attacked me. They punched me until the blood streamed down my face. After this happened, more than a hundred students accompanied me to Florence to hand out the leaflets there. We had a tremendous amount of solidarity in our Kurdish group. The Ba'athists wanted to rough me up again, but this large group of students attacked *them* this time. We hastened back to Torino when our business was done."

Hamid was immersed in his studies at the same time he was politically engaged. His brother had to constantly remind him, "Always remember your purpose in being here in Italy."

Hamid never forgot this. "I was number one among all the students because I studied very hard. My university friends went out dancing on Fridays, but I studied all the time." Vaziri also attested to Hamid's one-pointedness. "He followed a personal and moral discipline that did not reach the excess of a rigorous hermit, yet it kept him apart from licentious behavior which attracted many young people, making them easily malleable and influenced by 'the politically correct mainstream.'

He cultivated his singular purpose by leading a simple life, yet always maintaining himself independently,” added Vaziri.

Hamid, in speaking about the fruits of having focused upon his studies for one project at the University of Torino, demonstrated his excitement with learning, researching and accomplishing his academic goal: “For one project, I learned how to transform the architecture of one part of the city of Torino. Now this was an exciting project for me! I was dedicated to it. I chose to redesign the markets in the city and this taught me so much about static structural engineering.”

A Singular Vision

“The seed for the work I would do in the future came later. For me, all that mattered was to finish my studies. When you study in Italy, you have all the final exams after June–July, but I completed them in June because during the summer, I had to work. That was one of the reasons I pushed myself very hard.

“While pursuing my higher education, I focused on wrapping up my studies to be able to find work in Europe during those months. When my passport expired in March 1982, there was no opening for me to simply go to the embassy to ask for another.”

Challenge of Studying in Italy as a Kurd

Many of the Kurds involved in political activities with Hamid were struggling financially to maintain their lives in Europe. It was extremely hard to survive and study in Italy. To do this, Kurdish students had to have independent financial resources. It wasn’t like in other countries where students could receive scholarship money to study. So it was not easy to combine working and studying during those years in Italy.

“One friend, Kadir, who was studying medicine at the time, said he could no longer continue his studies in Italy. He asked to borrow money from me and then he left for Yugoslavia and then Sweden. I had money from Switzerland and I gave some to him. Fazel did the same; he just left Italy. He went to Poland and then on to Sweden, where he worked in a Volvo car factory. Kadir studied medicine and then ultimately settled in Sweden, where he continues to work as a medical doctor. They were two of my close friends from Mahabad who wanted to study in Italy but could not manage it.”

All Hamid’s friends received funds from their wealthy parents. But his path was different and very straightforward. There was no free-floating fund, no excess. He couldn’t foster desires for things beyond his reach. For instance, he never had the craving for a car, nor the possibility; he would have liked to own a small car, but it was financially impossible, so he would borrow a car from his friends on occasion.

These traits Hamid possessed of hard work and perseverance stand out among his friends. Aziz Mameli, whom he would meet later in Paris, described him as “a young man who arrived empty-handed in Italy and reinvented himself intellectually and professionally with his studies.” With pride Aziz expanded on this thought: “It was admirable. He did three things at the same time. He worked, studied, and was an involved political activist. This agenda shapes a person. Someone who finds success after this is different from a person who has had all possibilities handed to them on a silver platter from their parents.”

Student Life in Torino

Since Hamid still needed to make money to finish his studies, he began to work selling newspapers.

“I bought the newspapers, *La Stampa*, sold them after church services on Sunday, and would make ten thousand lire. Finally, when I received the scholarship from UNCHR, I had no more financial issues, which was a great relief. At the same time, I continued to be very active politically. All the arriving Kurds came to us, so our home was constantly full of Kurdish people.”

Hamid shared a meager two-room apartment in Torino with his friend Jabbar Fatah, a PUK representative, during this period. Each had one room to himself. They lived on Corso Union Sovietica, one of the main city roads that connect the center with the southern suburbs. Much later, he returned to that place and wondered how they had lived there, as it was so small and dirty. But their days were spent as full-on students, working hard, studying constantly and intensely.

“In Italy, our study schedule never eased off. We studied and attended lectures daily. Then in July, after scores of lectures on many subjects, we sat for our exams.” The memory still makes him wince. “But if you failed to pass them, you were back at it in September for another round—or later if necessary.

“My problem was that I had to pass every single exam in June–July. One year, I had nine exams and every one of them was in July. Most people spread it out. But I needed freedom in the summer to travel and work without having academic obligations.

Many of the Kurds involved in political activities with Hamid were struggling financially to maintain their lives in Europe. It was extremely hard to survive and study in Italy.

Suddenly we found ourselves completely alone, between France and Italy, atop the mountain in very heavy snowfall. We wondered if we might die there.

The challenge of moving ahead toward that end-of-year goal prompted me, throughout my time in university, to push myself in a very demanding way—more than most students.”

This period of intense studentship passed very quickly.

Passport Journeys

A month after his passport expired, Hamid had no choice but to seek refugee status. “I went to the United Nations offices and told them, ‘I am an activist here,’ and they granted me refugee status immediately. In 1982 many people were under the protection of the United Nations.

“The UN invited me for an interview. If I had high enough grades, I was told they would give me a scholarship. The first time they looked at my certificate, they gave me three hundred and fifty lire—about two hundred dollars per month. Also, they gave me a student restaurant card. This meant my food expenses were next to nothing. This was perfect for me. But traveling was not possible; I could not move anywhere outside the country.”

Mountain Rescue Mission

Hamid studied intensely at night, so he was awake when Kendal Nezan, the director of the Kurdish Institute in Paris, called him with a request: “The Socialist Party leader, Yusef, is coming to Europe. Can you help get his son get safely to France?” Azad, Yusef’s son, was sixteen years old and was coming from Turkey to Italy. Even though Hamid did not have a passport and could not leave the country he replied, “No problem, I will take care of him.”

A series of connections made it possible. “It was March 1982. The weather was very nice in Torino and I asked my friend Jabbar whom I shared an apartment with, to accompany me. He asked a wealthy Turkman student friend of his named Zohair to lend us his Renault. Jabbar did tell him where we were going.

“Because we were politically active, everyone respected us, so we were able to borrow the car. We had no experience, but we

studied the map to find a good route over the snow-laden mountains. We were not prepared for the snow; we did not have tire chains. Halfway there, the car got stuck and we had to find a sheet of metal to get traction. Suddenly we found ourselves completely alone, between France and Italy, atop the mountain in very heavy snowfall. We wondered if we might die there. It was freezing cold and the wind was howling. However, after several long hours, we managed to get off that mountain.

“There were no police there and no one drove by. It was three a.m. when we finally crossed the border into France. We crossed illegally since we did not have passports. Thankfully, due to the heavy snowfall, we were not stopped at the crossing.

“We had the address of a restaurant on the French side where we met up with the boy’s father, who sat anxiously waiting inside. He was both afraid and so overjoyed to see his son. He had left Turkey due to military persecution when the boy was an infant, and he had not seen him since then. It was a beautiful, heartfelt reunion.”

Learning to Build from the Ground Up

During his student summers, Hamid had been traveling illegally to Switzerland to find lucrative summer work. The summer of 1982 found him in Zurich without a passport—a state that hampered job possibilities in the restaurant where he had done very well in the past. Foreign illegal workers, especially Italians, were filling the demand for labor during a favorable economic situation in the country in the 1980s.

Since 1870 Switzerland had become a desirable destination for immigrants, especially from Italy. They came in large numbers; up to five million Italians moved to Switzerland in the years between 1870 and 1980. The intermingling of two such different cultural groups, fun-loving Italians and self-contained Swiss, made for interesting times between residents and immigrants. Psychological stress was not uncommon for those newly arrived.

Hamid found himself among a group of hard-working Italian laborers in a construction job. His Persian friend had received a contract for plaster work on a large residential building project from a construction company owned by a wealthy Swiss man with whom he had worked before. Hamid’s friend asked his boss if he could give Hamid a summer job as a student since he needed money. The boss, in his Mercedes sports car, agreed to meet Hamid and offered him the job along with a group of southern Italians. Hamid now had the on-the-ground experience of building construction—no longer theoretical, but on an intensely practical level.

“None of the Italian laborers believed me when I told them I was a student. They were workers whose goal was to buy a nice car. So I showed them my student ID card. When I explained my circumstances, their attitude changed to me. They even invited me to dine frequently with their families. My job involved carrying twenty- to thirty-kilogram cement bags up and down stairs all day and helping to prepare the interior walls. The home was three stories high and my task involved

intense manual labor. It was the hardest work I had done in Europe. One day I asked my coworkers for help and they came through for me.

“Because I lacked legal papers, I proceeded warily. I went in and out of the country illegally. I knew which trains I could take that would have less official control. My new friend Pietro Invernizzi, from Ticino in Switzerland, drove me back from Italy to Bellinzona. It was all very risky, but I had no other choice. I spent two to three months working in Switzerland and did well because they paid extremely generously.”

Paris Opens a Welcoming Door

During that summer, Hamid told Vaziri of his passport situation and Vaziri called Kendal Nezan, president of the Kurdish Institute in Paris.

One day a letter, dated March 12, 1983, arrived from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs inviting Hamid to France, with a note from Kendal also inviting Hamid to give a presentation at a conference on traditional architecture in Paris. This was the *raison d'être* for his invitation to travel, and they sent him his ticket to get to France, despite his not having a passport.

“I waited until summer and then traveled to Paris. I met Kendal for the first time during the summer of 1983. The Kurdish Institute had just opened and Kendal and I became friends.” Through the institute, Hamid would make many more friends and meet others again from his early years in Iran.

Two of these people were Aziz Mamei and his wife Soheila Ghaderi. “I knew Hamid’s older brother, who had a construction company,” Aziz recalls. “He was a friend of my brother’s. During a trip to Paris, Hamid came to the Kurdish Institute and met my wife, Soheila. He also visited our house. He was very likeable and it felt like we had known each other for a long time. Our formal friendship began then.”

The Mamelis were friends with Vaziri, and together with Hamid and Vaziri shared a unique bond. “Every time he came to Paris and every summer, he stayed with us as though he was with his own brother and sister,” Aziz remembers. “I saw him as a Kurd from Mahabad. He was sincere in his friendship and very active with the Kurdish cause in Italy. He told me enthusiastically of his activities in support of the Kurdish question, to defend human rights in Iran, especially in Kurdistan.”

From then on, every time Hamid traveled to Paris, he would stay with them. He always came bearing gifts, sporty clothes from Franca, for their son Arez, who became a fan of Hamid’s. Hamid “was very friendly and he even cooked Italian dishes for us,” the Mamelis remembered. “As long as we’ve known him, he always had the ambition to do great things, to change the world with his architectural vision.”

Hamid went with Aziz to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request a passport. While there, several officials asked if he knew Dr. Ghassemloo. Ghassemloo was well known and Hamid was proud to affirm having known and spent time around this great Kurdish leader.



With the Mameli family in Paris, 1982

A Passport Is Granted

In just two weeks, Hamid had received his refugee passport. With this, he could travel; he could come and go as he wished. So he made the decision to stay and study French. Aziz welcomed him to stay in his brother's room at the university while he studied that summer.

Politics Meets Reality: How Komala Members Lived in the Real World

While in Paris, Hamid met with Yosef Ardalan and Khosrow Dawar from Komala, with whom he became very active politically. By this time, he was immersed in his second year at the university in Torino.

One memory that stood out for him was that Jawad Kashmiri, a Kurdish political activist with Komala, asked him for financial support, even though Hamid was just a student. There was a notion current in those days that those who dedicated themselves to politics had to be maintained financially by others.

This situation brought with it some interesting lessons. "Jawad, a friend from Kermanshah, had studied with us in Italy. He had

become a professional politician and no longer studied or worked. He was very articulate in his political speeches, which we regularly organized at the 'Iranian House' in Torino, where Iranians came to discuss the politics of their party. He spent all his time doing politics and working intensely with Komala.

"I wanted to help Kashmiri find work, just as I had been helped. After two weeks, I found him a summer job in Switzerland, but after only one day of working, he decided to return to Italy. I didn't have the option of quitting because I had to work to support my ongoing studies and I was very determined. But he expected us to pay his living costs. From this experience, I saw that being leftist sometimes had nothing to do with reality and the challenging things that arise while living in the real world."

This disappointed the idealist in Hamid. "It was contradictory to me. If they could not manage their own life, how could they help others? You must first be able to manage yourself, your *own* life, to be able to help other people." He would later find out that this man created problems for Komala and would wind up in Sweden working as a cleaner at the university.

Hamid's Political Evolution

Hamid decided it was best for him to not belong to any party. In meetings, he found there was a lot of talking which he called "blah, blah." He did not want to be *used* by any party. "I had no tendency to be a communist. I did not feel we had class divisions at that time . . . Though some people felt that they should bring the communist socialism party to Kurdistan."

Ahmad had also shared with him how cadres from Komala had come to his office in Baneh, in Kurdistan, and taken all his machinery. They justified this by condemning him as a capitalist for having four hundred workers. It was the Democrats, the PDKI, that returned the machinery back to Ahmad. In the future, Ahmad would turn to helping the Democrat party.

By contrast Yusef Ardalan, one of the founders of Komala, was a realistic politician. He was well respected among Hamid's friends in Italy. "Ardalan was living in Paris and he liked me very much," Hamid reminisced. "He adhered to this principle: 'You work hard; you are disciplined.' I brought a hundred students to listen to him once in Torino and later in Rome, and brought him around for meetings because he was a person who actually lived his ideals."

Hamid realized he wanted to be a scientist, a practitioner of applied research, and help his country through knowledge, not politics. Repeatedly Vaziri told him that he was there to study. There were so many politicians—but what Kurds needed were more *scientists*, young people like Hamid, to study.

5. Opening of the Heart, Expansion of the Mind: 1982–1987

Shaping the Future

The four years Hamid spent at the Polytechnic University of Torino were seminal in shaping his life and future career, socially and culturally. This time in Italy served Hamid on many fronts and expanded his world outlook. It was educational for him on all levels. First of all, socially he was in contact with people from many other cultures. Second, he lived for several years with the benchmarks of discipline and structure in his student life. These habits and influences began to shape the man and the architect he was to become.

“The friendships and social interactions in Italy had an enormous effect upon me. I socialized with scores of Italian friends and with even more Kurds on a regular basis. I knew so many Italian people, more than in any other part of the world. Italians are remarkably warm and sociable. I still have not found people who are so friendly. They extend themselves to you. Of course, often people are polite and want to do everything once they know you. However, of all the cultures I’ve come in contact with, I’ve found this to be especially true of Italians, even more than with the Kurds I have known.

“The cultural qualities of Italians had a life-changing impact upon me; their friendship and honesty touched me very deeply. For me, there have been no stronger friendships than those I formed in Italy. Wherever I went, I found honesty and true friendship in those I met. In Palermo, I established very strong connections that continue to this day. Friends there wanted to give me everything even though they had very little.

“This all continued in Torino—with my classmate Paola, for instance; we still have a very good relationship. I learned a great deal from the countless social encounters I had during those years: how to deal with people, how to be kind, how to be polite and respect others. A lot of my education in such areas came from those student years in Italy.

“My social education in Kurdistan had been entirely different. The outward expression of these two cultures, while enjoying some similarities such as loyalty to family and friends, varied greatly in the realm of generosity of emotional expression, social subtleties, and the special forms of European ‘manners.’” As he continued to travel the world, Hamid came to realize that who he was becoming was a result of life experience in both worlds. A Kurd with a European refinement—and this is the man, a world traveler, essentially a Kurd with an overlay of many other cultures, that he is today.

“The first time my brother came, he, too was struck by the open-heartedness of the Italian people. He told me repeatedly that he had never experienced anything like this and it was amazing to him.



Alan with his brother Ahmad, Mamma and Franca in Perugia

Ahmad shared with me that now he believed what I had been telling him about this Italian phenomenon that had so greatly impacted me.”

“I was more open and much happier there. In Italy, everything centers around enjoyment—and this was something new to me. Food was part of that happiness: coffee, meals, socializing over the dining table. The food is simply delicious in Italy. They also pay a lot of attention to clothes, their design and the way they look. Thanks to my Italian friends, I was the only one in the university who always wore a tie. I liked to dress nicely and Franca helped me by gifting me with fashionable clothes from Ellesse. Through the generosity of my friends and Italian ‘family’ members, my awareness continued to expand on many levels during those years.”

Social Expansion Coupled with Discipline

For Hamid, university life was not only socially expanding, but instilled even greater discipline and structure in his days. To be

able to excel consistently in his studies, Hamid applied himself with focus and concentration. He also learned from each person he met and had contact with.

“As well as the Italian and other European students, there were many Kurdish students in Torino, but some did not really excel. The majority were from Iraqi Kurdistan. Only two or three percent were good students who worked very hard. The rest came from moneyed families and did not take their education very seriously.

“However, all of them were my very good friends. Ours was a close community; we supported each other and always ate together. On weekends, we went to football games because we lived right in front of the stadium of the Torino Football Club. Often during the final twenty minutes of the game, the doors were opened and the young fans who’d been waiting outside could watch for free the exciting final moments. My Kurdish friends and I were always there.”

Between taking the tram, going to football games, spending time at the Mensa restaurant, and applying themselves for hours each day at the university, time passed very quickly for the young students. They learned about architecture from days gone by, from the distant past right up to the present.

Architecture Comes into Clearer Focus

Adhering to his strict focus, Hamid was still not yet clear which subject he wanted to make his life’s work. The main thing was that he wanted to pass. But as time went by, he began to see that he was most drawn to architecture.

It fascinated him and he found this field exciting, with many new ideas constantly emerging on the horizon. In classes, he studied famous projects like the Termini Railway Station in Rome and how to calculate the structural engineering involved. Another building that had a huge impact on him was the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, designed by Renzo Piano.

As the months passed, Hamid came to see more clearly the areas of architecture which most drew him. The Architecture School was a very creative faculty at the Polytechnic University of Torino and this further stimulated Hamid. The city of Torino had donated Castello del Valentino, one of its most beautiful historic buildings with origins in the sixteenth century, to be the seat of the architecture faculty of the Polytechnic University. Situated on the bank of the majestic Po River lined with flowing willows, the castle stood with its horseshoe shape, four towers at each angle, and a large inner courtyard paved with marble. It sat in the popular and beautiful landscaped Valentino Park with its plane trees, ponds and fountains, intriguing sculptures, and foraging squirrels.

With admiration, Hamid observed its four round towers and marble pavements. There was so much history on these walls, blazoned with the coat of arms of the House of Savoy. Established in 1859, the Polytechnic was one of Italy’s oldest technical universities and a leading institution that



School of Architecture, Castello del Valentino

specialized in engineering, architecture, and industrial design. It shaped a unique international and varied cultural environment by attracting foreign students and supporting the mobility of its students and teachers and encouraging a world research network conducted in English. These progressive aspects attracted many foreign students and extensive research was also encouraged there.

Life at the faculty was vibrant. Students from all parts of the world met at the cafeteria for coffee and drinks to talk about what they were learning. Sometimes they met with their professors to engage in lively discussions. One professor in particular, Franco D. Vallan, became a friend. And later, in June 1983, it would be under Vallan's tutelage and guidance that Hamid would identify his thesis subject and pursue a master's degree in architecture to design a general hospital for the city of Torino.

At the university one friend in particular, Paola Mascherini, was a brilliant student, and she befriended the many Kurds studying there. She often invited Hamid to visit her family in the medieval city of Novi Ligure, east of Turin. Her father was very well respected in the municipality; he knew Hamid was a Kurd and respected him a great deal.

Her boyfriend, Renzo, was a geologist. Together, they did a lot of mountain climbing in the Alps, and would invite Hamid to come along. Paola became one of his closest friends and an inspiring study partner for him. He read the lecture pages she wrote because she took excellent and thoughtful notes and Hamid learned a lot from her.

Inspiration through Design

Hamid’s probing, expansive mind had free rein in the spacious world of architectural design: “The basic idea was about architecture. It was all very exciting to me, with a lot of new ideas. For example, when they taught us about the buildings that were very famous, I wanted to go deeper, to find out how they were built, how they were designed and so on. I was very drawn to modern architecture. It influenced my work later because it was more structured, and I liked that aspect of it.

“The first year I learned about Le Corbusier, the father of modern architecture. His five essential design principles included roof gardens or “green roofs”; a *façade* free from structural constraints and a ground plan free from limits imposed by load-bearing walls, supported instead by a gridwork of columns—essentially, free everything. This was something new and adventurous for me.” Hamid would also learn from another architect, Mario Botta, who had also been inspired by Le Corbusier. Hamid visited all Botta’s buildings and met him for the first time at his office in Ticino in 1983. As part of the investigative research for his thesis work, Hamid traveled to view several cities that Botta had designed. Many years later, he would meet Botta once more in the School of Architecture in Stockholm and this time would tell the accomplished designer how much he had been inspired by his work and ways of thinking.

A Decisive Time

Everything was all in preparation for the summers of 1982 and 1983. “They were a decisive time for me. Because I had to prepare for the following year in 1984 when my brother was arriving for his first visit, I said to myself, ‘Before he comes, I must complete all my exams as well as possible.’”

Never one to shrink from a challenge, Hamid passed no less than nine exams in the summer of 1983—a record for the university. No one could believe that this student, however serious, had accomplished this impressive result. In addition, Hamid kept the United Nations updated on his progress, and they congratulated him in a letter for his exemplary academics. By this time, he was

When they taught us about the buildings that were very famous, I wanted to go deeper, to find out how they were built, how they were designed and so on.



With his brother Ahmad in Rome

receiving \$350 per month as the UN scholarship, a sizeable aid package for the time.

During the summer of 1984, Hamid went to Zurich for two months, to work as a student practitioner in an architectural firm. Having landed this job with relative ease after sending out letters to a number of European companies, he helped to design houses and a small shopping center. This firm also worked with healthcare facilities, a precursor to the focus of his future work and career.

His coworkers commented frequently that they thought Hamid was Italian, so completely was he imbibing the culture he had come to love. One of his close friends, Pietro Invernizzi, an economist, frequently invited Hamid to his home, where he spent time with the family. It was a good time for him. “This was one of the best periods in my life. I had money, I was free and had no difficulties. It was very liberating for me.”

Ahmad Visits Italy

In the winter of 1984, Ahmad, who had supported Hamid at every step of his education, came to Torino from Mahabad. He was exceedingly proud of his brother’s exemplary accomplishments.

For Hamid, his brother’s visit to Torino was the most exciting period of his student time. “It was the first time I’d seen him

for many years. As well as coming to visit, he arrived with an unexpected proposal. He and my family had found a fiancée for me. One of our relatives wanted to see if I was interested in getting married.” This idea had arisen from Ahmad’s wife, and his brother understood the matter was up to Hamid, that he was simply the family’s messenger. Hamid explained he could not consider it: he didn’t know what his future held, since his commitments lay elsewhere.

So focused was Hamid on his studies and immigrant status, and so tentative about his future, that getting romantically involved had been impossible. While he had dated one woman off and on, in the end she walked away from the relationship because he was unable to commit to getting married, given his academic workload and Kurdish political activity. He felt it was neither responsible nor fair to a prospective partner to get involved at this point. Many of Hamid’s friends had become engaged or married and frequently socialized, going dancing. But these same friends knew Hamid to be a very serious person and respected him for this. Not once during his entire time in Torino did he ever go dancing.

Ahmad, when he arrived, appreciated his brother’s dedicated focus. “My brother was very pleased with me. First of all, he couldn’t believe I had managed all my exams so quickly and that I was already planning to complete my master’s thesis.” “How is it possible?” Ahmad asked. He was overjoyed that his younger brother had applied himself so diligently.

During the visit, they traveled first to Perugia, Milan, and other Italian cities—and then on to Switzerland. In Perugia, Pappa and Mamma were very happy to see Hamid’s brother. They said



With his brother Ahmad in Zurich

But then Ahmad literally could not go back home: in the midst of the war between Iraq and Iran, there were no flights.

it had been their dream to meet him. This was a quality visit in every respect. “It was a very nice period with my brother. Since I had finished all my exams, I was free. He had told me whatever you do is fine, as long as you concentrate on your studies. And I had done this, so he said he was very proud of me.”

Ahmad stayed almost four months in his brother’s tiny apartment. Whatever schism had existed in the past between them was healed during that stay. Hamid had been able to save some money and repay some of what Ahmad had generously given to make his education possible.

But then Ahmad literally could not go back home: in the midst of the war between Iraq and Iran, there were no flights. Finally, they found one flight with Arab Emirates departing from Zurich. The flight went to Dubai, then to Shiraz, and from there finally Ahmad was able to take a bus to Tehran. This trip back was very, very hard for him. With the war on, it took almost a week.

Master’s Thesis, 1985

Following Ahmad’s visit in 1984 there came another turning point as Hamid began the arduous process of pursuing his master’s thesis. He finished his studies in a total of six years. This became a further record-breaking accomplishment in the young Kurd’s life; no one else had finished their degree in this amount of time.

But for Hamid, with his financial situation, moving quickly was an utter necessity. And a swift completion meant he would get into the architectural marketplace all that much sooner to put forth the ideas that were beginning to ferment in his imagination. It was the topic of his master’s thesis that would pave the way for what was to consume Hamid’s attention for decades to come.

“I was very interested in designing a hospital,” said Hamid. “I had done many things, but never a hospital complex. Some students and friends thought I was crazy to take on a project of this complexity and scope. But I had gone to their thesis presentations and when they finished, I looked more closely at what they had done. Their topics were not nearly as exciting to me.

“At the time, I thought to myself: In the future I can design everything—houses, shopping centers, swimming pools, but not

a hospital. City planning was something I had worked on in Torino. That was nice and I had worked on an architectural project for a small psychiatric clinic, too.

“Now I was ready to help people. I was becoming more humanitarian in my outlook. The hospital is the most exciting place, a place society can cure people. You can touch poor people, too, who need to be treated and cured. This is the highest interaction between people and buildings. I saw that I could learn on many levels by taking on this project. It was very inspiring to me.”

Hamid had only four university exams left, including some subjects that would be part of his master’s thesis. He was supposed to do his master’s with another student, but that person did not share his sense of urgency to dive into the subject. So in the end he did it alone, feeling this was the best choice.

The Municipality’s Involvement

Coincidentally, the municipality of Torino was inviting students to design for a number of projects, including a future hospital complex. They held properties outside the city that were ideal for a hospital. Hamid met with the officials and told them he had chosen that particular hospital design project and was drawn to work on it despite its complexity. Since he had moved his other exams ahead to be completed later, he had one year of theoretical and research work ahead of him, together with at least another two to three years in the planning and design of the project.

This hospital project was to occupy Hamid throughout the entire year of 1985. He only took time to visit Perugia at Christmas. Other than that, he worked nonstop on his thesis, doing research and etching out the complex design.

Earnest Research

Hamid began gathering a lot of reading, books other and published materials, and scoured the city to collect more information about hospitals for his research. He spoke with doctors and visited the largest hospital in Torino to see how such a facility functioned. Then slowly he designed a hospital for five hundred beds. The design included both general areas and specialized medical sections, including an emergency department, a maternity wing, and surgical arenas. This work embraced and drew on everything in Hamid’s architectural studies up to this point. It was a vast subject to step into.

“This project helped both my intellectual capacity and my evolution personally. “I was touched by and delved deeply into this problem. I reflected constantly, ‘How, as a sick person, would it feel to go to this building? How would a person experience the actual environment? How would this space affect you as a person?’

“These questions all impacted me—the ways people circulate in such a building. How they interact. That was the most important aspect of a project like this. It was like a city in miniature. The moment

The larger question was that my work involved not only developing a hospital but examining the further implications for society as a whole. Changes were needed in healthcare architecture.

people enter through the door, they need help. This aspect in the hospital system was not dissimilar to arriving at an airport and needing to get to a gate. But how to treat those people through the building was very challenging, how to give them clear, proper directions that help them find their destination. Such directions were critical components.

“It was very exciting for me to study all those psychological ideas. Throughout the building, I considered, ‘How would people interact with the columns, the shapes?’ I was especially fascinated with people’s interaction and experience with the structure itself. These are often people who are in trauma and difficulty. It was all very new and exciting for me. I learned a lot about how people interact with that kind of environment and situation.

“For example, when people arrive in an ambulance, during an emergency, how do they feel and how can staff people best meet them? I got very close to people who had very hard, very poor conditions in many ways. When they get sick, no matter if you are rich or poor, people need help and support.

“It was all about the people. How could I create a hospital designed with people in mind? I began reading psychology books about people’s behavior within their environments. This helped me to understand people.

“This project was the seed of my future work. It was the first step in this new direction—working with people through the built environment. It became my future direction and career. As a result, thirty years later, I have devoted decades to solving these complex and meaningful questions, looking for supportive design solutions to the hospitals of the world.”

This master’s thesis project at the University of Torino set the course of Hamid Mahmoudi’s future professional direction. He saw clearly how creating architectural design parameters could step beyond design for design’s sake. Even the built environment of hospitals, where people come to heal and be cared for, can strongly impact the people who work and stay there if there is consciousness, awareness put into the creation of these spaces. This work has the capacity to help society as a whole when there is a conscious interaction, in their creation, between the buildings and the people who will use them.

This became his inspiration and the guide for his new direction: that it is possible to design healthcare buildings in a new way by keeping in mind the state of the lives of the people who inhabit them.

The Larger Questions

Hamid reflected deeply on this principle. “The larger question was that my work involved not only developing a hospital but examining the further implications for society as a whole. Changes were needed in healthcare architecture. This struck me from the beginning. Working with hospitals opened me up to the possibilities of the absolute necessity of human interaction within cities and society. There are many complex sociological and ecological layers in these large architectural projects. You don’t just design a building so it looks polished and professional and then it’s finished. Because these buildings affect the whole of society, there is much more to consider.

“I realized what I was working on for Torino could be designed anywhere; the functions are the same and an equitable approach with certain basic functions would work universally. Yes, my thesis was for a public hospital. Yet I realized I could design this for any city in the world and even for my people in Kurdistan who were so in need of such care.”

A Doctor and Mentor

“I met with many doctors in this process. One was Dr. Nouri, a Kurdish doctor. I met him the first time I came to Perugia. While researching my work, I met with him often and discussed many questions I had. He helped me a lot, telling me, ‘This is a very challenging project you have taken on.’ He spoke with me at length and even brought me to his hospital. Nouri challenged me to create a design so both doctors and patients could feel better within the hospital environment. He helped me to move forward on many levels. Now he is a surgeon who specializes in Torino.

“My master’s supervisor, Professor Franco D. Vallan, was also hugely supportive. He asked with interest about my background as a Kurd. We were working together quite intensively. He was a very polite, kind person and almost every week, I would show him my evolving drawings. I applied myself diligently. My friend Paola was also very helpful. She appreciated the difficulty of this project and that no other student had even touched it before. Students were generally more drawn to simpler design tasks.

“I put up a handmade drawing stand in my room. All my friends came there to visit me because I was always working. At first, I had no drafting board or drawing surface, so I approached a carpenter who built one for me. It was twenty centimeters high, with a nicely slanted surface. I could set it up on top of any table as a drafting stand. I used it for drawing throughout my thesis and it worked very well. Special design tables are quite expensive, so this was an economical and practical solution for me. I had it positioned in my small apartment. This was my first drawing table.”



At work designing his thesis project in his apartment in Torino

Completion

After nearly two years, the first date Hamid could present his finished master's thesis was in June 1985. No other students were ready and nobody could believe that he was, either. He had found a solution to fit the needs for the city hospital, and that month, he presented the creative fruit of his findings. The judging panel convened and heard Hamid's hospital presentation.

They were immensely satisfied with his completed project and the solutions he proposed for the needs of the city. The



Presenting his thesis to the judging panel; to the right is his thesis supervisor, Professor Franco D. Vallan



Celebrating with friends in the garden at the School of Architecture, Torino

municipality had asked him how to fit their needs to this project. Moving forward, they would actually incorporate much of his design concept in their future building. They took the ideas of his proposal, and although the final design of the finished hospital varied somewhat, Hamid received the highest marks for the work on his master's.

He traveled later to Perugia to celebrate and join with his Italian adopted family and all his friends.

Next Steps

That summer he returned to Zurich and stayed until April 1987, a year and a half, working in an organization that designed and did research on hospitals, the Institute for Hospital and Health Planning.

One reason for this move back to Switzerland was the dictates of his refugee status. Upon completing his advanced schooling in Torino, Hamid had been contacted by the United Nations about settling in the country of his choice. At that time, he had been drawn to the United States and Canada. As long as he resided in Italy, his United Nations refugee status was not accepted for long-term residence. One could only stay temporarily in the country that granted one's refugee status, so it was time to move on.

It was now pressing for him to decide a place for future residence. Refugees like Hamid had to select a country that would accept them. Hamid had been on a list to move to Canada and he was now invited to move there; he had been accepted.

While delighted with this news, Hamid said he wanted time to think about this important decision before finalizing a move. The officials gave him two to three months to decide.

Part 3

Arriving in Sweden to Shape My Future

1. Getting Settled: Sweden, 1987-1988

For someone in Hamid's position, an academically accomplished refugee in search of permanent residency in a country to pursue his doctoral studies, Sweden held a strong draw. Not only were large numbers of Kurdish immigrants flocking there in 1987, but many of his friends had already moved there. The Scandinavian nation was accepting refugee applicants within twenty-four hours, because they needed people to work.

Some of the hospitals he had included in his master's research were in Sweden, such as Huddinge in Stockholm—another plus. He was clear that the study of these healthcare institutions was to be a component in his future, so visiting Huddinge after having written at length about it would be an especially good move, allowing for further research into hospital function and design.

All these reasons, plus a compelling personal situation, helped Hamid to finalize this momentous decision. He could now relay to the United Nations officials that he had reached a decision—to live in Sweden.

The personal matter involved his brother Aco. In June 1986, Hamid had received disturbing news that his younger brother had been recruited for the Iran-Iraq war. During the summer months of 1986 while in Zurich and working at the Institute for Hospital and Health Planning, this pressing matter came to Hamid's attention. He realized that he must find a solution to get his brother out of the military, where young Kurdish conscripts were in constant danger. In 1987 the Iranians were carrying out "human wave offensives," and forced many men through induction into the army.

The Very Real Agonies of Conscription

Aco had been arrested several times and managed to escape. However, in 1986, the Iranian police arrested him in Mahabad while he was simply walking down the street with a friend. In this encounter he was harassed, getting into a tangle with the officer who grabbed his chest and chafed him. "I pushed him, then his hat fell off and he got furious," Aco reported.

As the young boy screamed for help in the street, four uniformed men appeared. The officers took him to the station, where he was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer. They tried to handcuff the boy, claiming he had intended to harm the policeman. Aco was struggling to escape so they were not able to clip the cuffs on him. "I wasn't trying to hurt you," the policeman told him. "But I could have thrown you where no one would want to go"—to a place where people were often killed and never seen again.

The All-too-Frequent Commandeering of Kurds

Aco's conscription story was not unusual for that time. Kurdish young men were being intimidated anywhere, at any time. This was not the first time he had been walking down the street when the police came to arrest him for no reason. But before, he had always managed to escape.

When Rahman, his sister's husband, heard that Aco had been detained, he went immediately to the station. The policemen claimed they just wanted to hear a sincere apology, but Aco refused: "I will *never* apologize for what I did." His brother-in-law apologized for him and convinced the police to let him go.

Meanwhile, Aco stayed in jail for two more days and then was summarily sent to the military area. Forced conscription into the army was commonplace. Aco's basic training began in the city of Mala, in Azerbaijan, and continued for three months. Then he was transferred to the Meimak area, at the southern Iranian front, along the border with Iraq 113 kilometers from Baghdad. He was never sent to the front, but while he was driving a vehicle that was transporting military food and munitions to the soldiers, he was startled when the car in front of him exploded.

Even troop movements in the middle of the night were high risk, and vehicles would often be hit right in front of Aco. One night, he and some soldiers were ordered to wash some dishes at a nearby lake near Meimak. Soldiers appeared out of nowhere and began shooting. The missiles they fired ricocheted off the rocks close by.

Anything could happen at any time, particularly at night. "But the Kurds weren't afraid," Aco remembers. "We were always alert, watching who was coming and going."

One night the men were talking together and the highest-ranking officer began joking and belittling the courage of the Persians. "Why don't you tell jokes about the Kurds?" one man chimed in. Another replied, "I love the Kurds because they are so brave. No one else would go up into those mountains the way the Kurds do."

How Aco Left the Army

"My sister had told Hamid that I was in the army and he became extremely worried," Aco recalls. "Of course, he did everything he could to get me out." In 1987 the Iranian regime launched another "human wave" offensive. The army was sent to fight with troops that were poorly trained and not equipped for battle. The outcome was horrendous; they were sent across the border to attack Iraqi troops and clear minefields. Fervent young and older men volunteered to martyr themselves.

American journalist Robin Wright describes this dramatic immolation. "During the Fateh offensive [February 1979], I toured the southwest front on the Iranian side and saw scores of boys, aged anywhere from nine to sixteen, who said with staggering, seemingly genuine enthusiasm that they had volunteered to become martyrs.

“Regular army troops, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards and mullahs all lauded these youths, known as *basij*, for having played the most dangerous role in breaking through Iraqi lines. They had led the way, running over minefields to clear the ground for the Iranian ground assault. Wearing white headbands to signify the embracing of death, and shouting “*Shaheed! Shaheed!*” (Martyr, Martyr), they literally blew their way into heaven. Their numbers were never disclosed. But a walk through the residential suburbs of Iranian cities provided a clue. Window after window, block after block displayed black-bordered photographs of teenage or preteen youths.”

Escape

Aco’s escape, which sounds simple now, was a complex, expensive, drawn-out, and covert affair. Luckily, Hamid knew people who could help get his brother out of Iran. Ahmad sent a letter claiming their mother was deathly ill, asking permission for the young man to visit her in Mahabad. “As part of the plan,” Aco said later, “I lied to the officer and said I needed to be with my mother. Actually, she had died years before, but this request enabled me to get permission for a forty-eight-hour leave.

“So, I returned to Mahabad and stayed for half a day. Everything had been organized by my brothers for my escape. Shahab, my brother Ahmad’s son, and I were led by one man to the border with Turkey. We crossed during the night on horseback. From there we went to Istanbul, where I stayed for six months. A smuggler had organized an apartment for us and I stayed there. He also helped us fix the passport and tickets for us to go anywhere we chose. I went to Sweden. None of this would have been possible without the help of my brothers.”

Strings Hamid Pulled to Free His Brother

Much transpired from one step to the next in Aco’s flight from the army. October 1987 was a month of frantic activity for Aco and his older brother in Sweden. Behind the scenes, Hamid traveled to Uppsala to meet the person who would help his younger brother. Still in Istanbul, the smuggler who had first

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helped them disappeared, leaving them stranded. Hamid had to sign for a \$10,000 student loan from the Swedish government to pay for a second smuggler to help them leave the country. This man obtained passports and tickets and organized the trip. But even that amount was not sufficient. Hamid had to secure an additional loan from friends.

Several attempts to board the plane from Istanbul to Belgrade failed until the men decided to pay the police a hundred dollars. The first time they flew to Yugoslavia, they missed their connecting flight and had to stay two more days for the next one. Having nowhere to go, they rested at the airport, but were spotted by the police. Once their ID and passports were checked, the officials realized they were carrying false papers. They were immediately deported back to Turkey with two other men.

Turkey

Back in Turkey, the police interrogated them. "I know you fled from the war," the officer berated the young men. "And I'm going to send you back!" He then asked them how much money they had. "We are simple, poor people," they replied. One of the other travelers deported from Belgrade spoke some Turkish, and sensing that the customs officer was asking for a bribe, offered to "buy some extra cigarettes." In exchange, the guard would release them. The young men bought the cigarettes surreptitiously, without a soul seeing them, and snuck in to hide the payoff under the officer's chair.

Aco and his nephew Shahab called their contact, the smuggler's mother. She took them to a hotel for two nights, hoping no one would notice, because if people saw the smuggler had failed to get them out, his reputation would be irreparably damaged. They bought new tickets for Sweden, this time via Copenhagen.

The refugees were again stopped at the airport. When the customs officer perused their passports, he exclaimed, "I'm going to throw these away. These papers are fake!" After a heated exchange, Aco's nephew was allowed to go through. Then after an agonizing wait, Aco's passport was finally stamped and he was also allowed to leave Turkey.

Sweden

In Copenhagen, the refugees boarded the plane for Sweden with ease. When they arrived at Arlanda, the Stockholm airport, they both sighed in relief. Finally, they had arrived.

At that crucial period, Sweden was processing refugees very quickly. The police interviewed them. Aco and his nephew Shahab explained they were Kurds and had fled the war. They were then taken to a refugee camp outside the city. Meanwhile, outside the terminal, Hamid was anxiously awaiting their arrival. He finally approached the police and was told he could meet them at the refugee camp. After such a prolonged, tenuous, and stressful ordeal, the two brothers were reunited at the camp.



With his brother Aco and their nephew Shahab on their arrival in Sweden

Aco and Shahab left the camp two weeks later. They lived with Hamid for two weeks until they settled their residency and organized their affairs and studies. Both would move to Katrineholm, a city near Stockholm, and begin to learn Swedish—the first step to their new life.

Meeting Kurds in Stockholm

Now settled in Sweden, Hamid himself had started to meet members of the Kurdish community there. Though he continued to follow the political events of his country, once again his focus shifted one-pointedly to his higher education, moving toward a career.

Unfortunately, the political atmosphere in Sweden when Hamid arrived was extremely tense and difficult for the Kurds. Olaf Palme, Sweden's much-loved and respected prime minister, had been assassinated February 1986 in downtown Stockholm. While walking home from the cinema with his wife, he was murdered—allegedly by a Kurd from the PKK, the militant Kurdish political party in Turkey.

This created a shaky situation for Hamid's countrymen in Sweden. Eventually, the effect of this incident died down and the theory

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about the identity of the assassin proved inconclusive. Still, at the time, many Kurds were arrested and there was pervasive mistrust toward all Kurds.

All in a Name

By June 1987, Hamid had moved in with Amir Hashemi, another friend, to a student house at Stockholm University. Acclimating to another living situation with another roommate was a challenge he was well used to. But the move to Sweden heralded a much more momentous change. In the reshaping of his identity, Hamid would find the need to recognize the sweeping transformations in his life in a unique way.

Throughout his years abroad, Hamid Mahmoudi had found his birth name difficult for non-Kurds. People struggled to pronounce it, and even more, to remember it. Perhaps also sensing that a simpler name would help him integrate more easily into Swedish society, he decided the time had come to change his name. Additionally, just having a Kurdish surname in Sweden, particularly at the time Hamid arrived, was itself problematic, given the current sociopolitical issues. It was time for a fresh start—which included taking on a new name.

Hamid discussed this issue with the Kurdish community and politicians. Among them was Amir Ghazi, whom Hamid visited at his home. Amir's wife was the daughter of Qazi Mohammad, the first president of the Kurdistan Republic in 1946. Amir suggested the name "Alan," which was also Kurdish: after playing around with different possibilities, Sallar Haidari suggested "Dilan" as a family name. Hamid also contemplated the surname "Delon," which sounded a bit French.

Twenty years later, Abdullah Hassanzadeh, then secretary-general for the PDKI, shared that Amir Ghazi's own secret alias was "Alan." Ghazi had offered him the name, Alan Dilani, that would help facilitate the rest of his life.

Hamid also discussed the question with his girlfriend, Satu, and his friends. After playing around with different possibilities, he discarded the earlier choice of "Alan Delon" for "Alan Dilani" or "Alan Baski."

“He asked me earlier about suggestions for his new name,” recalled his future Finnish wife, Satu. “He invented his new name. He was deciding between ‘Dilani’ or ‘Baski’—but I told him, ‘Never Baski,’ because in Finnish it means ‘shit.’ And we don’t want to have a name that could be associated with that,” Satu said, grinning.

So now the boy born in Mahabad, who had lived in Italy for years, had a new name befitting the emergence of his life in his new Scandinavian homeland. From now on, he would be known as Alan Dilani.

Death of a Father

It was November 1987 and Alan was settling into his new life when he received some tragic news. “My sister’s husband called and told me that my father had died six months ago. For me, this was devastating.” His family had not wanted to inform him because Alan was in the midst of bringing Aco to Sweden. “Every time I called and asked for my father, they would tell me that he wasn’t home.”

In hindsight, Alan learned that they had not wanted to tell him the truth because Aco, who had been in Turkey for six months, was getting ready to finally come to Sweden. “They didn’t want to give us this terrible news because we were all preoccupied with moving my brother to Sweden.”

When Aco arrived at Alan’s home and heard the news, he too was grief-stricken. “Aco was despondent because he was extremely attached to my father. After all, he had spent many more years with my father than I had. I remember my brother crying inconsolably. Some of our friends came, befitting the Kurdish tradition to support the relatives of a deceased person.

“I called our brother Ahmad and questioned why he had waited so long to tell us. He explained that after weighing all the factors, they thought they had made the best decision. This was heartbreaking for me. I would never see my father again, the man who had supported me in so many ways throughout my childhood, especially following my mother’s death. He was a caring and concerned father, and I had deep feelings for him.”

2. Meeting Satu: A Turning Point

For Alan, a self-possessed and focused student, the future lay before him. Sweden had opened its borders to the promising young architect.

Soon after his arrival, Alan was staying with his friend Amir at the University of Stockholm student house. Through his friend, Alan began to meet other students. “One girl on our corridor was from Finland,” he recalled. “We met each other at meals and ate together. Amir had told me she knew other girls, and suggested we ask her to invite one of her friends so we could all go out together.”

The Beginning

It was a Saturday midsummer evening in June 1987. Satu Sauvala, a young Finnish student, had arrived in Sweden just three weeks before. The reason for her excursion: to improve her Swedish before heading back home. Satu and Ejies, a Finnish friend, had met in the student dormitory while strategizing how to spend that balmy evening. They wanted to party, but did not know where to go—or who to go with. “I know one guy called Amir. Let’s check in with him,” Ejias suggested.

When Satu met Alan, he spoke to her in German. “At first, I thought he was American. When I was a child, we had met a family and the husband was American. This young man strongly resembled him the way he was dressed. His haircut even looked American. This fellow introduced himself as Pietro. But later I learned his name was really Hamid. He called himself Pietro, the name of one of his friends from Switzerland. In the next breath, he shared he was from Kurdistan. The only context I had at that point for the Kurds was the political PKK group and the rumors about the Palme murders, a crime that was rocking Stockholm at the time—so it was hardly a positive thing to say that you were Kurdish.”

“That night we all went out dancing,” she reminisced. “Because of the midnight sun at that time of year, we were still out walking at three a.m.” The four students decided upon a restaurant in the center of Stockholm. The sun was still shining that midsummer evening; they were young and adventurous.

Evening Memories

“It was such a delightful evening,” Satu recalled. “As the evening wore on, I spoke with complete honesty to this stranger about some family problems. My sister and I had been arguing and were



With his wife, Satu, at the student house in Stockholm where they met in 1987

not getting along. For some reason, I shared this with Alan, as though I had known him forever. I did not pretend to be perfect. Later he shared that by speaking so openly, I had shown him who I really was. He felt I was a very honest person.”

Alan’s version of their meeting, as sometimes happens between men and women, was quite different: “Well, Satu had come to Stockholm and we met through a mutual friend. I was in my own world at that time—quite preoccupied. I came here to visit my old Kurdish friends; some were from Mahabad and there was my old teacher, Jafar Hassanpour. All of them were here. I was really enjoying spending time with them after many years alone in Italy. Then there was my younger brother who was trapped in Iran—and whom I wanted to save.

“My first meeting with Satu was engaging,” Alan recalled. “She was beautiful, attractive, and a well-educated young woman. I found her to be a very honest, forthright person. Actually, I moved in with her right away as I had no place to stay and she was very accommodating—which I greatly appreciated. We

began spending more and more time together in the afternoons between her busy work and school schedules. I lived with her from the outset and we became close friends quite quickly.”

“At that time, I had a mission, and Satu immediately provided me with the peace and tranquility I needed. She was very quiet and not demanding, which was good for me. Despite our ten-year age difference, I could speak with her about anything and everything. She was, and is, very clever. Satu was adept at helping me sift through my problems with sensible, discerning suggestions. The more time we spent, the more I thought, ‘I have found the woman I could spend the rest of my life with.’ She had so many fine qualities. For the first time, I experienced that I could cherish this person so much. It was an exciting time for me. With her, I had fallen in love for the first time in my life.”

Satu added, “I felt he was a very nice, kind, and attentive person, and he gave me a lot of attention. Alan listened as we sat close to each other. That night we danced and stayed together all evening, until two in the morning. We walked for ages; there was no metro running at that hour. It was still light and it felt as though we walked half the night, wending our way to the student house.”

Satu’s Busy Life

“The next morning, I left for work, not having slept one iota, not one wink. We arrived back at my room at four or five in the morning and then at seven, I had to go to work. Mine was a summer job at the Hotel Circle Plaza I had found through Nord Plaz, a Nordic organization that helps students find summer jobs. It was a cleaning job and my shift lasted all the next day. It was a very long day and I was extremely tired.

“When I woke up to go to work, Alan stayed in my room and slept. I had only a studio, so I must have felt I could trust him. Or perhaps I agreed to this because I was only nineteen years old. He had decided that now he was here. ‘So, from now on I will stay with you,’ he declared and after that evening, he moved in. It all happened so suddenly.

“I worked all day and came home fatigued. I felt so bad, tired and ugly—and the first person I saw when I stepped out of the metro was him, waiting with his friend. Hamid wanted to talk and I protested, ‘Oh, no, no. Don’t look at me.’ Of course, since he had already moved in, we had the familiarity of roommates. Ever since then, we’ve lived and made our life together.

“At the beginning, we spent a lot of time with each other. He stayed with me for a few months and hadn’t yet decided if Sweden was to be his permanent home. He was enjoying the freedom of weighing his options.”

Alan had found a person outside his family he could fully trust for the first time, someone who could become his life partner. So he decided to spend more time with Satu, to get to know her better, since he already felt she would become his future wife. “I thought it was the only way to get to know her, as well as her culture. I soon realized she was to be my only love, and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.”

Testing the Waters

From her end, Satu had met a nice man who was very attentive to her, so she decided to give the relationship a try. “I thought if I don’t do this, I may regret it for the rest of my life. I mean he had *moved in with me* immediately. On the other hand, I wondered, is he simply staying with me because he doesn’t have another place?”

Alan at that time was still very consumed with Aco’s predicament. Satu clearly remembers the impact Aco’s situation had on their blossoming relationship. “Alan was often on long telephone calls—for one or two hours at a time. Sometimes our phone bill would be six thousand SEK (six hundred euros). That was my whole month’s salary. All of it paid for that one phone bill. We didn’t have any money. It was only because of some childhood savings from Finland that we could manage economically during that time.

“We had met at the end of June. I was to return to Finland in August. Around mid-July, Alan decided he wanted to revisit Italy with his friend Fazel, so he left for a few weeks. I asked him to bring me some Italian cigarettes because I was young and thought it was exotic and cool to smoke. He brought me those, as well as a lovely blue outfit from the Ellesse, the high fashion business where Franca worked. When you’re young, gifts like these make a big impression on you.”



Meet Satu after his return from Italy, summer 1987

Meeting Satu's Parents

“In the beginning, when I told my parents that I’d met a man from Kurdistan, I actually didn’t even know what Kurdistan was! Mostly I spoke to my mother, not my father. I even told her about his name, explaining that he liked calling himself Pietro—though this wasn’t his actual name.

“In mid-August, my parents came for a visit. I felt it was essential that they meet him, especially if I was going to move to Sweden.” Satu was eager that her parents be introduced to this man who had randomly tumbled into her life. He now wanted her to move to Sweden to live with him.

She had planned to return home after three months. For a young woman who had always lived with her parents, these events completely transformed her life. In September, Satu returned to Finland for her exams in Swedish; she stayed for six weeks.

Changing Times

Things were moving quickly. Alan decided it was time to start a married life and assume responsibility with a partner. Satu had come into his life and he also liked her parents; they instantly considered him part of the family. This was very meaningful for him, given the significance of family for the Kurds. Being in exile and living away from his own family, he had missed family contact for many years.

From Italy, Alan sent an ultimatum to his future wife. He had come to realize he did not want to live in Finland, he wrote her. But if Satu would return to Stockholm, he would join her. He realized that Sweden, with its many hospitals built during the sixties and seventies, was a good match for his work, a place where he could do research and continue work on his Ph.D. All this poured out in an express mail letter, in which he shared that his real reason for moving back to Sweden was to be with her. If not, he would move to another country.

Satu replied to this letter with an express letter of her own—and a resounding “Yes!”

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Meeting Satu's parents for the first time, summer 1987

Future In-Law Visit to Sweden

Alan remembers clearly the visit from Satu's family in August 1987. He invited the family and cooked Italian food for everyone: pizza, lasagna, and pasta. Atso Sauvala, Satu's father, was a university professor in Savonlinna and taught pedagogy. "He was a nice person, and even though he had never heard about Kurdish people, let alone known one, they accepted me from the start," Alan recalled. "Satu, too, was highly intelligent." This was a strong draw for him. "When I saw that she was so well educated at that young age, I knew she would be an ideal life partner for me. We had many things in common that were important.

"I was an athletic person; I didn't drink or smoke, and I was an academic. We had a lot in common, her father and I. Atso was very satisfied with my credentials." On top of that, noted Vappu, Satu's mother, Alan liked to cook! In those days, there was a big track-and-field competition between Sweden and Finland. "My father loved that event; it lasted for two days," Satu explained. "Juha, my younger brother, was there and we went to watch those games with Alan."

From the start, Satu's parents genuinely liked the young suitor. "For my father, it was important that Alan didn't drink or smoke—and that he was studying. Impressive, too, was that Alan already had his master's degree in architecture. Since my father was a professor, academics were high on his list. Nowadays, my mother also notes there were many similarities between the two of them. Both can also be excessively determined at times—completely focused on themselves."

After visiting Satu's family in chilly minus 37-degree weather for Christmas, they both happily traveled to Perugia to meet Alan's "Italian family." Everyone was very happy for the young couple. They all went dancing to celebrate the New Year in the company of five hundred Italians who, with wine and good cheer, maintained their joyful and loving composure. Everything was coming together perfectly.

The Future

Alan and Satu looked forward with enthusiasm to their future together. Always the planner and organizer, Alan wanted to make things official that summer and line out his future with Satu. "It was clear for me that it was time to confirm my true love for Satu and get engaged. On the anniversary of the same midsummer day we had first met, I would ask her to marry me," Alan recalled.

The way Satu remembered it: Alan announced one day. "Okay, it's midsummer 1988, so we will get engaged. Then a year after that, we will get married."



With Satu in their first apartment in Rinkeby, 1988

“From the beginning, everything was all very definite: this is how we will move forward, how we will do it,” Satu reflected. “Of course, the truth is, I liked him very much. So, at each juncture point, our life moved forward as if by some invisible plan.”

The Proposal

In June of 1988, they traveled to visit Satu’s parents in Finland. Alan was thirty years old and Satu was twenty. Upon arrival, Alan approached Satu’s father and asked for her hand. Atso scanned Alan for a moment and replied right away with a smile, “Of course, it’s okay with me.” He chuckled, “I’m not going to live with you. You’re going to live with my daughter, so if she’s happy, I am also happy.”

“That midsummer, her father had been quite sick with asthma; the Finnish weather was not good for him,” Alan explained. “I felt he was very pleased that we were getting married and establishing a family. Juha, Satu’s brother, was nine years old and Heli, her sister, was already living with her own boyfriend.

“We had an engagement party with the family at a restaurant—which was very unusual,” recalled Satu. “We never did that in Finland. We always ate at home since we did not lead an extravagant life. Though my father was a professor, my mother was mostly at home; they had to be economical.”



Meeting with Satu’s family in Savonlinna



Alan and Satu's engagement in midsummer, June 1988

The couple decided to get married the following summer of '89. But they had to start planning because they wanted the ceremony at a fifteenth-century stone fortress, the Olavinlinna Castle, located in Savonlinna. The castle, also known as the Water Fortress, was built on a small, rocky island surrounded by the Saimaa Lake. It was one of the most impressive and beautiful historic buildings in Finland. Since 1912 it had hosted the Savonlinna Opera Festival. The setting for their upcoming wedding couldn't have been more picturesque or romantic.

Invitations were sent out to friends everywhere. On Alan's side, Franca and her family were the first to be invited. Of course, Franca always took care of his clothes and sent him a Valentino wedding suit.

Meanwhile, Alan had begun to contact universities for his Ph.D. He also contacted Brink, an architectural firm, and began working there in the summer of 1988. Naturally he was extremely happy to have found a job; for the soon-to-be newlyweds, it would be a relief to have money coming in.

Austere Beginnings to Life as a Swedish Couple

Soon after Satu's return from Finland at the end of October 1987, they had moved into a two-room apartment in Rinkeby, a northern section of Stockholm that today is populated predominantly by foreigners, and has become very segregated. Later, in 1989, they

"Of course, it's okay with me."
He chuckled,
"I'm not going to live with you. You're going to live with my daughter, so if she's happy, I am also happy."



Alan and Satu's wedding, June 1989

would shift to a campus student apartment in Lappis, the place where they had met. Their three-room apartment there was on a hill, close to water and forests. It was a peaceful and beautiful setting for a young couple. It had a small balcony with windows that overlooked a tree-lined parking lot and was close to Satu's school, Stockholm University.

"We had our own apartment," remembered Satu nostalgically. "We owned a small mattress, his stereo, clothes and many, many books. I brought some of my belongings from Finland and that was it. I still have that mattress at home. We did not even own a table.

“Yet we were very happy,” Satu continued. In the summer of 1987, for the first time in his life, Alan had contacted Social Services requesting help to set up his new home. “I told them that we were living there, had no money, and asked for financial support to buy some furniture. We received twelve thousand SEK, about thirteen hundred euros. That was a lot of money then. From Ikea we bought a sofa, a table, and a few other things.”

Satu began work at the post office sorting mail. During that period, Alan also secured a student loan, which helped finance his brother Aco’s move to Sweden. “In Sweden,” Satu explained, “you can receive ample student loans, and for us, they were a godsend.” Money was tight, but they managed. “Alan was fun and is a lovely person. We went out a lot, mostly for pizza because it was cheap. He spent a lot of time with me. It was a wonderful time, absolutely.”

By June 1988, Alan had joined Satu in working at the post office. With both of them still students, they needed extra income while Alan finished his language studies and began to look for architectural work.

A Castle Wedding, June 1989

Everything came together the next year in midsummer, including the wedding. Satu, Alan, Franca, and a friend from Italy arrived a day early from Sweden. From Stockholm they had taken a boat to Helsinki, then driven three hours to Savonlinna, where Satu’s family lived. They all arrived on June 22, the day after Midsummer’s Eve and the day before the wedding. In the evening, the guests went to a friend’s home for a Scandinavian sauna and swim.

The wedding was to take place at three in the afternoon, but as the hour approached, ten expected guests had not yet arrived. This included Alan’s family and friends from Sweden. It turned out their flight to Helsinki at ten that morning had been followed by a 350-kilometer drive. The winding roads necessitated slow, careful driving; they had also lost their way. There were no phones in sight until finally they reached a lone gas station.

Satu was growing increasingly anxious as the wedding hour approached and many major guests hadn’t yet arrived. She was relieved to learn they were finally en route and approaching. Alan awaited them at her parent’s home while everyone else headed to the castle. Their friends finally arrived and quickly changed. Alan wore a silver blue suit with a crimson bowtie; Satu, a white bridal dress with a veil. The latecomers rushed to the Olanvilinna castle with Alan.

Wedding Day

It was an exquisite summer afternoon. The sky was clear, and the cold, blue lake waters shimmered under the sun. Surrounded by water, they crossed the drawbridge to the stone-built castle. “I remember when I approached, there were many people around because it was tourist season; people



With his brother and nephew at their wedding, June 1989

were snapping photos everywhere. I was so happy that day,” recalled Satu. “I felt really special. We climbed the stairs to the small chapel and waited for Alan to arrive.”

Finally Alan appeared flanked by his guests, racing up the stairs, just in the nick of time. Satu took her father’s arm and he escorted her into the chapel. Alan waited in the front with the priest. Light streamed from openings built into the thick stone walls. The view of the pristine waters and forests was breathtaking. Satu had requested that an Evangelist Lutheran minister marry them, and Alan agreed. He wanted Satu and her parents to be happy. The minister spoke in English so Alan could understand.

“His English, the minister’s I mean, was not very good,” Satu smiled. “At one point, he asked me if I wanted to take Alan as my *wife*. I didn’t even notice because I was so nervous, but everybody laughed: ‘Oh, so you have a wife now!’ ‘Okay, I have a wife,’ I responded.”

The reception took place downstairs in a large hall. Satu’s parents took care of all the expenses for the celebration. It was a boisterous, fun-filled evening. There was dancing and a small three-person band including an adorable ten-year-old who played the drums. Everyone showered blessings on them.

Honeymoon in the Palace of a Czar

Since there were no resources for a full-fledged honeymoon, the couple spent the night at a charming hotel her family had booked in a splendid summer house that a Russian czar had built for his wife; it was surrounded by trees. Franca and her friend stayed there, too. The guests from Sweden returned home to work, but many relatives stayed with Satu's parents. The next day, everyone gathered to continue celebrating and open wedding presents.

The couple accompanied Franca back to Sweden for her return flight to Italy. Soon after, Alan and Satu went back to Finland by ferry. They spent those pristine summer days enjoying the warmth, the sun, and the beauty of nature. Simple things like rowing to nearby islands or just being together were enough for them.

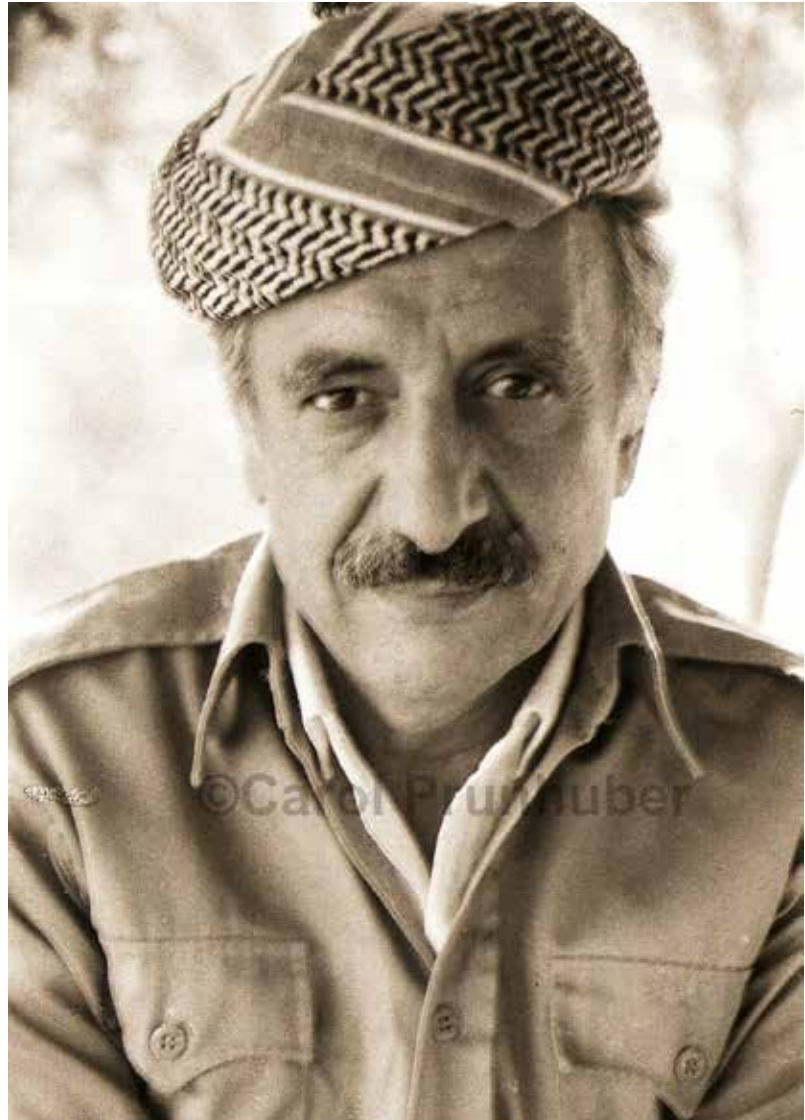
Tragedy

It was July 13, and Satu and Alan had been enjoying their summer together. That night, Alan sat with his father-in-law watching news on television. The announcer suddenly began speaking about the Kurds. Alan sat up, transfixed, as his father-in-law translated for him that a prominent Kurdish leader had died. That leader was Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou.

Alan took in the news as time seemed literally to stand still. "For me everything was up and down," he said. As he read the English headlines, he felt the incomprehensible depth of this tragedy. He had known Ghassemlou and often seen the inspiring leader in person at his home in Mahabad. Ghassemlou had been a childhood role model for him, someone he held tremendous admiration for. His first instinct was to call his Kurdish friends to get more information. No one knew exactly what had happened. There were contradictory stories. One said he had been killed by Saddam Hussein, others said by other Kurds, others by the Iranians . . . it was all disconcerting and confusing.

His new wife, Satu, had no idea who Ghassemlou even was. Until now Alan had never spoken about him. Yet she witnessed her husband in undeniable grief and shock over this tragedy. He was disconsolate, saying he needed to return to Stockholm

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Dr. Abdul Rahaman Ghassemlou, charismatic leader of Kurdistan, in Iran immediately. During the ferry ride back to Sweden, Ghassemlou's life and its meaning for millions of Kurds filled his thoughts. With the passing of this iconic leader, he feared for what the future might now hold for millions of his brethren.

Ghassemlou's Death: A Crushing Blow

A few days later, the Kurds in Sweden organized a massive demonstration in Stockholm. Huge photos of their fallen leader

were carried by men and women as they walked, sobbing over this untimely death. “There were many, many people,” Alan explained. “The police escorted the demonstrators while Ghassemlou’s daughter, dressed in black, walked in the front, silently crying.”

For Alan, the blow of Ghassemlou death was every bit as painful as the news he had received a few months before of his father’s death. Both men had been strong influences in his early life and inspired him in key ways.

“When I heard about Dr. Ghassemlou, it was life-altering for me. He was my hope for the future of Kurdistan, our hope for a nation and a leader for whom we held unbridled pride and respect. He was ever the respected statesman. His death made me feel desperate because there was no one that could possibly replace him; there was no one who came close to his stature or what he represented. He was a unique human being and leader—charismatic, intelligent, and well respected, by both Kurds and non-Kurdish people.

“He had been involved with the Kurdish struggle for so many years of his life. He was the pride of all Kurds at that time. Even those not familiar with Ghassemlou, and those from political parties who opposed Ghassemlou, united over his passing.”

His death made it clear who Ghassemlou was, his true stature. He was missed by all, then and now, to this day. There is no Kurdish leader at the present time who compares at all with him in gravitas and dignity. Alan would later essentially make a pilgrimage to the Hilton in central Vienna to walk the same path Ghassemlou had taken on the last day of his life. It was from this hotel that the Kurdish leader walked to the apartment where he was to meet a delegation sent by the Islamic Republic of Iran to negotiate a peace agreement. It was during these peace talks that Ghassemlou was brutally murdered by the representatives of the Iranian regime. Alan and his family would also visit Paris’s Père Lachaise cemetery where Ghassemlou was laid to rest. There the Dilani family would pay their respects and Alan promise to follow his mission and vision for the Kurdish people.

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Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou

Work

During those years in Sweden, it was easy for a foreigner to find work, whether you were qualified or not. So Alan had found a job quite quickly. While he continued to scout universities where he might best complete his Ph.D., Alan had begun work with the architectural firm

Brink; this left Satu now able to begin her own further studies. She had thought about going into history, but her pragmatic husband encouraged her to study something else that would grant her ready, immediate well-paid employment. So in September 1988, Satu had entered the School of Business, in the field of economics at the University of Stockholm.

A Home of Their Own

In 1989, Alan decided it was time to build their own home. They began searching for a piece of land. “As an architect,” he said, “it was less expensive and better to build, and I could design it. In Sweden if it was your first home, the government supported you financially. So, we applied for a two-hundred thousand dollar housing loan.” With this and the \$35,000 the newlyweds had received from Satu’s parents, they financed the land purchase—a debt the couple later settled with Atso.

Alan found the cheapest prefabricated house from Norway and bought a piece of land in the southern part of the city, close to lake Drevviken. “I redesigned it, and by 1990, we had our home, and moved in by April 1991,” Satu said. “It took a lot of work and focus to build this house by ourselves. Alan was very driven about wanting to live in a house he had made. He was a bundle of energy, the coordinator of everything. We bought the land, house, garage, and foundation—all separately. He did absolutely everything and was completely committed to this project.”

While Alan worked and studied Swedish, Satu immersed herself in her career and Swedish language studies as well. Mastering the new language was critical for them both. Work and study became their sole focus.

Studies

Satu had to study very hard, especially the last year, so she could begin working as soon as possible. “It was an enormous concern for us now because in 1988 when Alan started to work, I had begun to study at the university,” remembered Satu. “My studies were meant to take three and a half years but I needed to finish within three years because in 1990, we bought this land.”

“I was a student working for a twelve thousand–SEK salary as an architect,” explained Alan. “Satu is very clever and worked hard; she finished her accounting studies six months ahead of schedule. Her expertise helped us manage our household financially. It was all very tough.”

The house was finished in the spring of 1991 and they moved in immediately. “Then I also finished my studies but I couldn’t find work corresponding to my education,” Satu said. “I think it was because of my name: from my applications, they didn’t know if I was a woman or a man. That’s the reality. You must have a Swedish name, like Anna Svenson, and then life and jobs are much easier in Sweden.”

During the summer, thanks to a neighbor, she found work at an elderly care facility. In August 1991, she found another job; but one year later, an economic crisis hit Sweden. “Alan lost his job and we were one and a half million SEK in debt. Alan had worked at Brink for four years, from 1988 until 1992, when the building crisis descended upon the country. He and other architects were fired. Only the main management remained at the company. It was rough. Every kroner we saved was used to pay back the mortgage.”



Dr. Ghassemloou’s memorial at the site of his murder in Vienna, with Ambassador Sinjari

Alan and Satu had been forging their future, but this crisis left them feeling uncertain.

Satu’s Family

Satu’s father retired early owing to health issues. He had asthma, and Finland’s extreme weather exacerbated this condition. Atso had always dreamed of traveling by car from California to Latin America, and he did make that trip.



Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where Dr. Ghassem Lou rests

While he traveled, Vappu and Juha, Satu's mother and brother, came to stay with Alan and Satu and helped set up the new house. They stayed for one year.

In June 1993, the Dilanis had their first child, Sara, a daughter. Vappu, with them in Stockholm, helped with the child and even designed and sewed clothes for her. They had decided to have a second child very soon because Satu had an eighteen-month maternity leave. Before this leave period was finished, Sara was joined by a little brother, Marco, in December 1994.

In October 1994, Atso passed away very unexpectedly. Two months before he died, Satu had visited her father when he was in the hospital. She had brought her infant daughter, Sara, to meet her grandfather. Given his poor health, it would have benefited him to live in a warmer country like Spain, but he loved Finland.

This was a very sad moment for the whole family. He had not lived to see Marco born; his death was untimely, for Atso was only fifty-seven. Now Vappu was left with Juha. She and her son moved to a house surrounded by beautiful landscape, close to the sea, where they lived for many years.



Alan with their children, Sara and Marco

Satu's Grandmother

Alan held both concern and fascination for Satu's eighty-eight-year-old grandmother, Aunne. She was a most unusual woman. She had been a teacher and retired at sixty. Then she began a new career, becoming an artist without ever having painted or done any drawing. At age eighty-eight she had an exhibition of her art work. She and Alan communicated by sending cards. He often came to visit, and she visited her family in Stockholm as well. Despite her age, she took the boat to travel to Sweden.

She used to tell Alan her remembered stories about life during World War II. Satu's mother had been adopted following the war. "She was a World War Two baby who grew up with stepparents, so after they died, she was alone," Satu explained.

Alan has often cited Aunne in his lectures on aging and health. "I have used her life story in my lectures for elderly health because she was inspirational, very passionate about art. She worked with wood, metal, textile, and aquarelle paint. She was always active. In her later years, she had a clock; if she had problems, she could ask for help by ringing an alarm connected to Social Services. She was an amazing person."

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Aunne, Satu's grandmother, who lived 100 years

When she turned 100, Alan and Satu went to celebrate with her. It had been a trying time because her family had been unable to find a residential home for her. In Finland, surprisingly, there were not enough places focused on elderly care. And because she was so old, her life and its quality were not considered a priority. So the family had no choice but to move her to a hospital where she was to stay in emergency care for six months, though she was not ill. Alan explained, with deep regret, "In truth, because of her age, she was a low priority for the hospital and they didn't properly care for her. She stayed indoors for three to four months. She was just old. They called this the end-of-life treatment: the hospitals don't care for them, they simply wait for them to die; they want them to die, so they don't feed them enough. This happens often. It is a dismal state of affairs."

"In Latin countries and in America, people take care of their elders. For example, my Italian Mamma is ninety-four years old and even now, Franca and Paula take very good care of her. The Latin culture is vastly more compassionate in that sense. Here it's not the same and it's very disheartening.

“In Finland, the government is responsible for the care of its children and elders. The elderly become like kids and society considers the government should take care of them. Social welfare for the elders is inferior. I work with the elderly and I’ve seen that the majority don’t get treated well, especially at that age.”

Years later, Alan would dedicate his expertise and understanding toward elder care.

Satu: A Great Support

During their marriage, Satu has lent great and constant support to her husband. She would always review his work. “Whatever I wrote, Satu read it. I could engage her in all my work, especially in university,” Alan recalled. “She was constantly there and supported me in every way, including all my travels—even to Kurdistan. My success has depended on her support. In many ways, she has been the key to my success.

“When I travel, she is dedicated to caring for the household and especially our two children. They’ve grown up beautifully because of her mothering. Sara and Marco speak Finnish as well as English, Swedish, Spanish, and Italian. They do not speak Kurdish because I didn’t want to push them. Yet both of them understand the Kurdish language. They are more involved with the Kurdish culture than the Swedish. They like the music; they like to dance to it.

“Sara has many Kurdish friends. When there is a Kurdish demonstration, she’s always there. My brother came several times to visit us and my sister came when the children were three and four. Satu learned enough Kurdish to be able to have a simple conversation with her brother- and sister-in-law on the phone.”

Of living internationally and holding a global awareness, Alan has said: “My children and my wife have been all over the world. They all have a very broad life view. My children did not long to travel when they graduated because they have already done this, all over the world, while all their friends wanted to travel as soon as they finished school. I tried to impart this knowledge to my children, to broaden their life experience. Sara and Marco are very engaged socially worldwide, especially Sara. Everywhere she goes, she adjusts within a few minutes. I think this is an important quality she has received from the ways we have lived as a family. Marco equally is very calm and sensitive; he has very high social competence. And he loves cooking very good food.

“Over the years, I’ve lived in many places. Now I find I can live anywhere around the world. It has become very easeful for me to adjust equally into different cultures. My entire family shares this quality. This makes me extremely happy.”

3. "Nine Hospitals Meet the Future," 1989-1993

Pursuing further depth in his chosen field, Alan delved into more nuanced hospital planning research and determined that as his Ph.D. topic he would study the critical factors that create a care-giving, efficient, and revolutionary approach to nursing departments. He selected nine Scandinavian hospitals to study and pursued this subject with characteristic motivation. Alan began working at Trondheim, in Norway, and led a forum at KTH, the Royal Institute of Technology, holding a Nordic Seminar for medical professionals and architects in Stockholm. His work with Brink ended in 1992 and he began full-time work at KTH.

Alan landed in fertile ground when he made Sweden his future home. There was a lot of action taking place throughout Sweden and Scandinavia in the areas of hospital design and construction. It was a booming period. Many people who worked in these fields, after reading his master's thesis, were intrigued by his focus on this relevant and specialized area. From some he received job offers. Alan set his sights on one thing: further analysis and study of the places where nurses worked in hospitals and how to make their jobs better, easier, and more effective for the patients they served. He decided to make this the topic of his Ph.D.

Along the way, he met Olle Sutinen, a brilliant Finnish architect who worked for SPRI, the Research Institute for Hospital Planning. This group was well-known for developing architectural knowledge focused solely on hospitals. Olle was in the middle of linking his office with Brink. He and Alan hit it off with shared goals and interests. When they met, Olle was establishing his own office. Alan found this man's interconnected work totally intriguing.

Brink

Alan had begun work with Brink in late 1988, and did so for the next four years. One of the things Alan learned on the job was that county councils were responsible for healthcare planning in Stockholm. This knowledge would serve him well in the future.

At Brink, he designed several psychiatric and elderly care units and worked with a number of large hospitals in a range of planning stages. "I was part of the team of three to five people that developed and designed parts of the project," he explained. "At that time, all our designs were hand drawn. Even if we did not have computer design then it was a very creative period. My interest in the planning process developed and this would lead me to prioritize and develop my Ph.D. research.

"I was revolutionary, wanting to help economically challenged people. But in the end, this idea was not economically feasible."

"I remember being very excited to visit Bo Castenfors, a famous architect who had designed the Rikshospitalet, the national hospital in Oslo, considered one of the best hospitals in Scandinavia. Castenfors had won the competition bid for the hospital design. I had great respect for him and felt he liked me. He was a brilliant man and I was fortunate to learn from him, something I felt was not happening at my office at Brink."

Alan threw himself into this new job with characteristic verve, creativity, and effort, working in the morning and studying Swedish at night. "Alan often worked until midnight or one in the morning," Satu recalled. "He also attended social gatherings at the office, often meeting with the municipalities. He gave his time generously—as is his nature."

Africa

Alan continued his search for the right university for graduate studies, with an eye to beginning his Ph.D. As part of his focus on supportive design approaches for nursing departments, his first idea was to work in Africa, promoting development of more effective healthcare systems serving the poor in African nations. Alan met and spoke with Professor Sven Thiberg, a Social Democrat and leftist, who accepted this concept as a potential research topic. Sven was known as a professor who worked with all manner of students and theses, from left to right. "It was important to find a professor who accepted you. Since I had worked full-time in his department, I'd seen his open-mindedness," Alan reflected. "I was revolutionary, wanting to help economically challenged people. But in the end, this idea was not economically feasible." Despite his altruistic and humanitarian leanings, Alan realized such a topic was not pragmatic and that sponsorship would be difficult to nail down.

He was already working with several healthcare projects through Brink—investigating ways nursing departments could function more effectively, now and into the future. This current job-related focus was a natural segue to further his Ph.D. research.

Ph.D. Commences

In 1989, Alan began his Ph.D. project with evaluation of nursing departments in nine different hospitals. One hospital was in Stockholm and five were in other parts of Sweden. The rest were in Norway, Finland, and Denmark. These hospitals had been recently built and represented the latest design trends and ideas. His main criterion for choosing them was that they all had targeted acute care as their focus. This in-depth study would continue for five years. His final paper would be published by KTH after he finished in 1994, thus receiving a Licentiate degree, a diploma level between a master's and a doctorate.

The key questions he queried in this research were these:

- How do these hospitals meet the needs of the future?
- What are the new ideas and innovations incorporated in them, and how do these compare with traditional ones?
- What are the trends in hospital planning?
- How do the staff and patients cope with the built environment?

Nursing Ward Analysis

Alan proceeded with a complete analysis of each hospital's nursing ward. He understood that the foundation of every hospital lay in this ward. It was literally the heart of the hospital: the place where patients and staff met and interacted. It was also where patients most acutely experienced the efficacy of the building and became healed. Hence, it was the most critical space. The other most important spaces in the hospital, he realized, were the patients' rooms. His study included this radius: where nursing care happened, and whether important criteria were being neglected.

He found some hospitals very progressive, well-designed, and effective—and others poorly conceived, with little thought to patient care. The health of the caretakers—that is, the nurses, physically and mentally—was often overlooked in design plans. For example, Halmstad City Hospital had three-bed rooms for

patients, and the design was poor. The design itself created many potential challenges. Other facilities were much more mindful of patient and staff needs and addressed these with refreshing creativity.

Hands-On Approach

Alan spent time himself on the hospital floors as a nurse, to experience what the fruit of each design produced. “I spent two weeks in each hospital,” he explained. “To begin with, in one hospital, I actually worked as a nurse, without formal training, of course. But I dressed as a nurse and performed duties that were not medically related.” Accompanying the nurses, his aim was to “feel what it was like and what their experience was of working in the hospital.”

Pilot Project at St. Göran Hospital

“The patients never knew that I was not a part of the staff during those times,” Alan said. “For one month, I did this as a pilot project in St. Göran Hospital in Stockholm to see if it worked and to yield the data I had hoped for.

“St. Göran Hospital was the most contemporary building in Stockholm. There I analyzed (1) how many and what types of rooms they had, (2) their care philosophy, (3) how the different activities ran in each ward and (4) how support for the ward was organized. Other topics I explored were (5) staff structure (nurses, assistant nurses), (6) personnel, (7) how many nurses they had working and whether they were more or less qualified and (8) what times and hours they worked. I also had to describe which nursing model they were applying. I applied for a two-week period in each of the nine hospitals.”

Tromsø Hospital in Northern Norway

Another hospital where Alan worked was Tromsø in Norway. “Tromsø was another one of the case studies for my Ph.D. I was there for two weeks and spent time in their nursing ward to observe how it worked. I discovered it was designed as a block hospital, which meant that there were a number of blocks built with vertical communication that connected the blocks with each other; they comprised a three-floor unit. On each floor, there were two nursing departments, with a total of eighteen nursing departments in the building.

“Each nursing department had thirty patients, divided into three groups of ten patients each—with two staff members, one nurse and one assistant, responsible for them. Because the ward was not well designed, the working conditions for some of the staff were not user friendly. Some nurses had to walk nearly six kilometers per day, while others spent much less time to serve their patients. This care model in a hospital is known as *group care*.

“There are many philosophies concerning how to take care of patients. There is a second model called PAR, in which a specific number of patients have only two staff members designated to care for them during their entire hospital stay. A team of two nurses takes on a particular patient’s care from the day they arrive until they leave: there is one nurse and one under-nurse who walk through the ward to meet their designated patients. These nurses are responsible for a given number of patients.”

The Impact on Patient Care of the Distance Nurses Walk

“Critical to my study,” Alan observed, “as a look at the different distances nurses had to walk in a day. For them to perform their work optimally, this distance is critically important. There was one nursing station where nurses walked to all parts of the ward. Since their nursing station was not centrally located, the older nurses worked closer to the station and had shorter walking distance.

“In another model, nurses had patients with rooms far away from the nursing station. They had to walk very far and became much more fatigued. After evaluation, I found the latter walked almost six kilometers per day. This was an inordinate distance for some of them.

“In the beginning at one new hospital they said, ‘Oh, very nice. We have come to a new hospital and it has nice colors and beautiful décor.’ But after two weeks, staff found it to be a very hard place to work, compared to what they were used to. It was very simple. I understood this immediately. Because the nursing station was not centrally located, they didn’t have other services close to them. There were fifteen to eighteen wards in this facility that had been built with this type of design and model of care. They had a room outside their area for education, but they never used it.”

The point was that the design did not take into consideration the staff activities within the wards because the architects had not involved the staff in their reviews.

The point was that the design did not take into consideration the staff activities within the wards because the architects had not involved the staff in their reviews.

Innovative Design Approach with the Staff in Mind

“Therefore, in my Ph.D., I suggested changing the plan. I put all the nursing stations in the center, so nurses could have equal access to all the wards. All the nurses were situated exactly the same distance from their patients. I also reduced the number of patients to be served by from thirty-two to twenty-eight. This meant there were four wards with seven patients on one side and seven patients on the other, with a team of two nurses serving each group of seven patients. Nursing teams were equal, so they could work, no matter which team was operating. Each had the same distance to cover.

Size of Ward and Organizational Care Models

“We analyzed internal and external connections between nurses and patients. I analyzed the staff sense of control—for example, if nurses are in a certain location, could they see all the departments at night? In the past, they could only see a very limited distance. Some time before, one patient had jumped out from the window and died—to be discovered only the next day, since the nurses could not have an overview of all patient rooms from their nursing station. Some patients left the hospital to return home for the night and came back the next day without the staff knowing. There was simply no control because there were two entrances. But positioned differently, nurses could see both sides, including who came and left. Changing the design enabled a greater degree of efficiency and safety for everyone.

“These were the models I worked on: walking orientation, walking distance, and working efficiency. I analyzed these three factors in a detailed manner and came to the following conclusion: The nursing station should be easily reached by the patient. It should not be located outside the ward. There was a need to modify the ward configuration so it worked well in terms of room connection, distance, and sense of control for the staff. My suggestions were accepted and welcomed by all the staff.

“The day after my presentation,” recalled Alan, “the Norwegian daily journal *Adresseavisen* quoted the hospital director saying that the new hospital was old-fashioned and needed a fifteen-million NOK reconstruction just one year after opening. He agreed that they had followed the old hospital design, which was no longer valid.”⁷

Further Career Expansion and Developments

Alan’s research paved the way for further career openings for him. Because he had included one case from Tromsø, in 1990 Alan was invited to Norway to present his report. Following this, the Norwegian Ministry of Health asked him to work at Trondheim. “After these evaluation articles were published,” Alan said, “the Ministry of Health in Norway invited me to visit their new hospital

project in Trondheim and present my findings. Consequently, I would be involved in the evaluation of the new Trondheim project for the next two decades.”

There were even more new opportunities for Alan. In 1991–1992, he led a Forum for Healthcare Research at KTH Royal Institute of Technology and organized a Nordic Seminar—a seminar series with a number of lecturers presenting findings to hospitals from the Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark—in Stockholm. “It was part of my research to network and discuss what was going on in Scandinavian healthcare and invite architects and authorities to discuss new projects in the country,” Alan said.

Further Expansion

In Sweden two large firms, White Architects and FFNS, dominated the market and the competition. Yet they were also aggressive in acquiring smaller qualified firms to enlarge their business and penetrate the market in other parts of the country. To maximize their profits, they usually kept key staff in their new agency acquisitions and fired the rest. At times, they built what amounted to a type of cartel and shared jobs in different parts of Sweden. “Many firms in the country hate these two companies because some of their dealings are considered to be unethical,” Alan explained.

When Alan’s work with Brink ended in 1992 and he shifted full-time to KTH, this new opportunity led to unanticipated expansion in the philosophy of his chosen architectural field. Hospital design and construction was about to become more multidimensional and impactful. The new ideas about to be born would be broadcast throughout the world by the young architect from Mahabad.

Before that could happen, in 1994 a challenging period of controversy in Alan’s life began. He would find himself opposed by some of the most prominent personalities and architectural institutions in Sweden at that time. This would test his mettle—and for a time, at least, impact the immediate future for him and his family.

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4. Challenges in Sweden: Architecture and Politics, 1994-1996

The trouble started in the late fall of 1994. With the publication of Alan's first article in November, a media controversy ensued that lasted until March 1995. Alan highlighted inadequacies he found in some of the current Swedish hospitals and design projects. A troubling period of opposition followed. One branch of the Swedish architectural lobby pitted themselves against the young Kurdish architect's forthright research. Years of architectural study, coupled with his astute observations about design and functionality and his straightforward response, ran headlong into staid Swedish precepts.

In Sweden, the combination of politics, societal prejudice, dated architectural design, and immense financial investment in large healthcare projects in the mid-1990s collided with the incipient architectural career of Alan Dilani.

Alan's report indicated certain hospital designs had unsatisfactory effects upon both patient recovery and the staff. In particular, the conclusion of his research negatively impacted several hospitals. Halmstad was one of these. His research targeted both practical and subtle layers of hospital functional design. The credibility and expertise of the design firm of White Architects and of Skanska, the construction firm, were both called into question. The hospital staff themselves responded positively to Alan's research. Several doctors ended up resigning in support of Alan's findings—and to protest the design solution of these firms. Using their large network and contacts, including the city council of Halmstad, these large companies sought to undermine Alan's research and reputation.

In retrospect, the overarching reason such heated opposition came about was due to Jante Lagen—a well-known societal phenomenon that highlights inherent conflicts within Sweden itself: while seemingly progressive in politics and throughout its business communities, in truth the Swedish mentality holds many controlling, racist, and backward aspects. One registered nurse, Lalla Thord, has observed, “As a foreigner, you always have to fight even harder to have equal value. Sweden is a remote place. It's not a hub, so there's always skepticism toward foreigners who come. It's hard for Swedes to really embrace them.”

Jante Lagen was especially directed toward the young architect from Kurdistan whose research was critical of established hospital design concepts. This eventuated in a head-on confrontation that surfaced in the media. Though challenging at the time, opposition to Alan's probing research did little to deter his future work. Actually, it steeled him in moving forward to initiate change in the way hospitals are designed. These emerging principles were to form the underpinnings of Alan's future work.

Key Aspects of Hospital Design and Deficiencies

Flexibility is key within healthcare today, as it was in 1994. When aspects of healthcare change, hospital building itself must adapt to these changes. Some of the recent shifts include a diminishing hospital workforce, reduction in the number of patient beds, and increased use of technology. Hence, the difference between a good hospital and a bad hospital is now being determined based on whether the institution can adapt to the new demands. Other keywords in planning a new hospital are *overview* and *short walking distance*. Differences between the types of wards, including the spatial relations between the nursing stations and the patient rooms, are significant when it comes to walking distance.

“A remodel,” Alan noted, “should be able to happen without any significant engagement or high building cost.” In 1994, while Dilani applauded some hospitals, he was very critical of the planned construction of a C2 block designed as an addition to the hospital at Halmstad, on the west coast of Sweden. With support from Halmstad’s hospital staff, Alan entered a media controversy through several articles in *Hallandsposten*, a major morning local newspaper.

His criticism of the design deficiencies of the hospital angered not only the architectural firm White Architects, but also the hospital management and city council officials. Since the creation of this hospital carried an enormous budget, those involved with its building approval were quick to defend the efficacy of its design.

The problems began when Alan pointed out three main deficiencies in the hospital’s design: the lack of flexibility for the building to adapt to change and new demands; walking distance between the patient rooms and nursing station which reduced time for patient care; and cramped bedrooms that did not offer patient privacy on the one hand or support social interaction between patients on the other.

Long walking distance was a main problem because it meant the staff had less time for the patients. This in turn meant the number of staff had to increase, and this had a financial impact. In an article in *Dagens Medicin*⁸ Alan explained that in Örnsköldsvik, two outdated and unnecessarily large hospital buildings of 23,000 square meters from the 1940s were being demolished and replaced with a new 8,500-square-meter building. “The largest change for patients is that the current six-patient room model completely disappears,” Alan noted. “The new hospital will only have rooms for one or two patients. Bay windows will give light and all rooms will include a shower. The staff’s influence supported an acute care unit focused on radiology, laboratory and intensive care.”

Today’s Medicine Article

Following a conversation Alan had with Halmstad Hospital, the article by reporter Anna Maria Bengson appeared on March 7, 1995. Since 1977 the nurses and doctors who worked in the hospitals the article cited had been voicing these shortcomings. Their words were ignored. But in his research, Alan addressed their concerns.

“The controversy began in 1994 when I got into a discussion with a hospital in the south,” Alan said later. “The people I spoke with were critical. I wrote articles and their responded with more critiques. Politically, the county council in Halmstad didn’t want to talk with me at all because they knew they were in the wrong. However, they had no choice but to move ahead.”

Journalistic Coverage of Alan’s Critique

On Friday, November 18, 1994, the daily *Hallandsposten* in southwestern Halmstad published an article that instantly elevated to a newsworthy issue Alan Dilani’s opposition to the construction of the county hospital. The headline read: “Strong Criticism Directed Toward the Hospital Construction: Researcher Wants to Prevent the Building of C2.” The article went on to quote Alan: “The building is in line with the Japanese hospitals that are considered the industrial world’s worse hospital constructions,”⁹ Alan declared.

His critique had found resonance among the hospital staff who had warned of the deficiencies in the C2 project. They supported his critique—but stating these issues typically fell on deaf management ears.¹⁰ The surgery personnel particularly denounced hospital management for ignoring the staff’s prior critique regarding deficiencies of newly built care units just months after the move in 1987. This criticism too had fallen on deaf ears. Now the C2 construction was moving ahead with a 600-million SEK budget following the same defective model.

The hospital staff demanded construction be halted. They wanted the plans modified before it was too late. The journalist pointed out that the critique voiced by hospital personnel was basically the same that architect and researcher Alan Dilani had presented in his dissertation. “Both the single rooms and the three-bed rooms are so tiny that there is not even room to move a bed out of the room without refurnishing,” explained Annika Lindmark, assistant nurse at Surgical Clinic Division 7.

Patients served by that department ranged from those in process of surgery to others receiving care in the final stages of life. “Sometimes their closest family members want to sleep near the seriously ill

Long walking distance was a main problem ... This in turn meant the number of staff had to increase, and this had a financial impact.

The article stated that in his doctoral thesis, Alan showed the ways other hospitals had solved such construction dilemmas.

person, but it's almost impossible to fit in an extra bed for this purpose. If we squeeze one in, it gets hard for us to work with the patients," said Birgitta Catoni, administrator of the section.

Solution Pointed Out by Alan Dilani

The article stated that in his doctoral thesis, Alan showed the ways other hospitals had solved such construction dilemmas. Among other things, he highlighted Kalmar Hospital's three-bed rooms as a stellar example. There the beds are placed at angles to one another, with a bed on each wall. The care room is designed so that the patients get their own space and can sleep freely on both sides without visual contact with the other patients in the room. "It's a solution that both the personnel and patients are happy with. The solution has been much acknowledged and it's unusual that Halmstad Hospital did not consider the good examples that exist when they planned the C2," Alan explained.

"In fact, the new C2 rooms are no different from the earlier C2. They are so small that the beds will have to be put next to each other. Even though the hospital of Norrköping is ten years old," added Alan, "their nursing departments have higher standards in every respect compared to the newly built hospital in Halmstad."

Lack of Space

At the outset, the staff of Department 7 had been excited about the building of the new C1. The patient rooms they had been working with had twelve to fourteen beds and they had realized those units had considerable deficiencies; another concern was that they did not have proper examination and family conference rooms. This was a point Catoni stressed: "We do not have anywhere to go when we need to speak privately with relatives of the patients."

The same thing happened with the design for the surgery clinic, which was to be divided. The design did not take into consideration the needs of both staff and patients. Alan pointed out that the units were not built for surgery. Instead, surgery practice was being forced to adapt to the unit design.

Lennart Smith, chief physician at the surgery clinic, felt that those who “work with the direct nursing think that the care units are the most important.” He regretted that the hospital management had not listened to their opinions and concerns—nor had planned for an overall top-notch modern hospital, making necessary changes where needed. Instead, they had chosen to build a “600-million SEK project” C2 using the same deficient model.

***Hallandsposten*, November 22, 1994**

This controversy continued publicly. Alan’s research had highlighted the many flaws in the plan—but decisions made were based on costs. Sune Samson, healthcare director, acknowledged that the weaknesses Alan had pointed out were known, but due to the expense, were not resolved.¹¹

Resigning county council member Sven Skoglund dismissed Alan’s four-year research project and independent doctoral report as “something a university student could come up with.” Yet current officials at the county council were taking the report seriously. “You have to be humble toward this report,” stated county council Stanley Brodén. He explained that “in the planning of C2, we are at a crossroads and we can’t please everyone.”

One example of a flaw in the plan was the design of the children’s clinic. The hospital management insisted that the children’s clinic in the C2 was a success, but the nursing staff and managers disagreed. They explicitly stated that staff preferred to stay in the old facility rather than have the clinic activities split between different buildings in the C2. The staff were worried children would not be close to nature since they would be stuck in the sixth floor with bars covering balconies and no access to the outdoors.

Stefan Aronson, chief medical officer at the children’s clinic, requested the hospital manager to forward their concerns to the politicians involved. He even resigned in protest to the dividing up of the pediatric clinic.

Hallandsposten observed that the Halmstad Hospital construction revealed a gaping lack of communication between officials and politicians. The article also confirmed that the views of many politicians were not included in Alan’s report. His study focused

on the user's perspective on the work environment. Politicians had not listened to the staff's needs. They simply compromised with the architect and supported the poorly designed plan. Hospital management went on the defensive.

Press Conference

At a press conference, hospital directors and managers defended their decision, which was based on limited financial resources. They explained that many of the flaws Alan had pointed out in C1 had been addressed in the C2 plans. Yet other deficiencies required changes in technology, and economy had been the decisive factor.

However, the journalist was not convinced by this argument, because Halland had one of the best economic situations in the county and a large budget to run the hospital. "Five other counties have built new hospitals in the last couple of years. Nowhere else in the country have the hospitals been so poorly built as the hospital in Halmstad is," she observed.

A Solution

Alan contested the administration's explanation and cited Norrköping Hospital's three-bed room setup as a good solution: "The size of the room is slightly larger; however, the rooms are a lot easier for the staff to work in and considerably more pleasant for the patients." The construction manager, Lennart Blixt, defended the plan. The criticized wards, he said, constituted only 12 percent of the C2 section; the three-bedroom decision, he insisted, was a political one.

But what the hospital staff and Alan Dilani disapproved of, the article made clear, was "the fact that the shape of C2 would rule the operation and not the other way around." Among other things, they pointed out that "to fit the new premises, the surgical rooms and pediatric clinic would need to be split. 'Shouldn't the newly constructed hospital fit the operational needs in the best way possible?' they queried. Alan's report had not only brought to light the flaws of the hospital plan but also, due to media coverage, had opened a debate between care personnel and the responsible public officials."

The article observed that the key politicians had maintained a low profile, staying in the background and keeping "surprisingly quiet."¹²

White Architects Respond Publicly to Criticism

In response to criticism, White Architects wrote an open letter¹³ to the *Hallandsposten* defending the project: "Hospital planning and hospital building requires distinctive teamwork in a lengthy process. Many people and organizations are involved. Parts and context are complex. Overall, everything aims to achieve the best balance to the whole." They explained that planning and building

of the hospital expansion was a long process and that comparing it to Kalmar Hospital meant a 150-percent increase in the area standard. It defended itself by stating that public sector's costs rose sharply and had to be reduced, and that the Halland County Council was not overbuilding as other city councils had.

The White Architects letter dismissed Alan's thesis as beset with errors, including incorrect scale indications. It added that if Dilani's ambition was to elevate the area standards of the hospital, it was "misguided."

they contested the notion that there were any deficiencies in C1, the block that had been built earlier and was now in use. "For the C1 in Halmstad," they claimed, "it appears the staff are, in general, very supportive of the department. One might add that overall, the wards are very good from an operational and financial point of view. The fact that adjustments must be made, both now and in the future, lies in the law of development. Instead of 'throwing out the baby with the bath water,' all positive forces should be collected for the next developmental step of the county hospital in Halmstad. This means, as we see it, to arrange an entrance which consolidates the judgment that the hospital is the country's most open and friendly."

Response from Alan Dilani

On December 3, 1994, Alan responded: "Instead of taking the criticism seriously and facing it in a constructive way, the people in charge chose to attack my doctoral thesis on false grounds. The care units in a hospital occupy about 40 percent of the total building area. The formation of the premises constitutes a large portion regarding quality of the care. The patients are taken care of 24/7 at the care unit, and at the same time, it is a permanent workplace for the staff who have a challenging work task, and their performance is a determinant for the patients."¹⁴

The hospital layout was so poor, he added, that the personnel, as well as the patients, would be affected unless there was new construction. "The opinions I put forward in my thesis were confirmed by all groups of staff at the hospital. The patient rooms are very tight—meaning that they do not meet the necessary requirements for proper operation."

The architect, Håkan Josefsson, had made incorrect comparisons of the area standard between Halmstad and Kalmar: "Specifically, the net area for patient rooms per bed in Halmstad Hospital is 10.5 square meters compared with Enköping Hospital, 11.7 square meters, and Norrköping Hospital, 11.8 square meters. Both nursing units in Enköping and Norrköping have an L-shape and they have three- as well as four-patient rooms, which in turn may reduce the net area per unit room. The architect refers to the gross area of Kalmar as 54.6 square meters and defends the gross area of 37.5 square meters per bed in Halmstad. Even the other hospitals in his study have significantly higher gross area. My criticism is not only about the area standard but is in fact additional evidence of inaccurate care planning. For instance, the department only has *one disinfection room* for 28 nurse units."

He knew the major factor in their decision was the racial or ethnic prejudice Swedes hold for people from nations other than their own.

“Halmstad has the lowest standard,” Alan continued, “when compared with other hospitals in the study. This, in turn, has caused major problems for the staff. It is very regrettable that they have not considered their users’ needs and requirements during the hospital planning phase.”

Finally, Alan added that he could not “understand how White Architects planned these wards without consideration for the operational needs [of the hospital] and without any awareness of the staff—as well as respect for patients and their families. The ward in Halmstad also lacked premises such as conversation rooms, rooms for deceased patients, rooms for training, conference, library, medical expedition, secretary room, toilets for visitors, rest rooms for staff, room for relatives, and changing rooms.”

In conclusion, Alan explained the purpose of his research was to expand knowledge of nursing facilities so that users, both patients and staff, could be given a voice on building design and usage. He insisted that staff are central—and that the planning needs to be done in close cooperation with them.

Alan went on to say that his message was unfortunately ignored in the case of the county hospital in Halmstad. He continued to insist upon flexible planning in Halmstad—and again, that the staff was critical because instead of building a ward according to its functions, hospital functions had to adapt to the structure.

State of the Hospitals in Sweden

Specialized media continued to request comments from Alan about the state of the hospitals in Sweden. In March 1995 *Dagens Medicin*¹⁵ prepared a report on the best and worse hospitals in the country, stating the piece was based on the research of “Alan Dilani, the architect and researcher at KTH, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. The first part of his doctoral thesis, ‘Nursing Units from a User-Friendly Perspective,’ has just been finished.”

For this article, Alan explained that one of the sources for excellence in hospitals is the inclusion of staff to provide their feedback as part of the planning. “The staff has been a part of the planning and been able to provide comments at the planning

stage. The difference is not about who has invested the most money. On the contrary, the fact is that bad hospitals are also expensive hospitals. To invest time in planning is cheap in comparison to the cost of having to change things when the building construction has started,” he declared.

Differences in Hospitals Examined

Alan found very big differences among hospitals he'd observed. He pointed out that Kalmar Hospital, which opened in 1991, was user friendly because the planners took input from personnel and patients and took their needs into consideration. This resulted in an excellent design solution for patient rooms. For example, in the three-bed patient rooms, rather than being lined up parallel, next to each other with little space between, each bed was set with its head against a separate wall. With the foot of each bed stretching into the room from a different angle, patients had both physical and psychological space from each other, affording them privacy. At the same time, the arrangement, in which patients were able to see one another from across the room to converse, also allowed for social interaction.

Alan Dilani credited the designers for their ingenuity: “They have a new way of thinking when it comes to the three-patient rooms, with the design giving patients their own corner, so they can sleep freely on both sides without having to see their roommates. The bay window is also very much appreciated. The rooms are spacious and it's easeful for the personnel. Also, the internal connection between the wards' various rooms is good. The department's station is centrally located, close to the entrance to the other departments. Both day rooms and dining rooms are centrally located between the patient rooms and in connection to the kitchen. It is very well visited. The walking distance between the staff and patients is about 20 meters.” He also extolled the beauty and humanity of Norrköping Hospital, where the spaces are filled with light, and nature is visible thanks to the bay windows.

Alan compared these to the Halmstad Hospital, which he considered a poor example of healthcare building, probably due to the lack of input from the staff on the design and planning.

He was even more critical toward the county council. He pointed to basic design flaws such as an inadequate number of bathrooms, also poorly designed; rooms inappropriately positioned; only one disinfection room for twenty-eight patients; and no rooms for deceased patients.

The healthcare planner of Halmstad responded defensively, saying that the employees' criticism had not been made clear enough when the hospital was in its planning stage—and now it was too late to make changes.

Not-So-White Architects

Opposition continued as the traditionalist White Architect lobby pitted themselves against Alan and his investigative work. When he presented his Ph.D. before the Swedish jury in 1996, it was

turned down. It was clear to Alan that the fierce opposition he had encountered was not merely about criticism regarding his research. He knew the major factor in their decision was the racial or ethnic prejudice Swedes hold for people from nations other than their own.

By 1996 the attacks against Alan became fiercer. He continued his work for Vårdbyggnadsforskning, the Forum for Healthcare Design Research, of which he was the secretary and the primary developer, and at the same time prepared to defend his Ph.D. His supervisor had set up the jury; one panel member was a medical doctor and another the architect who had designed Trondheim Hospital. Two days prior to the presentation of his dissertation, the jury was altered to include, instead, two people who had links with White Architects. It became clear that their goal was to undermine Alan's career and block him from getting his Ph.D.

Unfortunately, when Alan realized that White Architects had a hand in this change, it was too late. "Otherwise," he said, "I would not have agreed to attend this session. I could have said I was not ready and that I didn't accept the jury change because it was not right," explained Alan. "They wanted me to fail, to punish me. That was the main intention of White Architects."

And they did just that. The jury ruled that the dissertation was not accepted. For Alan, the true reason was not academic or scientific. The fact was that he simply was not part of the architectural firm's network. "White Architects, as well as other major firms in Sweden, control not only the university and research funds but also many county councils which are corrupt and form part of this business," he reflected.

Dissertation Is Turned Down

It was so clear that day that the rejection of Alan's dissertation was personal and not based on academic excellence. Inge Fottland, Trondheim Hospital planning director, had read Alan's thesis and given his comments, and recalled this difficult episode with straightforward realism. "Alan had invited his whole family from Italy to come and celebrate. I was also there. He made his presentation and then the jury began to ask questions, very hard and critical questions. Alan was getting nervous. I felt it would be a catastrophe. It was hard listening to what they were saying. Then they concluded he hadn't passed. It seemed the judges had been changed. It seemed very clear they had an agenda.

"There was no way that something like this could happen in Norway. Once you go to defend your Ph.D., everyone who has worked with you has already given you the necessary feedback. Your work has been reviewed completely. It's common to receive feedback before the defense. But in Norway, this is not done in a full auditorium. The people around him had the responsibility to ask him, 'Is this good enough? Are you missing something? What are you going to replace this with? Are you on the wrong track? Do you need to take another approach?' No, you don't do this in an auditorium that is full of well-wishers.

"This was cruel. You are having a big party for all your friends and family. It's a big moment, perhaps the biggest moment in your family's whole life. Alan had worked to help his family all his life. You

simply don't do such a thing. I told him afterwards, 'I'm going to help you.' We had lots of discussion and we did make some changes."

"For us, it was a very upsetting day," explained Satu. "We had planned a celebratory party for Alan's dissertation. We had booked a place and ordered the food. So, we had to cancel the whole affair that same day! We had enough food for fifty guests and we brought some home. But the rest was wasted. It was distressing on every level.

"Alan was angry and sad. Yet he always held the belief that he was in the right, that he had to speak the truth, because otherwise they would not hear it anywhere. So even on this disappointing day, he felt he had done the right thing. For him, it was not possible to act in any other way."

He immediately went to speak with university rector Jane Carlsson and explain the situation. Rector Carlsson agreed with Alan that what they had done to him was "not legal or acceptable." He was given one year to re-present the thesis and finalize his Ph.D. "I had executed unique and valuable empirical work at the Royal University of Technology," Alan said.

The Reach of White Architects: Alan's Research

Alan left the architecture department of the division of Building Function Analysis and shifted over to Project Methodology to review his research with someone at the Department of Design. As it turned out, however, the new department in charge of research was also connected with White Architects. Alan learned this later and was convinced that many people at the university were influenced and controlled by this group. "White Architects was so dominant that you could do nothing without involving them," he added.

Alan was convinced that White Architects would try to sabotage his efforts at every turn. "However, I decided that my work must be of the highest level so they would have no excuse to fail me." As always, Alan decided he would have to excel. "I would present research that no one had done before. It would be more scientific than anyone else's. That was my intention. I did this with other people's support outside of KTH."

The jury ruled that the dissertation was not accepted. For Alan, the true reason was not academic or scientific. The fact was that he simply was not part of the architectural firm's network.

The new department supervisor was also in a bind. “He was responsible for me and could not do anything that was not legal in my case because my research was unparalleled. At the same time, for six months he never spoke with me. I didn’t care, because I had my lectures and I had begun to work abroad.

“At this point, I was very active internationally. I was collaborating with the Trondheim Hospital project. They knew about my situation and supported me. They also were aware that these people had obstructed me because of my criticism of White Architects.”

Seeking More Academic Support

Alan was not a person to shy away from obstacles, so when he did not receive support from his supervisor, he sought it elsewhere. “I found Margaret Enfors, a nurse and professor of nursing sciences from the Department of Caring Services at the University of Örebro—and she helped me understand more about the philosophy of nursing. She was a very honest person. The first time she came to meet with my supervisor, he began shouting. She was shocked by his behavior. He often behaved like this because as my supervisor, he had control issues.”

In fact, Alan had begun to lay out future comprehensive and holistic research for himself. He wanted to work with people from different backgrounds—not just architects. Alan enlisted support from Rolf Gustaffson, a professor of medicine sociology at Karolinska institute, as well as Dr. Marti Tekkari, a medical doctor and architect from Finland. Still, Alan knew he would be unable to bring them to KTH because the new supervisor would not accept them. “As my main supervisor, he wanted total control over all of my research. This was very limiting for me because it was through contact with other people that I could find excellent solutions for my work.”

Nonetheless, his research spiked interest from a professor in America: Roger Ulrich, of Texas A&M University.

Dissertation

In his new dissertation, Alan included an introduction with a review of the architectural development of modern hospitals from his empirical study of nine wards, including a case study about Trondheim Hospital. For three years, he worked on this extension of his original dissertation, so his degree took six years to complete, rather than the customary three or four.

“One of the aspects of my research included the evolution of hospital planning in Scandinavia. It had been newly captured in my Ph.D., plus I included some theoretical sections about how to deal with this in my licentiate. The result was very thorough and clear. No one could contest that what I had done was deficient or inadequate.

“When my Ph.D. jury finally saw my work, they commented upon the excellence of the work I had done and noted the many new ideas. My paper was a meticulous and expert evaluation of six hospitals, including Trondheim. The methodology I’d developed and analyzed was complete. To this day, I still use the same method and it is very scientific.”

Source of Income

While at KTH, Alan received no financial support. Fortunately, his work with Trondheim and his lectures abroad helped finance a large portion of his research. Another source of income came through his work as secretary of the Forum for Healthcare Design Research. The Forum was funded by twenty county councils, responsible for hospitals in different regions of Sweden, and ten architectural firms including White Architects. Each of them paid 10,000–20,000 SEK, so the Forum had a budget that included activities. It also covered Alan’s secretary and budget accounting work at KTH.

“As a researcher, you hold the responsibility of being part of society—and also to inform society,” explained Alan. “My intention was to do this through forums and lectures. I was very active and such events were very popular at the time. I worked with the Forum, which through its speaker’s bureau marketed my lectures. I was also paid as a columnist at *Metro*, a free daily journal, and they compensated me regularly for the pieces I wrote.”

Impact of Controversy

Regarding the White Architect controversy, Satu later said that she never truly grasped the dramatic impact it would have upon Alan’s future. “I never got the whole picture about how upset these people really were. Only in hindsight, when I saw the degree to which they managed to stop my husband’s career, did I finally comprehend how much Alan’s work had threatened them.”

Satu perceived that Alan felt he was doing his country a service by bringing design deficiencies of Halmstad Hospital to the

Alan was not a person to shy away from obstacles, so when he did not receive support from his supervisor, he sought it elsewhere.

forefront. Yet the extent to which his professional colleagues attempted to damage his professional future had escaped her.

A Significant International Opening: Japan 1996

Despite this local opposition, Alan's work stirred much interest abroad because it was the latest in the field. In 1996, prior to finishing his Ph.D., he was invited to speak at the International Hospital Federation in Japan.

Two professors from KTH, when speaking with him about the Japanese invitation, were skimpy in their praise of Alan's research findings. They could not bring themselves to acknowledge his probing results. Instead, his thesis advisor, attributed his invitation to the fact that he was from Sweden, that his attendance would bring an international element to the Japan event. "It was not my knowledge that was respected, but the geography of my home," Alan mused later. "I found this quite astounding.

"I fell completely silent at the time, and he understood the inappropriateness of having spoken to me in this way. But he would not change his way of thinking. Ours was an unhealthy relationship and unconsciously, he sought to control everything I did, all my work, all my future opportunities—everything about my blossoming career at that time."

Forward Movement and Networking

Alan spoke again with Jane Carson, president of KTH Royal Institute of Technology, who agreed that he go to Japan, and secured the necessary funds for his trip from the Wallenberg Foundation. Alan traveled to Japan and presented his paper at the Congress of International Architects, a public-health group. He received tremendous support for this, since his paper was considered innovative research.

Alan was clear that to move forward, he needed to build his own network. He had become wary of sharing the manifold invitations he was receiving from abroad with any of his KTH professors. "That was the first time I sensed that it was necessary for me to disconnect from these people. I had already published several articles and was receiving very good feedback. So I began to contact various universities not only in Italy, but in other European cities, and in the U.S.A."

Part 4

Expansion

The 1990s were an immensely active time for Alan's personal life and career. On a personal level, between 1991 and 1994, Alan built his family's own home and his wife gave birth to their two children, Sara and Marco. Following the completion of his licentiate degree in 1994, his work headed in new directions with collaborative support from several key colleagues. Though opposition to his creative ideas was present, he continued to form a broader framework. Once the media controversy had passed in 1996, Alan took broad steps forward, drawing a wider arc through contact with an expanding group of designers, architects, psychologists, and other healthcare professionals.

As his network of international colleagues grew, he learned, shared, and connected with pioneers in the field. Alan was invited to lecture in more countries and met with people who were drawn to solve complex contemporary issues in healthcare design, architecture, and methodology. They found Dilani's commonsense leadership and unorthodox approach compelling. His concept was to bring seemingly diverse elements together. This made for a vibrant synthesis. During this period of expansion, Alan began to formulate a healthcare design milieu—au courant to this day.

1. Groundwork for Global Expansion: First Steps, 1991-1998

The inclusive expansion that came to characterize Alan's later work would manifest in 1995 when he organized a national symposium on international trends in healthcare at the city hall of Sundsvall, Northern Sweden; but his activities since 1990 had been laying the groundwork. Now he would begin to set the stage to reach a wider audience by organizing further such national symposiums, with an eye to investigating new developments that might be applied in Sweden, and accepting more international invitations.

"I continued with my activities despite the disruptions. I remained very active. I had seminars everywhere in the Nordic countries. The one in the Sundsvall was one of the most exciting. Seeing all these obstacles, I looked for more growth. I began bringing more people into Sweden—despite the opposition," Alan said.

Invitations Begin

After his licentiate, interest grew in Alan's research. He began receiving invitations to present his findings. Prior to this, he had begun inviting researchers to discuss the issues of hospital planning. He recounted, "During my licentiate, every three months I invited different county councils in Sweden to discuss issues about hospital planning. These forums were very interesting. I built up a network and frequently I went out myself for lectures. Later, these initial participants would bring the information we discussed to universities."

In 1995 Alan was invited by city councils from Swedish municipalities to organize a symposium in the city of Sundsvall. This symposium brought together interested parties from government, business and academia to begin discussions that would eventually lead to a more expanded event that he named Global Design & Health World Congress.

Following this seminal Swedish event, Alan started contacting international professionals and was invited to various places to lecture, traveling more internationally to the U.S.A. and Europe. A marked period of expansion ensued.

Trip to the United States

Another first in 1995 was an invitation for Alan to visit the U.S.A.—to lecture at Texas A&M University. He spoke in San Francisco and Los Angeles, presenting his research at universities.

"I ordered a pizza and to my surprise, it was huge enough to feed an entire family. I had never seen this kind of excess before."

The seeds of what was to become salutogenic architecture began to take shape. This concept was formulated by Alan as he traveled to prominent American cities and universities and was consistently well-received. The creativity and innovation in the fields of health design and healthcare in the United States created a genuine competition. The Americans were always looking to embrace new ideas.

Mardelle Shepley, now a professor at Cornell University, met Alan in Texas at that time when she was teaching at Texas A&M University. "Alan was coming to Texas from another location on his visit," she recalled. "Texas is kind of a country unto itself. One thing I have always noticed about him—Alan shifts from culture to culture without concern about stress or the angst that some people have when they enter new settings. He just makes his way through and it all turns out fine. Even during the process of deciding who was going to be invited to that very first meeting, who was going to be invited to present, we sat on the floor with a pile of paper and sorted things in groups—saying yes or no and telling jokes, just sitting on the floor in Roger Ulrich's house."

This was Alan's first exposure to the United States and it was an eye-opening trip for him. With nostalgia, he remembered a bus ride he took from Houston to College Station to Texas A&M University on one of his first speaking engagements. He decided to take the bus from Houston instead of flying; Alan wanted to interact with the American people. "I found the bus was used mainly by blue-collar workers and African-Americans. I struck up conversations with the passengers—they all gave me insights into the socioeconomic layers of the country." Alan was struck by the extravagance he witnessed in everything, from food to possessions. In his arrival at the College Station Hilton, he said, "I ordered a pizza and to my surprise, it was huge enough to feed an entire family. I had never seen this kind of excess before."

New Colleagues

Alan made new contacts, including Dr. Wayne Ruga, at that time CEO for Health Care Design in San Francisco, who helped Alan network. He also met Jane Malkin, a San Diego interior designer, who was working with the Planetree caregiving model

so relevant to his healthcare design research. Other new acquaintances included architect Derek Parker, CEO of Anshen & Allen, a well-recognized healthcare designer who would become a future mentor.

Derek's story was especially touching. He had lost one of his twin daughters in an intensive care unit at the hospital. At that time, children's intensive care units were not well developed as they are now. The tragic loss of his child inspired him to dedicate his work toward improving children's hospitals. Derek designed the first advanced intensive care unit for children in California and went on to participate in many international competitions for children's hospitals. He won several prestigious competitions in San Diego, at Stanford University in Palo Alto, in Seattle, in the Canadian city of Calgary, and in Florence, Italy.

During that trip, Alan was introduced to Professors Mardelle Shepley, George Mann, and Roger Ulrich of Texas A&M. Ulrich's background included work on the environmental impact on health and people's well-being. He did a study in Uppsala, Sweden that had a huge influence in the U.S.A. He published an article in the *Journal of Science* centered on an image of a person looking out at nature and addressing the ways contact with nature supports the healing process.

A Pivotal Expansive Step

Back in Sweden at KTH, Alan began cultivating an interdisciplinary approach to further broaden the reach of his architectural design concepts. Other areas he began researching and integrating included public health, architecture, and real estate. "Before I presented my final dissertation, I visited Karolinska Institute, the medical university. This visit was fortuitous. It opened a whole new world to me. The professor of psychology, Kristoffer Konarski, inspired me so much that I immediately wanted to work with him. He asked me to come as soon as possible. I did so without even telling my supervisor at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH).

"Konarski was the 'Father of Psychosomatics' in Sweden, and president of the Swedish Psychosomatic Society. I started working with him in 1997, before finishing my thesis. I learned so much from him. He taught me more deeply about what salutogenesis means and that understanding health is a process and how to reach it. These ideas had a profound influence on the development of my work and the rest of my life."

Ph.D. Finalized and Moving On

In 1998 Alan finally completed and presented his Ph.D. dissertation, entitled "Design and Care in Hospital Planning." It passed the assembled jury effortlessly and without pomp. This event brought to completion the highly controversial period during the first iteration of his doctoral dissertation. Finally, that project had ended. Its impact would be brought to life many ways in the years to come.

“In 1998, my thesis was finalized with a very high quality of scientific work and I didn’t invite any friends or family to attend,” Alan recalled. “Usually you have a celebratory ceremony at the end of your Ph.D., but I chose not to hold one. I organized a dinner at the university and my friend Kicki Björklund, a fellow collaborative Ph.D. student who had been supportive throughout, helped me put that event together. We had collaborated and published an article before my Ph.D. That completion closed my association forever with the KTH main campus. I would never return there.

“By then, I was working in Trondheim, traveling back and forth. The eyes of Trondheim were looking to the future. My sight was also turned in that direction. I had begun to focus on creating the First World Congress. At a national congress in southern Sweden I’d spoken with Göran Persson, then finance minister, who later became prime minister. We talked about involving relevant parties in the planning process of designing and constructing a hospital.” This conversation, as it turned out, would prove both fateful and fruitful.

2. Trondheim: Sowing the Seeds for Decades of Collaboration, 1990-2014

Alan was invited to Trondheim at the beginning of 1990 to present his dissertation revealing the extent of his research into nine hospitals, including the Norwegian hospital in Tromsø. Still employed by Brink, he continued his travels to Norway throughout the entire decade of the 1990s. Alan's involvement with Trondheim became pivotal toward the unfolding of his career and continues to this day.

Background

For his Ph.D. research, Alan had visited Tromsø hospital, in northern Norway. Now he decided to contact Inge Fottland, director of planning. "Alan called me because he had done research on a hospital in Tromsø. He told me he didn't like their concept and had heard we were starting to work on a new hospital design. We met in Trondheim and spoke about emphasizing the well-being and involvement of patients, as well as the salutogenic approach," Fottland recalled.

"I explained that we were currently working on a new type of competition for planning a hospital. The competition was to center around a concept in which doctors, nurses, and architects would join in shared discussion with all kinds of professionals. Alan liked the idea at once."

Fottland sensed Alan's exploratory healthcare viewpoint and immediately wanted him to work with them. "Right from that first meeting, Alan got involved. He wanted to include our hospital planning in his ongoing Ph.D. research. I knew Alan was from Kurdistan and that he had been through many challenges in his life to become who he was. I thought it would be interesting to listen to his views and ideas. He also wanted to learn, so I involved him in the project.

"Over the years, Alan and I have traveled around the world and seen many clinics, met physicians, planners, government officials, and so on. At that point in our collaboration, we realized a new phase in hospital planning was about to begin. Our understanding was that we could no longer copy what had previously been done. We moved toward making changes, including ways the patients were treated and the prime importance of building according to patient and staff needs," Fottland added.

In 1990 Alan became an advisor for the Trondheim City Council's immense hospital construction project. But it was in 1997 that he and Fottland would lead the 1st Design & Health World Congress, with Alan supporting a review of the international design plans for Trondheim Hospital. At that time, his work with Fottland would become consolidated.



Trondheim Hospital in 1995

For the competition, Alan was asked to independently review all the submitted proposals. The open-minded attitude of the project managers made for an exciting and innovative gathering of competitors—with the exception of one group. Once again, White Architects were present—and given the design scheme they drew up, Alan would again find himself butting heads with that group.

First Trondheim Trip

Alan's 1990 trip to Trondheim had grown out of the serious commitment he held to his Ph.D. Of the first time he went to meet the future hospital planning committee, he would later say, "I was already deeply involved in Trondheim. I held a seminar for all the political parties and the director of planning. I brought global architects and they liked it very much. I explained my dissertation to them because that was what I had written on the subject; I explained ways it could be used for Trondheim."

"I told them," Alan said, "that it would be better not to build hospitals as they had in the 1960s; they should not repeat the same mistakes as had taken place with Tromsø Hospital. These

people were the leadership. They immediately understood my critique, my evaluation of their hospital based on research I had done. They also grasped my design orientation and goals –and asked that I come work with them, feeling my knowledge would be useful for the future hospital in Trondheim.”

Both the directors and city council members concurred: “You’re right. We will use this knowledge and improve upon it.” Tromsø’s hospital director, Knut E. Schröder, echoed Alan’s critique: “According to Alan Dilani, we’re old-fashioned. The new Tromsø hospital was inaugurated on October 1, 1991. This top modern hospital cost 1.8 billion NOK (Norwegian kroner) but we consider it to be old-fashioned and it needs another 15 million NOK to be rebuilt.”¹⁶

Next, Alan was invited to the Ministry of Health. He received an open-ended invitation to come consult with the Trondheim officials and enthusiastically agreed.

Trondheim Project

Fottland had taken the initiative to set up an advisory board for the Trondheim project and a scientific review committee that originated from the healthcare field, including directors from Tromsø, Karolinska, and SINTEF, a large research organization in Norway, as well as medical doctors, architects, and other top decision makers.

This team began to address pertinent questions with a number of stakeholders. “We invited a wide range of politicians. I think we had one hundred local and regional officials attending the debates. We arrived at two totally different concepts: one was centralized and the other decentralized.”

What at last began to take shape was an international competition for the design and construction of a new hospital in Trondheim. Organizing for this competition began in earnest in 1995, with the drawing up of a vision for the event. Comprehensive plans for every aspect were drawn up at an early stage, as well as guidance to implement particular design elements throughout the process.

“The scientific review committee decided that only one of the six concepts presented could win. Alan wasn’t a formal part of this

"So as a foreigner, it was hard for me to enter the inner circle, especially if I did not think as they did."

committee," Fottland recalled. "Yet he was a valuable partner for me in the discussion and his contribution was invaluable due to his extensive Ph.D. research."

Inge Fottland and Alan reached a mutual decision on a unique way of building the hospital. Since they knew it had never been done before, they wondered if their ideas would be accepted once they were fully fleshed out. Alan proposed that he and Fottland connect with planners from around the world. They decided to host a conference in Trondheim in 1997 to bring together the relevant people to review new concepts. Challenging design to look forward to the year 2000—and beyond—for completion, the international competition would come to be entitled Regionsjukhset I Trondheim year 2000, or RIT 2000.

"We wanted to gather people to discuss the future of hospital planning. The conference was built around the goal of receiving input," Fottland said. Alan led this conference project and Fottland supported him in every way. "He was seminal in planning the whole event. Everything that followed began here," Fottland shared. As plans for the conference developed, the expanded gathering would finally take form as the 1st Design & Health World Congress.

Alan recalled being asked to review all the proposals submitted for the challenge. The project managers' open-minded attitudes made for an exciting and innovative group of competitors—with the exception of White Architects. They were present and drew up a design scheme that was determined to be the least relevant and efficient.

Alan's Contribution for the RIT 2000 Competition

Alan was very aware of the complexity of hospitals and the fact that innovation in medical science and technology would bring many future design changes. The questions for Alan and the Trondheim team were: How can we design Trondheim Hospital to include these potential developments—and what degree of flexibility can we provide that would include this innovative medical technology so it adjusts to the future?

“My task,” Alan said, “was to evaluate all these design proposals. Hospitals are among the most intricate buildings in the world. I analyzed all seven design proposals submitted to the competition, going through each one to review the concepts of patient-focused care, what worked, what did not, and general organization. Other considerations were how patient-focused the care, how human centered the design—as well as ways the design met the challenges of flexibility and innovation.”

White Architects React Again

In the second stage of Alan’s evaluation for his doctoral dissertation, he found White Architect’s design plan to be the most poorly conceived. Unfortunately, the group had decided to join the competition. They proposed a compact facility that indicated a range of services concentrated in the central building without shaping their design to show how they could actually build all these services in.

“It was unfortunate they had come to my presentation of my thesis,” Alan shared. “But their proposal was not good at all. All that I mentioned was that their high ambitions didn’t show in their planning or what they presented. That was all I said in my critique. There was absolutely nothing personal with this. It was the *second* time I conflicted with them. Others concurred it was the worst proposal.”

“White Architects, as the largest architect firm, became challenging two times—both in my licentiate and in my Ph.D. research. My thesis criticized their proposals based on their poor design concept and lack of expertise in that field. Despite their close relationship and influence with the local authorities, it seems those authorities had never scientifically evaluated their work. One of the reasons is that local authorities are often appointed due to political connections and in many cases, they lack expertise and knowledge. So they were easily manipulated by White Architects.

“The truth is that many of the local officials who adjudicated the project with White Architects had worked previously with the company, as well as with other large firms. This led to corruption and manipulation. As a practicing architect, I witnessed the impact of large architectural firms in Sweden. Researchers know that the relationship between large firms and local authorities damages competitiveness and good project outcomes in such a small country.

“I felt that it was my duty, as a researcher with high integrity, to unveil this discrepancy and corruption in Swedish society which tended to generate a certain group to support its own business. In many ways, it is a cartel that controls positions in universities and society as a whole. Such large firms control the resources that should be available to all researchers. So as a foreigner, it was hard for me to enter the inner circle, especially if I did not think as they did. Because of these two intertwining aspects,” Alan surmised, “I was not trusted.”

A Norwegian Design Wins the Competition

The expansive competition attracted a wide range of submissions—from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, England, and other nations. However, the most exciting submission and the subsequent winner of the competition was the Norwegian architect Niels Torp.

“Niels Torp is a very famous and world-recognized architect. He analyzed the ways that a hospital in the center of a city could be connected as part of the urban area, with an existing city block that connected with others. This concept would shape a hospital that was well integrated within the social structure of the city. For the first time, people could see the benefit of such a solution to connect the city blocks as ‘new quarters’ with ‘existing urban rooms.’ His design was creative and innovative. He showed ways to build and demolish until the final stage. This was the concept of *restructuring*, and the winner of the competition was completely original,” Alan explained.

“The reason Torp came to this conclusion was that he had not been influenced by traditional architects who design hospitals. He analyzed ways that the complexity of hospitals could be simplified. That was the major issue. In addition, one of the other



The winner of competition by Architect Niels Torp

challenges was how the hospital could be integrated within an existing city structure. As people go to school, offices, shopping and caring for their children, he reasoned, they should also be able to easily get to a hospital.

“I could see immediately that his design was completely different from the traditional models. He brought something new. All the centers he designed could relate to each other and were connected with a high-rise building in the middle as a landmark. I called it a *neighborhood hospital*.

“My suggestion was that his plan was unique, ‘a miracle’ as I mentioned later in a magazine. Torp was the clear winner. For the first time, we saw a different approach to hospital planning that brought the future *here*. His plan was both flexible and dynamic. It could adjust with this era of the evolving medical technology and innovation in medical science.”

The Goal of the Congress

“The congress was built around a single goal: to bring people together and discuss the future of hospital planning,” Fottland recalled. “We wanted to get input from others.”



The final shape of the hospital in Trondheim today

“The Trondheim officials became excited,” Alan added. “Their enthusiasm grew when I suggested inviting our network to transfer and share our ideas with the rest of the world, thus communicating this knowledge to a much wider audience. That dynamic was our main impetus for creating the First World Congress.

“One objective of my thesis had been to support Trondheim. Prior to the congress, I had already created the foundation of Design and Health. It was then called the International Academy for Design and Health and we began planning the congress event for 1997.

“In the beginning, there were skeptics who wondered if people would actually come to the Trondheim congress. We said they will attend because it is going to be a unique project. I went ahead and organized a call for papers, invited global participants and the most prominent people in the world as keynote speakers. This event was sponsored by Trondheim with a few additional patrons. The vision was to dialogue, sharing knowledge about the best way to learn from one another, building the base of knowledge. The Trondheim team had visited four hundred hospitals in the world to better understand how to meet future trends in hospitals. They were eager to incorporate design elements that would manifest a hospital that was pointed toward the future.”

In 1997 Alan’s and Inge Fottland’s work for the 1st Design & Health World Congress became a reality. This international gathering had as its theme the intersection of healthcare design and philosophy regarding patient care.

Since Alan had already been heavily researching these topics, this forum was a natural concretization of his emerging ideas. It was the first in a series of congress gatherings, a forum that for the next twenty years would bring together intersecting architects, designers, stakeholders, and business people and continue in other locations. The stimulating discussions and exchange of information had far-reaching impacts on a subject that had begun to gain worldwide attention.

“There was a scientific committee to evaluate the abstracts for this congress competition. It was my job to provide a set of criteria based on innovation and scientific quality that I had already developed in my Ph.D.,” Alan said. “I provided a rigorous, scientific approach. The aim was to solicit and assemble the best papers. All this preparation and attention to detail gave us credibility. It was highly successful. People were pleased with the outcome. Large international firms like Ernest and Young and Siemens came to sponsor the Trondheim congress and I realized that this sponsorship could itself become a future trend.”

The 1st Design & Health World Congress: Trondheim, 1997

“The Congress in Trondheim eventuated partly due to my American lecture trip,” said Alan, “because this had expanded my work. It also inspired me to bring together global knowledge and transmit my work throughout Scandinavia. The congress was only three days—but while there, the participants also visited the Planetree model in Trondheim Hospital for their learning and evaluation.”

Most of the people Alan brought to the Congress were from the U.S.A., mainly from the disciplines of architecture, interior design, and nursing science. He also invited his contacts from Europe, including earlier colleagues from Italy and Finland, as well as participants from a number of Swedish universities, including Karolinska and KTH, that were not from the architectural milieu.

It was a creative program and Trondheim found it very interesting. Highly qualified academics and practitioners from over forty-two countries attended and fifty-three papers were presented between August 28 and August 30, 1997.

Gudmund Hernes, Norwegian minister of health, gave the opening speech: “It is a great challenge,” he said, “to build a hospital where the patient will experience availability, higher quality, and better service, and at the same time to use the human and financial resources in a more efficient way. To achieve this, there is need for extensive organizational changes. Trondheim will be an exciting new project within the Norwegian health services and I am happy that it already is of interest in the international arena.” In Alan’s introductory talk, he noted, “I shared that the congress goal was to develop a forum for exchange of ideas in research and development concerning healthcare planning—with a focus on human value.”

One new participant, Canadian architect Susan Black, recalled how she came to attend the Trondheim congress. “Alan had what I believe was his very first congress in Trondheim. When I found out about him and what he was doing, it was through the professional network. People were talking about conferences and I thought this one was perhaps differently focused. I had been working with a large hospital on a particularly unusual unit. We put together a presentation and sent in an abstract for the conference. But since it was late in the game, I was unable to go. So I sent a staff member. We practiced the presentation quite a bit because we wanted it to be good, having a sense that this conference might be of major importance. This little project we presented concerned geriatric regeneration and we thought it might be useful.

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“We had no idea, really, the impact that Alan would have in the future. We did not know the word *salutogenic* but we certainly, in my studio, had all the makings of being a good fit for Alan. For me, these congresses have had a uniqueness, a specialness, and they have been very meaningful.”

Even from the start, the congresses had great impact. “All in all, it was a tremendously exciting program. I had very close collaboration with all these people,” Alan explained. “This was strategic, because I brought people we could work with in interdisciplinary ways. I believed these delegates could help me and others in evaluations. Some were from Egypt, the UK, Spain, and many other countries. This was the idea, that people from various countries participate. I worked with the network I’d established and afterward, they often would invite me abroad—those people and their organizations.”

The multinational aspect and cross-pollination were very important to Trondheim because the officials had wanted to see the nursing sciences emphasized in alignment with patient-centered care. Also, since Trondheim actually had the Planetree model, the hospital administration and leadership were sensitive to considering the psychosocial factors in both the hospital’s care philosophy and its design elements. This care model came predominantly from the U.S.A.

A Focus on Human-Centered Design

“Human-Centered Design for Healthcare Buildings” was the designated focus and approach for the 1st Design & Health World Congress. Pertinent questions discussed included: How can we put people in the center and make them the focus? What do people need in relation to the building environment—especially the staff and the patients? What are the conditions and requirements for creating a healing environment, with functional quality and efficiency? Management and organization were the main themes of the congress in response to consideration of the future needs of the Trondheim hospital as it would be planned and shaped.

“These were the points of departure, and we invited people to discuss those questions—psychologists, public health officials, interior designers, architects, artists, nurses, economists, and medical doctors. It was a unique interdisciplinary global event for the first time with an innovative approach to hospital planning in Trondheim. It was not only a presentation of projects by architects. The educational scope was much broader than this. There were other lectures so delegates could grasp what ‘health’ really means and how the philosophy of care could be discussed and improved,” Alan recalled.

“However, the main focus was on healthcare buildings, hospitals. We looked into the ways a particular care philosophy leads to a hospital’s success. This was important to each one of us. There was a mutual agreement: to present our project ideas and share knowledge so we could learn from each other. This was agreed upon and collaborative.

“The first congress was financed entirely by Trondheim,” Alan said. “This was visionary of them, especially the City Council project director and director of planning, Inge Fottland. A creative

person, he oversaw planning projects and made them happen. Inge came many times to Stockholm and helped me personally, financially, and supported me during my Ph.D. He did the same for the first congress.” Fottland continues to attend every World Congress of Health & Design and later was put in charge of developing university campuses at Trondheim.

Planetree Care Model

Many effective partners had come from the U.S.A.: interior designer Jane Malkin; Lynn Werdal, a nurse and vice president of Griffin Hospital, who had applied the Planetree care model in the U.S.A.; and other nurses who had come from Europe to critically review the care model and philosophy of patient-focused care. The Americans had a strong innovation background, having worked with the Planetree model at home. At the time, they were the leading proponents of this philosophy in the world.

The Planetree Care Model was created in 1978 by Angelica Thieriot after she herself experienced traumatic personal healthcare situations. The model focused primarily on the needs of patients in the hospital environment. At that time, Planetree was the only care philosophy that clearly cited the need for a healthy building environment to support the healing process. Trondheim was already applying this model.

Planetree is a model based on the Socratic idea of treating a patient, in a sense, “under a tree” so the experience is one of connection to nature. For its time, its clear statement that quality of the built environment was key to the healing process was considered the most advanced model. Many doctors, nurses, architects, and artists had heard about it and were interested to learn more. Later, Planetree would be established at Stanford University for patients, their relatives, and the public. The concept caught on, being both innovative and effective.

Planetree Ward Set Up at Trondheim as a Model

Trondheim had just one Planetree ward. It was set up as a concept for people to view, discuss, and understand more about the way it worked. The results were promising, and later it was developed further, with adjustments that suited it more closely to Norwegian culture.

Alan had made sure to invite Jane Malkin for the first international congress. “It was immensely exciting for people to see and learn about Planetree,” Alan shared. “This concept remains one of the most inspirational in the world because everyone ended up following it—the model of the decentralized hospital.

“It was made even simpler in the winning Trondheim architect’s design. The architect Niels Torp had never designed a hospital before, but he knew how to design complex buildings. He has designed many spectacular structures—the Oslo Airport, British Airline’s head office in London, and many others—so he was able to conceive ways to make the hospital extremely manageable. That was how

he came up with his concept. By comparison, all the other proposals were very traditional and of lesser quality.”

The Need for Cultural Adjustment

“The highlight was that the philosophy of care with an emphasis on patient-focused care wasn’t yet being widely utilized in the U.S.A.,” Alan explained. “We tried to adjust culturally to the region in our presentation because patient-focused care in the U.S.A. is not the same as what was being done in Trondheim. Different cultures impact the way a certain care system manifests.

“Based on this work, I later realized the importance of combining the *global perspective* with *local identity*. We also debated this concept in the congress and discussed aspects of the Trondheim contest winner. We wanted to learn and apply this knowledge to the new hospital. It proved useful to show Trondheim was on the right track. Our aim was to determine how this hospital could be constructed as a benchmark for the world. This was the most essential outcome of the first congress.”

The most challenging congress participants to whom Alan had to impart this were the political decision-makers. Alan knew if they were on board, utilizing this model could be confirmed—and he managed to enlist their support before the congress.

The Process of Developing a Hospital Design

At the outset, Trondheim was just a concept, an idea. The focus of the congress, and of the invitational design competition, was on how to transfer an existing, aging hospital into the most modern facility. This was the criterion specified for the Trondheim competition.

Construction for a hospital project of this sort is extensive; it can take a very long time. For example, small hospital projects, say for a two hundred-bed hospital, can take at least one to two years. When you examine a drawing, you then develop more detail about it. The initial designs are elaborated upon, as part of the initial concept. Then the concept, including ideas from stakeholders, moves first into a stage of schematic or preliminary design and then into executive design, which becomes the actual basis for construction. Subsequently, in the case of designing for Trondheim, we asked the competitors their ideas about the concept of design and how to transform the current old-fashioned hospital into a truly modern version.

Hospitals Linking with Technology, Science, and Innovation

“At the time, medical technology was becoming increasingly important,” Alan noted, “because all

hospitals are connected with technology, science, and innovation. The evolution of medical technology had to be considered. Some doctors recognized this reality back then and others were against it because they thought it would mean decentralizing—relocating some activities or services to a number of functional locations around the facility rather than keeping them together in a single centralized department. One example might be X-ray services: rather than being located in a central department to which patients must be transported—say from the emergency room or from medical wards or even from the surgery suite—X-ray might be provided right on site in such key locations, saving both critical time and patient comfort. As another example, I can give today’s system of electronic or digital data handling. With this technology, you can connect one place with others, without their being physically in one location. You can have satellite locations and connect them. Now this is all manifesting.”

The other side of the question of centralization versus decentralization was the matter of the geographical location of the hospital itself. “They wanted the Trondheim hospital facility located outside of the city. The consequences of this was a point I constantly stressed in discussions. I said, ‘Hospitals belong to the city. We must have them for people, not for the medical doctors who drive their cars to the distant hospitals outside. There is the crucial matter of transportation—because seventy percent of people coming to the hospital travel by bicycle. This is argument enough to support the idea that a hospital should be located within the city.’” As it turned out, locating the hospital accessibly, within the city itself, would create fruitful opportunities for expanding the functions of the hospital and its services to the public.

Visionary Trondheim Leadership

There were many conflicts along the way for the Trondheim officials. “But we tried to always have scientific arguments,” Alan emphasized. “The government said no matter how much it cost, we must bring all these innovations. There was a lot of discussion and controversy. However, I was honored to be a part of all this; it was tremendously exciting to be able to work on this project. The leadership was visionary in the end.

“Based on this work, I later realized the importance of combining the global perspective with local identity.”

“That was the quality that made Trondheim unique. The other fact to note was that Trondheim was built over time. It wasn’t that everything that had come before was demolished and rebuilt at once. Over time you can adjust to the requirements of the hospital and the technology and the needs between the two. That was quite dynamic. There was not another proposal that solved these complexities. It’s buildings like this that we must create all the time since the world is becoming more connected. Such hospitals may consist of several functional departments or centers, but they must be connected in one piece—and interconnected globally as well with other facilities and aspects of the industry.

“Trondheim was careful not to repeat the mistakes others had made in this regard. They wanted to include every idea to help them reach their goal: to be the most advanced hospital in the world. Trondheim invested everything to create this singular distinction.”

Alan’s Contribution to the Trondheim Project

In Fottland’s view, Alan’s contribution was in a very essential aspect, one that was key to the congress and the project: finding solutions. He established a way of thinking that involved logistics in the systems.

“In short,” Fottland explained, “Alan developed the way of thinking about what would constitute good concepts for hospitals. He asked the key questions: What is going to be near, what far away? How are we going to bring light into the structure? How should we have nature in it? Should we have outside gardens? He thought about integrating art created for a specific building. All the artists here had to work inside these buildings together, with those who worked there. What are you going to fight for and what are you not going to fight for?”

“Alan’s professional evolution has now become an ethics approach,” Fottland explained. “I think the interest for what happened inside hospitals has been part of his way of developing. In the beginning, his research was about architecture. Now it has turned into ‘How are you producing healthcare?’ That all started here.

“I have to say,” Fottland continued, “that Design and Health was important. In the end, I must thank Alan for pushing this concept forward. All the politicians were with me all the time, lending support. I had to convince them that this was unique and would be a new concept they would be happy in approving.”

While Alan was working on the building in Trondheim, he was also constructing his professional and philosophical foundations regarding design and health. “He wanted to organize everything regarding health and well-being. We know that there isn’t a single integrated university hospital around the world. We are the only ones who are integrating a university hospital around the city that houses it,” Fottland added.

“I still give lectures all over the world about the Trondheim concept,” Alan added. “I must have

given more than several hundred lectures. It's been a part of my presentation everywhere since 1990 because this project continues to be developed and it is inspirational.

“Because it's a unique concept, I continue to speak about it. When you are going through that hospital, you don't even feel you are in a hospital. It is amazing.”

Trondheim Receives Seven Academy Awards

Twenty years later, the Trondheim Hospital would receive seven Design & Health Academy Awards for its primacy as the most successful hospital in the world. It would take that many years to build. It would be done by phases; “they learned, then they built,” Alan said; “they evaluated once again, and continued until they finished it all.

“During all those years,” Alan said, “I presented these awards at every stage: from the competition through the hospital's evolution. Trondheim is an exceptional example in the world because they have one division called the Wellness Center. People can go there to learn more about health.”

The concept of a wellness center or a knowledge center for health promotion was something that emerged during the years of design and rebuilding of the hospital at Trondheim. What began as a pilot to experiment with design for effective care and medical methods evolved as a venue for both commercial and educational purposes. “The building process took a long time,” Alan noted; “transforming an existing older hospital to something modern and cutting-edge is a big challenge.” Throughout the dynamic process of building, partners looked at trends and came to understand the need for the hospital to function in a broad and proactive way to promote public and personal health.



Winners of the seven International Design & Health Academy Awards



Wellness center at the Trondheim Hospital, Norway

It was toward the final stages of the building process that the concept of the wellness center was implemented as an integral part of the hospital. “Trondheim was the first to come up with this idea for prevention and health promotion. It was an absolutely new idea in the world.” The center utilizes interactive digital displays to show users how the body works and to suggest healthy personal life choices.

The hospital’s integration with its urban location supports the center’s effective public interface and outreach. Instead of a single massive structure with one entrance and a labyrinth of hard-to-navigate interior corridors, the hospital comprises multiple independent centers, each with its own special areas and activities and each easily accessed. “The hospital is designed as a city block, and people passing by can enter during the day. With the hospital open to the city, like you go to any shop, you can stop in at the knowledge center.” With this unique design, not only in-patients and visiting family members, but the public at large—daily passers-by—have easy access to the wellness center and health information.

Trondheim remains the most advanced hospital because of how planners and builders learned from their mistakes. “They took them and transformed each one into a creative solution. They were adventurous. They took all the input and learned without giving in to economic limitations. They studied the factors and came to results based on performance and the users’ satisfaction. It is my strong feeling that definitely all new hospital plans being undertaken must learn about this innovative project,” Alan says now. “Their willingness to branch out into something new has contributed to the immense triumph of this hospital. Its success has come back to them in innumerable ways and benefited the whole world.”

3. The Next Step: An Interdisciplinary Approach, 1998–2002

The imaginative research, study, and work Alan embarked upon with Professor Kristoffer Konarski had far-reaching effects. Konarski became his mentor on what they termed “Quality of Life—Health & Design.” Together the two pioneers drew connections between the fields of design and health. This synthesis delved into the physiological effects of architectural design on human sensibility and wellness. Alan incorporated Design & Health as a subject in the Department of Psychosocial Health of the Karolinska Institute. He continued to be inspired and greatly respected everything about his collaboration with Konarski—which came to a premature end in 2002 with the untimely death of his work partner.

Following the completion of his Ph.D., focused on design and care in hospital planning, Alan’s work continued moving in ever-widening circles. This period marked the formal completion of his education. However, he chose to continue conducting research and learn more about both the physiological and psychological effects of architecture on human beings. Already he had established Design & Health as his benchmark brand, and would soon install it as a formal subject in the Institute of Psychosocial Factors and the Department of Health within the faculty of Public Health at Karolinska Institute.

Thus, while he was still learning, Alan simultaneously shared his new insights and their implications with others. The wide-ranging professional network he invited to Trondheim and the 1st Design & Health World Congress included people he had been meeting on his lecture tours. It was now time for Alan to expand his view of architecture in ways that would impact the world of healthcare and healing. He began to define and embrace salutogenic design—which would become his signature concept. The mentor and collaborator with whom Alan would lay these pathways was Professor Kristoffer Konarski.

As a researcher, you have the responsibility to be a part of society and inform society. That was always my intention—through forums and lectures. I was actively speaking about healthcare research which was trending at the time. —A.D.

In 1998, when Alan finished his dissertation, he was already positioning himself toward the future: “My attention now turned to what I would do.” Lecture invitations continued to pour in unabated. Despite his past challenges, Alan’s work had caught the attention of educators, business managers, and civic officials.

When he finalized his doctoral paper, he pursued the avenue that was beckoning him toward the Karolinska Institute and its medical university. Alan contacted them to inquire about the

emerging field of healthcare architecture. His point of focus was very clear: to learn more about the interaction of the built environment and health—or put more specifically, to determine connections between psychosocial factors and health. He contacted a learned professor from Karolinska with these inquiries in mind.

Konarski

The day he finished at KTH, Alan had lunch with Kristoffer Konarski, a visionary psychologist, and Professor Hans Wigzell, president of Karolinska Institute. This was a new beginning. Without telling anyone, Alan immediately went to work with Konarski. Konarski became his mentor; Konarski's knowledge and wisdom brought a dramatic shift in Alan's life view, as well as shaping the direction of his emerging career. Alan never again returned to KTH.

“When I went to Karolinska,” Alan recalled, “I started doing real investigation into health as a postdoctoral researcher. I developed broader parameters simply by working with Konarski. When I came to him, the university was called the Institute of Psychosocial Factors and Health. It was part of the Department of Public Health Sciences. Konarski's division was renowned and globally respected.”

Publication of the Dissertation

Karolinska published Alan's Ph.D. research and had it translated into English. This opened the way for wider distribution. Alan formally became part of Konarski's center for psychosomatic research and engaged in research on how built environments affect health and reduce stress. Within the institute, there were many research projects taking place. Several nurses and occupational therapists were engaged in their own doctoral projects and Alan served as their supervisor, along with Konarski. At the same time, he began guiding a master's program at Luleå Technology University, in northern Sweden, and teaching a course entitled Working Environment and Health.

Further Developments

“Konarski also invited me to the Psychosomatic Association and I lectured with him in many Swedish cities and universities. He would speak about health and I talked about design. Somehow, we connected with each other during this process,” Alan shared.

“He felt I should have my own center, call it Design and Health, and become more independent. Each department had their own group of researchers and our group had their own department, budget, and team. We were independent. I was responsible for this area and the leadership accepted it. We brought a lot of money to the institute and the administration was quite pleased with that.

“Konarski introduced me to the entire Karolinska team, as well as the president there. I first met the president, Professor Hans Wigzell, in 1998; when I told him that I wanted to work at Karolinska, he was extremely encouraging. He urged me to pursue interdisciplinary work on the care environment under Konarski’s leadership.”

Initial Popular Course

Right away, Alan began teaching a two-week course for medical doctors who wanted to learn about the built environment, the “environment for care.” Many students attended. They considered this information important, knowing they might well become part of the decision-making process for future hospitals and care facilities. They understood that the impact of the built environment on health was increasingly considered a pressing issue.

“I was voluntarily teaching three credits for medical doctors for the first time. One aspect of the course involved models of care, organization, and the impact of related design choices. This course gave me an opportunity to learn more about health as it related to stress—as well as discuss the ‘wellness factor’ within the built environment and the close interrelationship between the two.

“I was also giving seminars and organizing scientific symposiums. Some were held at the prestigious Nobel Forum at Karolinska Institute.”

Attendance at these events continued to grow. The Nobel Forum only had capacity for 104 attendees. So Alan began to hold other events outside campus at the Hilton Hotel in the central city of Stockholm, a venue with a capacity of over three hundred. “I was very pleased with all of this,” Alan recalled. “I was the main organizer and this position also financed my salary and all my work. It was a very exciting time.”

Alan was considered by many other colleagues at Karolinska Institute an outsider with his unique approach to health, but he was respected by others. For the first time, he brought together a discourse from many different disciplines focused on health and

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well-being and the impact of psychosocial factors and design on health. Among those he invited were a number of university professors: economist Leif Edvinsson, to speak about design as intellectual capital; neuroscientist Lars Terenius, member of the Royal Swedish Academy, to elaborate on creativity; Paul Roberson, psychologist and lead musician of the Medici Quartet in London, to deliberate on “Music and Mind”; sociologist and Harvard fellow John Zeisel, with expertise on design for people with Alzheimer’s; and Christer Asplund, director of business development for the city of Stockholm, as well as other local architects and physicians.

This symposium also critically reviewed the orientation of medical science toward pathology rather than with promoting health and well-being—topics Alan felt should be its main objective. The symposium led to development of the salutogenic approach and its role in framing research on creating the “wellness factor” that promotes health and answers the questions about what makes people healthy.

“Professor Konarski was honest with me. ‘I was born in Sweden,’ he explained to me. ‘My mother was in a concentration camp and my father was Swedish. My birth name from my father was originally Jan Svenson. We established this institute on behalf of the World Health Organization, developing the theory of stress research at Karolinska Institute.’ It turned out that when Konarski wanted to become head of that institute, certain individuals pushed for another candidate who had social connections—instead of Konarski, who had the scientific and professional merits. I think discrimination may also have been a factor. Kristoffer was much more qualified. It was acknowledged that this decision was noticeably strange.”

There was a considerable degree of competition in the institute. A lot of the people there were psychologists, Konarski explained—and often they’d become psychologists because they’d experienced problems in their own family. Konarski advised the young researcher, “You should not get involved too much, only scientifically. Don’t pay attention to them.” Compared with KTH, what Alan experienced here were odd interactions and a strange social atmosphere. “I never had any encouragement from the head of the institute,” Alan said. “Konarski mentored me not only on health and quality of life, but also on psychology and people’s behavior. He wanted to help me expand this knowledge.”

Alan and Konarski Develop a Theory of Environment and Health Connection

The outcome of the Dilani–Konarski collaboration was successful in every way. Konarski loved Alan; “Like him,” Alan said, “I was also a foreigner. I worked with his theory, implementing his ideas in my research. I was now working on how to develop the health theory and salutogenic approach to health and design in all kinds of built environments.

“Konarski said repeatedly that health is a process, and composed of psychosocial factors, lifestyle, emotions, and experience. Emotional experience is a central part of the health process. I realized if your emotions are strongly affected by your experience of interacting with any built environment and



Alan at the front of Institute of Psycho-Social Factors and Health

design, you are getting impacted positively or negatively. This is true wherever you may be. Factors like greenery, nature, sunlight, and windows will all affect your experience positively, while the lack of these design factors might have a negative impact upon our experiences and thereby our emotions. The degree of emotion is strongly linked to the state of health and well-being.

“Konarski concurred, and we worked to link these factors during our research,” Alan continued. “Together we developed and solidified the theory about design and health, to make it more scientific, with actual evidence involving interactions between the built environment and health. Also, we worked with the use of relevant definitions. Many Americans, especially in English-speaking countries, use countless generic terms. But those definitions have nothing to do with reality—terms like *the healing environment*, for instance. ‘Healing is a process,’ he told me. ‘Environment itself cannot be healing.’ But we defined that it *could* be supportive in reference to the healing *process*. Then we felt we could appropriately use a term like *the healing environment*.”

Alan and Konarski convened a seminar to explain these concepts to a wider audience. There were psychologists, environmental behaviorists, work therapists, professionals from many disciplines, and medical doctors gathered to discuss these ideas.

“Kristoffer’s great interest in research was about our emotions, how these affect our body and, on the other hand, how the body



Alan and Kristoffer Konarski

affects our feelings. He was ahead of anyone else in Scandinavia in researching the concept of *alexithymia*, the individual's lack of ability to distinguish emotions. This is central to psychosomatic medicine, and his interest resulted in several research projects. This research in turn resulted in psychosomatic hypertension treatment programs that complement other forms of treatment.”

Professor Kristoffer Konarski was driven by a great interest in architecture and culture in many forms and was convinced that increasing cultural activities can promote public health in general—but also that music therapy, imaging therapy, dance therapy, and psychodrama are important as specific treatments for a variety of diseases.

Loss of a Colleague, Mentor, and Friend

During the 2nd Design & Health World Congress in 2000, Konarski suddenly became very ill. He had an ongoing kidney problem which plunged him into a life-threatening situation. Alan was disconsolate with the news about the man with whom he had worked closely and who had inspired him in so many ways.

“Kristoffer was sick. His kidneys did not work properly, but he never spoke of his illnesses with me, though I was aware that he was often in dialysis. I visited him one last time in the intensive care unit. He died several days later in January 2001 following many years of struggling with his sickness.” The reminiscence still evoked sadness.

Alan acknowledged the key role Konarski played in his life: “He was supportive and decisive in helping me gain more wisdom to develop an interdisciplinary approach. Under his guidance, I was able to define ‘health’ more deeply than many doctors did. His presence in my life was stimulating and expansive. I owe a tremendous debt and gratitude to him.”

Visiting Professorship at the University of Florence

Since moving to Sweden and even while he was at Karolinska, Alan maintained his connection with the academic world in Italy, specifically now with the University of Florence. Over the years, this was another venue through which he carried out research related to what would become salutogenic design and related subjects.

“During this time, I was working as a visiting professor with the University of Florence, as I had for many years. That was very good, because I taught there and later we began working together to conduct research. It was an excellent collaboration. For example, we conducted a research program on elderly care. The Florence group helped a great deal, in a very supportive way, along with Professor Romano del Nord, vice president of that university. My Swedish staff was also involved in that project,” Alan remembered.

“Under his guidance, I was able to define ‘health’ more deeply than many doctors did. His presence in my life was stimulating and expansive. I owe a tremendous debt and gratitude to him.”

Another person whose insights contributed to research was sociologist John Zeisel, who authored a book entitled *Inquiry by Design*. He was a global pioneer in a particular method of research. Alan met him on several occasions in Sweden and in the U.S.A., Canada, and Florence to discuss elderly care. They spent a lot of time together. His later focus would be on the life of people with Alzheimer's and ways to care for people with that condition. Globally recognized as a researcher and well respected, he is today the president of the I'm Still Here Foundation and Hearthstone Alzheimer Care, Ltd.; the foundation name is based on his preeminent book in the field of Alzheimer's care, *I'm Still Here*.

4. The 2nd Design & Health World Congress, Stockholm, 2000

In the period between 1998 and 1999, Alan organized several high-level symposiums on healthcare design in Nordic countries, partnering with Karolinska Institute and other universities. By then Alan had adopted a holistic approach, learning more about health, stress, and quality of life as related to the environment. The focus for the congress he organized in 2000 was on design and care in hospital planning for the new millennium. It was here that Alan introduced for the first time the concept of salutogenic design. The 2nd Design & Health World Congress was the outgrowth of interdisciplinary research he had developed at the Karolinska Institute. One example of this was the discussion included on music and health. Other new areas involved subtle factors within healthcare facilities and interaction with nature that could impact outcomes for those healing and working in healthcare buildings. The congress was a major way for Alan to share his findings more widely with other stakeholders, from business to academia.

”What I learned between 1997 and 1998 about health, stress, and the quality of life as it related to the environment was all new to me,” Alan said. “I found it exciting and relevant. In the process, I brought several institutions together as partners for the Second World Congress. These included the Karolinska Institute and Texas A&M University, among others. My idea was to bring everyone together as partners to share challenges and solutions. There were many organizations I was working with at that time in my life,” Alan remembered.

In 1998, Alan launched planning for the 2nd Design & Health World Congress. Entitled “Integrating Design and Care in Hospital Planning for the New Millennium,” the congress would demand an entire year of preparation. After the first congress in Trondheim, it had taken another three years to organize this conference—a testament to the ways both the scope and participation in the several-day event were ramped up. “When I went to Karolinska, I wanted to help their leadership to redesign their hospital, which is old-fashioned since it was designed in the 1960s. Karolinska president Hans Wigzell would support me in bringing the Second Design and Health World Congress to Stockholm.”

During 1998 and 1999, Alan offered symposiums to various departments and disciplines in universities across Sweden; for instance, to departments of nursing sciences in the universities of Lund, Luleå, Malmö, Kalmar, and Örebro. Luleå University of Technology also invited him to teach in the Department of the Working Environment. In planning for the congress, Alan invited Professor Paul Robertson, psychologist and musician, to discuss the connection between music and enhanced health. His goal was to bring a wide range of highly accomplished people to this congress.

“I had to do the work of six people to move ahead successfully and be accepted for my work in Sweden.”

Alan’s talent and propensity for gathering sponsors and a diversity of disciplines and groups bore fruit in the 2nd Design & Health World Congress. It was finally celebrated in Stockholm at the Karolinska Institute in partnership with Texas A&M University.

Setting a High Personal Benchmark

When a culture sets the boundary so high for foreigners, you must have a driving ambition to succeed. —A.D.

As a non-Swede, Alan often said his ambition helped him move through barriers that may have daunted others. “This was the issue,” he has said. “I had to do the work of six people to move ahead successfully and be accepted for my work in Sweden.”

“Luckily, I have had a certain drive and vigorous ambition my whole life. Even before arriving in Sweden, I’d overcome many obstacles in my life. Once I perceived the situation here—and even before—it was not uncommon for me to put in sixty-plus hours per week. In Sweden, they will not consider you otherwise. You need to make your mark by being outstanding in your approach. That was why I worked very hard. This is not necessarily true of young people nowadays,” he added. “They don’t need to work like this. I put forward great effort in all that I accomplished throughout my career.”

This was certainly true regarding the Design & Health World Congress series. Alan built international networks and then invited people to participate in his novel programs. Accomplished architects, designers, business professionals, health practitioners, government officials, and academicians all enthusiastically attended to both gain and share new insights and knowledge—and to discuss relevant topics with their peers.

Focus of the 2nd World Congress

This 2nd Design & Health World Congress developed further understanding of the psychosocial factors involved in creating all kinds of healthcare facilities, including mental-health care, children’s hospitals, and facilities for care of the elderly. Many international projects presented in Stockholm by large international

firms from the U.S.A., such as Siemens and Armstrong, also contributed to sponsorship. The congress focused not only on how the quality of built environment and design enhance medical care and patient recovery and improvement, but also on how they can enhance health and well-being more proactively in a broader sense.

Texas A&M University had overseen major healthcare education and research programs and taken on much business in this field. Thus they played a significant role in this conference. The other partners included Trondheim and Karolinska Institute. Ultimately over forty organizations and globally sponsored that supported the congress. The Swedish royal family served as patrons of the congress. Princess Christina opened the event in the beautifully designed Aula Magna.

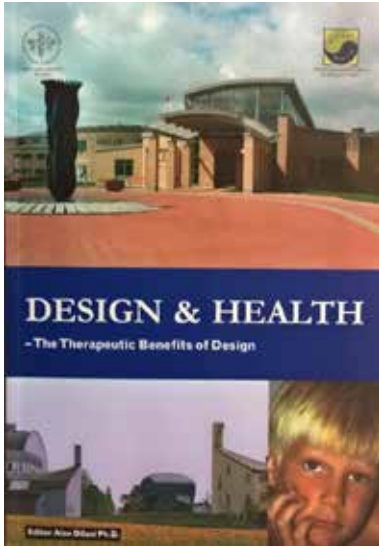
Meeting Princess Christina

“There was a particularly distinguished guest who attended the Stockholm congress,” Alan recalled, “and that was Princess Christina, the king’s sister. I had previously wanted to invite the king; but the royal family emissary advised, ‘Design is not really the king’s main interest. However, the princess would love it if you were to ask her.’

“When I met Princess Christina, she said, ‘Alan, I am jobless. My dream was to be an interior designer, an architect. But I am jobless now.’ It was very honest of her to share this with me. After



Princess Kristina at the congress Design and Health in Stockholm



Picture of the book of congress

I explained the concept of the event, she said, 'I would be honored to be a part of the congress.' She came and opened the whole congress. Her participation was an unanticipated addition and gave the Second Congress something unique and special."

This congress also provided Alan with a global platform. This was in part an outcome of the congress's and the invitation Alan had extended to all his previous supervisors to show them the work he had done. Though in some cases, however gracious, it did not bear the desired fruit, this invitation was also an effort toward reconciliation. Alan had also prepared and edited the preceding congress publication, including all presentations from that event, to complete this book for presentation at the 2nd Congress. One chapter, entitled "Design & Health: The Therapeutic Benefits of Design," became a reference point for international firms to garner what the 2nd World Congress provided and to point the way to the future, as well as to showcase its innovations since the 1st World Congress.

Alan invited his former thesis supervisor to speak at the congress, as well as a former challenger, a physician from Finland. "I wanted to respect these people by including them in what I was doing. I involved everyone and laid aside past grievances," he explained. "I also wanted them to enjoy it. I hoped people would come to see how they could join the ideas I was working with.

"Yet instead of expressing gratitude for participating in the congress, these people chose to network among themselves and with the Americans who were there, planning for their own events. Their exclusion was a dramatic and great lesson for me personally.

"I also invited many personalities like Professor Paul Robertson to speak about music and health, Dr. John Zeisel and Derek Parker, our Academy Award winner and Lifetime Leadership Award recipient. These people inspired me and continue to do so. They are still working with us."

The Aula Magna: A Breathtaking Location

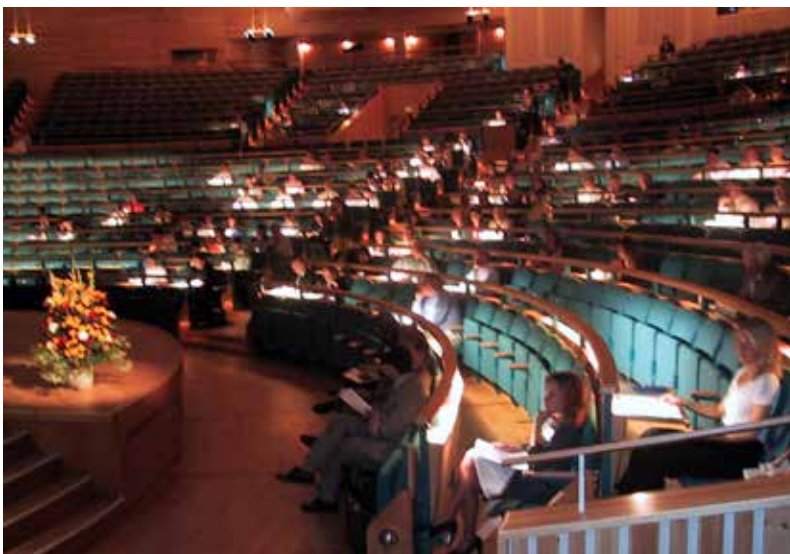
The 2nd World Congress was held at the Aula Magna of the University of Stockholm's green campus at Frescati. There were

about five hundred participants. A Swedish television channel spoke glowingly of the event.

The Aula Magna, designed by architect Ralph Erskine, was inspired by nature. Nestled atop a rocky hill, it is surrounded by magnificent ancient oaks through which deer and other wildlife can be fleetingly glimpsed. “Aula Magna is seven floors, three of which are blasted into the rock.” Approaching it, you have the impression that the primary entrance is low and small. But when you enter the large foyer, you perceive the full height of the building. Bricks of different textures and colors and large window walls make up the façade. The foyer is illuminated by the soft Scandinavian light reflecting on the wooden surfaces. Solar reflectors bathe the auditorium through skylights. The acoustics are of such quality that a speaker on the stage can be heard by twelve hundred people without the need for a microphone. It is like a Greek amphitheater.

The reception was held in the Stockholm City Hall, where the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences organizes Nobel gala dinners each December for each year’s laureates.

“It was very successful because it was the most beautiful congress hall in the world,” Alan explained, “and it was in midsummer. A group of Canadian architects came out at two in the morning. It was still light and this was very strange for them.



Aula Magna design and health congress

My main contribution to the congress was to develop the concept of *salutogenic*.

“The congress inspired the Canadians who went back home and designed the Tender Bay Hospital, which is also built of wood. Tye Farrow, the architect, later shared with me that he was completely inspired in Stockholm. He designed it right after the congress. It was his first time in Sweden. Later, he was given a Design & Health Academy Award for this design. He said that it was the congress, the nature, the subject—all the elements helped him to be creative and design the best hospital in the world.

“People commented that they had never experienced such a lecture hall. The Aula Magna was certainly the most beautiful lecture hall in the world, without equal. It is an extraordinary piece of architecture.

“For my first talk,” Alan explained, “I used the research Konarski and I had conducted to describe and further develop the definition of health. My main contribution to the congress was to develop the concept of *salutogenic*. Salutogenics is the source of inspiration for our architects. It is scientific, and it is the point of departure for looking at health and stress and the source of the psychosocial design factor.

“Salutogenic design had not yet been developed within the schools of architecture or even considered by architects. Since that time, I have been pushing relentlessly in that direction, getting the word out constantly and determinedly. That is my task and I have been able to bring a lot of good people to support us,” Alan said.

Why People Attended

“I had begun to build a core group of people like Derek Parker from the industry and John Zeisel, who have been very supportive of the work we’ve done,” Alan continued. “Many of those who supported us wanted to also profile *their* work at this time, to show their brand through the International Academy for Design and Health because it was already becoming very reputable and well-respected by both industry and universities. This made an attractive drawing card and others desired to be visible there.”

“It was a very beneficial situation for everyone and I was comfortable with that as long as they didn’t take advantage of our open invitation, sacrificing the quality of our program. That was

my preoccupation, to keep the unspoken balance of respecting them, giving them exposure, without reducing the quality of our work. That was my concern with industry. I always wanted to protect that balance.”

Criteria for Evaluating the Submissions

In Stockholm, Alan developed criteria for evaluating the papers submitted because, for example with the university applicants, he felt their submissions should be evaluated anonymously and not merely based on their academic acumen. He established a process for determining and accepting the choice of speakers. These criteria remain in place to this day.

“I’d met some people in Sweden and got help from people involved with nursing sciences. We discussed ways I could evaluate the papers fairly. I used the same criteria in subsequent congresses and the process was helpful. Before I adjusted or adapted the criteria, I asked if the scientific review committee had further ideas to review the submissions.

“My primary concern was always the content. I wanted to be as honest as possible because these people made their submissions in good faith. Since I traveled to many conferences and saw the same people and subjects they presented, I strove to ensure our content was interesting and innovative.”

Sidelined

Even though Alan strove to include a diverse audience, including those he’d had conflicted relationships with in the past, his inclusiveness was not honored with reciprocity. “For example, following this congress,” Alan mused, “a colleague told me that there had been backroom discussions that involved planning the next congress to take place in one year in the Netherlands, excluding my involvement. At first, I was stunned to receive this news. One learns many lessons in the realm of business. I felt this situation lacked integrity, especially given my close association with its organizers and their noninclusiveness. I learned to be more aware and build associations with colleagues only when there are agreed-upon and clear agendas and motives.”

Alan Organizes More National Symposiums

The 2nd World Congress was very successful and Alan received a lot of recognition, including recognition from Karolinska. “They wanted to increase their engagement with Design and Health and my ongoing research projects,” Alan said. “Increased interest stemmed from industry leaders who wanted to be more involved. For example, Saab gave me a car for two years to drive as a Design and Health sponsor.”

Following the 2nd World Congress, Alan had new speaking opportunities as well. He was asked to travel and give even more lectures. His talks were sold through Tallar Forum, the Speaking Forum,

the book; one important sponsor was the Council of Building Research. I had gone to the council and asked for their support. They replied, ‘Alan, we cannot back this project financially because we are required to go to our board, and they have not always been supportive.’ The director told me, ‘I can only authorize a maximum of \$6,000 under my authority without approaching the board. I urge you to accept this toward your publication.’

“I accepted,” Alan recalled. “I had no choice, but I felt disrespected. And that this was a clear sign of discrimination, because a Swedish researcher with a similar project would have received ten times more support. Nevertheless, with their funds and those from the industry, I published the book. I learned that I had to trust the industry and glean ways to commercialize what we do for them. This was something critical to be developed for the future of this work.”

Colleagues Speak: Nadia Tobia

I met Alan in 2000 in Stockholm. I was working on the facility of Bridgepoint Hospital in Iraq. One day a call for a paper landed on my desk for the upcoming conference in Stockholm. This was the first time I had heard about the Academy for Design and Health and the conference.

At that time, we had finished an interesting project at the hospital for its cognitive support unit and decided to send an abstract on the project. I did this and it was accepted for presentation. I then attended the event. The venue was such a nice space; it was magical. The conference was very professional. Since it was the first time for me, the congress had a tremendous impact. I got to know what others are doing, the larger healthcare discussion and how it's being managed. It was an eye-opener for me. I incorporated what I learned there in my work. I also met Alan there and we've been in touch ever since.



Architect presenter Nadia Tobia speaking at the conference

5. Establishment of the Research Center for Design and Health at KTH South Campus, 2002

Prominent business developer Stig Larsson, former director of the international systems-communication corporation Ericsson and president of the southern Stockholm region for support of business development, invited Alan to establish his own research center for design and health at the south campus of the Royal Institute of Technology. This center at KTH, Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan, received several million SEK from industry and hired four researchers with diverse educational backgrounds, as an interdisciplinary staff. Alan would come to develop the mission and vision of the research center.

Moving Forward from Tragedy

It was in 2002 that there took place the unexpected event that grieved Alan deeply: Kristoffer Konarski entered intensive care. Konarski was a relatively young man, but his condition was serious; just seven days later, he passed away. This was a shocking and life-changing event; Konarski had been both a friend and inspiration to Alan. For the past four years, since 1998, he had supported him in his postdoctoral research at the Karolinska Institute.

Six months later, Alan decided to leave the Karolinska Institute. He did not want to work at the central campus where Institute support for design and health was inadequate. So he finally went to the KTH South Campus, thanks to advice from Stig Larsson in his capacity as president of the southern Stockholm regional organization for business development. Alan had begun a conversation with Larsson, who sought to develop the southern part of Stockholm, with plans to include a new hospital, business and industry, and a university. Alan was very interested in the proposed new hospital.

Larsson opened many doors for Alan Dilani and strove to teach him ways to be more diplomatic. “I spent much time with him,” Alan shared. “Carefully, I learned from him. He would tell me, ‘If there are things you don’t like, stay silent. Let other people speak. Listen more and speak less. You have two ears. It’s better you listen than talk.’ He was pedagogical with me regarding social interactions with diplomacy and he had deep understandings of this subject.”

Larsson recommended Alan come to KTH South Campus to meet with the dean, Inge Jovik, and with Professor Leif Edvinsson to establish the Research Center for Design and Health. “At the same time,” Alan said, “I was at work with the preparation of the Third World Congress on Design and Health, to be held in Montreal. The reason Montreal has been selected because I was often there, teaching at the University of Montreal. But also there were two large projects for hospitals that were significant for networking, to follow up and learn what was going on in that part of the world.”



At his new research center at KTH South Campus

At KTH South Campus, Alan Dilani developed a research program and then looked to establish his own research center with four doctoral students at the campus and a postdoc researcher; he also served as supervisor for a doctoral student at Luleå University, where he taught courses on the subject of the work environment. During this period he was in almost daily conversations and meetings with industry, university, local municipalities, and government groups around the country and internationally, or lecturing about his new field, Design & Health. After several months of meetings he made a public posting in architect journals inviting applicants for an opening at the research center for a

qualified researcher with a new interdisciplinary program. The research program established a number of projects, each involving doctoral candidates to develop the research.¹⁷

Research project no. 1, with Ph.D. candidate Christina Danielsson

With the company AP Real Estate as sponsor, a research program was developed focusing on the office environment. The goal of research for the project, entitled “The Health-Promoting Office Environment in Today’s Knowledge Society,” was to create better conditions for producing and shaping a psychosocially supportive environment in office settings as workplace. An agreement was signed and AP Real Estate approved the financing of the project.

Research project no. 2, with Ph.D. candidate Jonas Andersson

With Haninge Municipality as sponsor, Alan Dilani developed a research project on mapping existing elderly care and giving advice in the design of a large two-story facility for elderly care in Haninge. The project, titled “Psychosocially Supporting Environment for Elderly Care,” aimed to generate understanding about how a model for elderly care would be organized and designed in the future. An agreement was approved between the partners. As a resident of this municipality, Allan felt some responsibility to offer it support.

Research project no. 3, with Ph.D. candidate Erland Flygt

A research program for a healthy school environment, entitled “Learning Environment,” was developed to promote healthy lifestyles among future generations. Studying today’s learning environments from both design and psychosocial perspectives, the project looked at how the design of learning environments affects healthy lives and activities among students and teachers, including environmental impacts on creativity and the desire for better learning. The initial work was first to identify and map stress factors and later develop psychosocial design elements in the school to create a supportive and healthy environment for learning. An agreement for financing the project was developed with Haninge Municipality and approved.



Stig Larsson, President of Academy

Research project no. 4, with Ph.D. student Anna Rylander

An overall project for the center as a whole, “Interaction Design, Health, and Intellectual Capital,” was initiated to explore how other projects could be used to study design as intellectual capital. For a business, the physical work environment is often seen primarily as a cost item, and considered from a cost perspective. In reality, however, the physical environment affects most aspects of a company’s intellectual capital and its human factors, and affects the process of value creation. But tools for analyzing the physical environment as a value-creating asset for the company are generally missing, and this is what the project sought to develop. Financing was to be covered by other projects; agreements were approved with Kinnarps Furniture Company AB and Professor Leif Edvinsson as main partners for supervising the project.

Research project no. 5, with associated Ph.D. students

Together with nursing science professor Ann Langius of Karolinska Institute, Alan Dilani developed the research project “Prototype Nursing Unit, Design and Care.” The project aimed to create a prototype or pilot nursing unit through which the industry could test their products and services and promote development for a larger market both in the Nordic region and internationally. The company RECEPTA agreed to finance two Ph.D. students for this project; discussions were also conducted with other partners to fund the project.

A proposal for business development in connection with these projects was developed and presented to SVID, Swedish Industrial Design. The project had economic potential for business in the country to develop new products.

R & D project no. 6 in collaboration with Karolinska Institute: Prototype Health Room for stress-free work environment, supervised by interior designer Alexandra Moore

Prototype Health Room was a unique concept to be designed at KTH South as a pilot: the construction of a full-scale health room to document how stress can be eliminated in the working environment through positive emotional experiences. This prototype was envisioned as capable of later adoption as a design at workplaces throughout the country.

In this design, staff at each workplace were to be given a time for rest and experience in the health room while receiving a diagnostic physiological analysis of their stress levels and the condition of their health as measured by an AIR-PAS device. Participating employees should then be able to measure and regulate their own activity and response to stress and monitor the changes—hopefully improvement—in their own state of health. By consciously modulating their work rhythm, the idea was that workers could learn to achieve the balance between work, rest, and contemplation that is fundamental to quality of life and prevention of stress. If intervention for health improvement were needed, whether at work or elsewhere, AIR-PAS data could provide both the base level starting

point and a way to gauge progress, as measured by the individual's physiological stress status and condition.

The prototype was to be built with design elements known to contribute to health, such as tranquilizing fountains, aquariums, plants, color, shapes, daylight, music, and art to stimulate emotion and experience. The health room was intended to provide the conditions for the support of positive emotion and creativity, while also, for employees who so wished, providing important data about their physiological state and responses to stress. Controlled studies were planned on the effect of the health room in different workplaces, with priority given to those with significant levels of stress and where workers have little to no control of their working conditions—ranging from underground industrial labor to ever-changing workplaces or shift schedules, or intense deadlines and decision making in the financial sector.

“While I was busy with organizing the Third Congress in Canada and with a heavy schedule at KTH South Campus,” Alan said, “these efforts attracted a lot of media attention. So much enthusiasm and publicity was not possible without the great support of many people. I invited Stig Larsson to come in as president of the board for the newly formed International Academy for Design and Health. I also asked Inge Jovik, the prefect of KTH South Campus, to serve on the board, and in 2001 formally registered the academy as a nonprofit organization in Stockholm.

“KTH had only allocated 12,000 SEK (\$1400 US) for the doctoral students associated with the projects, but I decided to give them 14,000 SEK (\$1700 US) as what I considered a fair salary. From my own experience, I knew that when you are a student that isn't enough, so I contributed the additional 2000 SEK from academy sponsorship to enable the students to support the work of the academy in planning the Montreal congress.

“When the vice president of KTH heard about my additional support for these young people, she did not approve. ‘This is not allowed in Sweden,’ she told me. ‘You cannot continue doing so.’ I replied that I could pay them separately and that I would find the means to do this.

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“But she insisted I could not do this. Yet I felt responsible for them. I knew, because I myself had been a Ph.D. student, that the salary given to them was not enough. I told her, ‘Whether you like it or not, I will do this. It is my position, and you must find a solution for that.’”

Show of Solidarity

The health minister, the president of the largest municipality, professors, and political party leaders reached out to Alan in a show of solidarity. He connected with a neurosurgeon at the Karolinska Institute and he also invited high-profile researchers like neuroscientist Lars Terenius, psychologist Paul Robertson, musicians, and many others to join his team.

Finally, in September 2001, Alan was invited by the Swedish Academy of Science to give a seminar on the impact of design and health from a scientific perspective. The presentation received wide recognition.

The New Director Asserts Himself

After this Alan was contacted by several people who wanted to sponsor his research center. Alan brought in around 4 million SEK from people who wanted to be sponsors for the workplace design project sponsored by AP Real Estate. “They took us to a very expensive restaurant in Old Town in Stockholm that evening,” Alan recalled. “An anthropologist named Tore Larsson came who had just returned from Australia. He was five or ten years older than me. He bluntly announced, ‘I want to be the director for this center. I want to work with you but I want to be the director.’”

“I said no, that this wouldn’t work for me. He asked me why and I replied, ‘You are an anthropologist; I am a public health scientist and architect, I have much experience in these fields and I brought all these resources and people.’ He simply answered ‘Okay’ in front of the KTH vice president and the dean.

“But it seemed the vice president wanted him—because it had already been decided before the meeting, with the lobbying



Eco Architecture Solaris designed by Ken Yeang

Once again,
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of Sweden.

of his friends and relatives. They had brought him back from Australia and had no sympathy for me because, quite simply, I was a foreigner with a different background.

“I informed them that if he became the director, I would not accept it. I was happy to work with him, but he was not qualified to be the center’s director. On top of that, I had created the center and brought in the revenue, thanks to my network. I was extremely clear that if he took over, I would leave the center. I considered this takeover as poor leadership and I could not accept it.

“The vice president was unhappy with my response. But my position on this was unwavering.

“Swedish people have a cultural tendency toward not expressing what they actually believe. This was an ongoing problem for me. I felt these people had acted underhandedly and I told the dean, ‘I will be leaving.’

“Her explanation was: ‘This man is more Swedish.’ She expected me to apologize for speaking bluntly, but I refused. She repeated, ‘If you don’t apologize, you must leave. You know that.’ I said, ‘I will leave. But you will lose my brainpower, with a lot of ideas.’

“That was the last meeting I had with the administration at KTH. I left the same night and was saddened to see that all four of my Ph.D. students immediately went to the new director, the anthropologist, and I never again heard from them. I had fought for them, and these people never said another word to me.”

Once again, this experience of feeling sidestepped and discriminated against led Alan to search for and focus on working outside of Sweden. However, he went back to Karolinska Institute and met with Hans Wigzell, Karolinska’s president, and chief advisor to Göran Persson, the Social Democrat prime minister. Wigzell invited Alan to establish his own research center for design and health at the south campus of the Karolinska Institute, NOVUM Science Park. This center received several million SEK from the municipality and hired four researchers with diverse educational backgrounds as an interdisciplinary research team; staff included a researcher from the U.S.A. and a postdoc from South Korea, and together with the administrative staff created a very successful research center well connected both internationally and with the local government.

Moving On

Alan went back to the new center at NOVUM the next year and relaunched the theme of health-promoting work environment and care. He created a symposium on the topic and presented it himself in partnership with Karolinska Institute.

In his focus on the interdisciplinary aspect, he was the only researcher putting forth those ideas to the public. “My prevailing approach was to bring into the academic world people from outside the university—high-level professional people from other universities, from business, industry, and the Stockholm development office—and create interaction between industry and very qualified researchers to discuss social problems. They paid attention to me and the invitations kept coming. I gave interesting lectures and people enjoyed them.”

Ph.D. Students Return

At one lecture in his series, some students from KTH came to hear Alan; they had not been invited but they asked Alan if he would be their academic supervisor—to which he readily agreed. “I gave them all the knowledge and the material they requested, even though when they went back to KTH, they never acknowledged my support as a resource in their papers. Still, I didn’t care that they used all my material. No one on that end ever realized what input or advice had transpired in developing their papers.

“Later it turned out there were two versions of their papers,” Alan said. One was presented at KTH; the other was later published with Alan’s name as a contributor. “Sook Young Lee, the postdoc researcher from Korea, came back to me and said that she was not able to work with the people at KTH South Campus. She felt they did not respect her.” Alan concurred; he agreed to mentor her, and helped her for many years.

Sook Young Lee and Alan would later publish several books and articles together. The Korean Academy of Science financed her postdoctoral work with Alan, with support for her and for Alan as well since he was her supervisor. He encouraged her to publish a book in Korea which included material they had developed together. As a result, years later, Alan received a letter from another Korean scientist asking if the book belonged to his center. This was a confirmation for Alan that his work was being disseminated. Sook Young Lee attended many Design & Health world congresses with Alan and she continues to be inspired by Alan’s work.

The Research Center for Design and Health at Karolinska Institute NOVUM Science Park became a leading interdisciplinary research center and received grants of several million dollars for their research program from both from industry and government. Beside consultancy and advisory activities and lectures worldwide they have carried out the most extensive research on facilities for elderly care and correctional institutions in Scandinavia.

6. Expansion into New Architectural and Cultural Concepts: Montreal World Congress, 2003

In July 2003 Alan would convene the 3rd Design & Health World Congress, in Montreal. Such international forums were becoming an important aspect of his work, both for networking and for collecting and disseminating information on growing trends in healthcare design. Each congress had a particular focus and incrementally moved Alan's work forward on the salutogenic concept. The congress in Montreal presented unique cultural challenges which enlarged Alan's awareness about how to take cultural factors into account when working with facilities in other countries.

*Another fruitful outcome from Montreal would be publication of a book based on talks from that event, widening the impact and reach of the Design & Health brand. Prior to this congress, Alan had been participating widely in international symposiums and television programs; now, following the congress, public exposure would broaden to include writing a column on workplace and health and psychological factors and health in Sweden, and in 2000 an invitation from a German group to visit Cape Town, South Africa, for the first time.. His focus would widen further, branching out into other age groups with the architectural and design principles of the salutogenic concept in healthcare. Following up research pursued since 2003, in 2005 he would publish another book entitled *Elderly Care by Design*, which would be well received in both English and Swedish.*

Opening the Door to a World Congress in Montreal

The Institute of Design Montréal had proposed two large hospitals for Montreal, for two different cultural communities: one for the Canadian French-speaking community and one for English-speaking citizens. These “super-hospitals” were to be sponsored by McGill University Hospital and SICHUM, the Société d'Implémentation du CHUM—CHUM being the combined Saint-Luc Hospital and the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal. “The big, big projects that were fascinating at the time were the two mega-hospitals being planned,” Alan recalled. “That is what attracted us to that place; that's why we went there. I had also lectured at McGill University at the time and was working with the Institute of Design.”

A rivalry existed between the two cultural groups, the English and the French—a factor that became increasingly evident as planning and the congress itself unfolded. Whatever one group moved to do, the other side would duplicate in a competitive rather than complementary manner. This situation was well known in Montreal and when Alan shared with colleagues his plan to hold a congress there to address plans for a hospital, he received cautionary advice from many people: It would be critical, they advised, for him to find balance between the two competing groups. He took those words to heart: “I always paid attention there to language and cultural diversity. I never

showed sympathy or preference for one group over the other. I respected them both in all my dealings around this congress. We brought a balance between all these participants from both sides because the theme was broad or universally applicable. People liked it. This approach worked very well.”

In his previous work with Montreal’s Institute of Design, Alan had stressed the need for focus on the future in planning these urban hospitals. His words of advice helped planners sort out priorities and make decisions. Subsequently, the Institute of Design became a key sponsor of the congress. “The Institute of Design of Montreal wanted me to work with them and establish Design and Health there,” Alan said. “They wanted to bring funding for us to establish a research center.”

Prior to the congress, Alan gave a presentation at the Institute of Design that quantified health as linked to design choices. He developed a stress theory and linked it to relevant design elements, describing in detail psychosocial factors that exist within the built environment as they relate to design. In the congress, he would expand upon these themes in his presentation.

Themes of the Congress

Five hundred to six hundred people attended the 3rd Design & Health World Congress in Montreal. The main focus was on presenting the interplay of the fields of design and health, as well as plans for the new super-hospital. There were two morning sessions and two discussion sessions in the afternoons. “For the first time, right in the beginning, we introduced the IADH Academy Awards,” Alan said. “We contextualized them by saying we felt it was important to recognize superior design excellence.” Highlighting plans for the two large hospitals for the different Montreal communities, the congress focused primarily on those two building projects.

Once again, Alan created an interdisciplinary approach, by inviting a spectrum of participants. These included Annelie Enochson, member of the Swedish Parliament; Christer Asplund, the director of business development for the city of Stockholm; Leif Edvinsson, professor of economics, who received the Brain Recognition Award that year for his work on intellectual capital, the intangible “capital” of a society and the value of brainpower.

One Australian participant, Ian Forbes, later recalled: “Just prior to the Montreal congress, the SARS epidemic happened and the American participants and presenters abandoned us, because they weren’t going to come across the border into Canada. But we turned up from Australia and it was a very good congress. I attended the first congress advisory committee meeting there in Montreal. What I liked about that congress was that most of the people were there to share research—so it was all new. I was very interested in finding out what was new around the world. People were presenting stuff that was real research. It was exciting, and opened doors.”

All the talks were presented in English and no translation was necessary due to the language capability of the attendees. “The idea was to present those projects and in this congress, I also had people from my research center participate,” Alan said. “They were working with me, and I also had them evaluate each congress. They sent queries and analyzed what worked well and what didn’t.”



Leif Edvinsson, professor of economics

Takeoff for the IADH Academy Awards

“We introduced several Academy Award categories in Montreal. For the first time, we presented the actual awards as well. Because there were so many projects, I realized that in order to distinguish the best projects, we must have an evaluation and announce examples as a benchmark and reference. I also wanted to give recognition to some of the people who had worked very hard. The awards seemed like a suitable way to do this. I chose to let the people themselves do the evaluating—people from the industry—not me, but others to whom the prizes should be awarded. That’s why,” Alan continued, “in each category, there are three people evaluating. There’s always a lead judge and two other people who decide the winners. I am not personally involved in these projects. The majority of participants are from the industry, even today. And being from the industry, they have the expertise to decide.

“We had announced the Montreal congress six months in advance and set the deadline for submissions as October 15. We received many projects right from the beginning and the number continued to increase all the time. We received roughly a hundred projects but we didn’t have many Academy Award categories at that time—there were only ten or eleven. I think receiving the

Most of all, I experienced the necessity to always make an event like this balanced, with participants from all over the world, to respect all the diversity.

Academy Award is very humbling, to be honest. It's also a way for us to find interesting new projects; no one knows everything that's being done or who is doing what research."

Regarding the synergy generated by the congresses themselves, Alan has said, "Yes, I'm always looking to find new people. The congresses always give me connections with people and places. Big universities, industry, government—they provide a network.

"I've seen that having an anonymous scientific evaluation for the awards is the only guarantee for that. In this way, I can find new people that I haven't met before. That has been one of the sources of inspiration for me in holding these forums. In a later congress held in 2015 in Hong Kong, I would finally meet fifteen new people in person who work with us and support us long distance, I did my best to help them with what they wanted, to help them meet and interact with other people. I supported them to connect with universities. This is how the network as a whole improves and increases in a very systematic way. That is the beauty of these congresses.

"One of the conditions in the Montreal event was that participants making submissions for an Academy Award must come and present a poster. There were several categories for the academy awards; some are integrated into the final program because they are noteworthy projects. One man from Malaysia whose project focused on rehabilitation was integrated into the final program. It was well received. The was a very good project."

The Play of Cultural Factors

The main takeaway for Alan personally in Montreal was this: "All told, it was participating in the world culture on a global stage—witnessing the differences and similarities between the English and French cultures—that was exciting for me. It gave me insight into different cultures, different mentalities. I learned a lot from that.

"Most of all, I experienced the necessity to always make an event like this balanced, with participants from all over the world, to respect all the diversity. It's not about preferring this or that outlook; you must compromise and see the advantages of all sides.

Then you find the synergy. I was always curious about the synergy of a congress and the outcome. The British dominated culturally and then they saw that the French were of equally high quality. Both plans were of very high quality but to start with, they were fighting between themselves. I was in the middle . . . and learned a great deal from this congress.”

Montreal Invites a Return

At the time of the Montreal congress, while city officials and hospital administration wanted to see a large facility built, the concept of the “super-hospital” was not yet prevalent. Such buildings had not yet been created. It was not the model at the time, yet plans and concepts for a super-hospital became the focus of the whole event.

Years later, in 2015, the city of Montreal would invite Alan to bring the congress back there again. All the hospitals, he saw, were now completed. He was introduced to several universities and he spoke with the county council too. The city’s investment board wanted him to establish an Institute for Design and Health there, and asked him to set up a research center for two to three years, where he would be invited to work independently. By then, however, Alan had settled firmly in Sweden and was based in Stockholm.

“I had gone back three times to Montreal to give lectures at the universities following the congress, but that was it. In 2015 I was there for one week. They set up interviews with people at several universities, and a meeting with the county council. They had many good ideas, but I realized I could not devote that kind of time there at that point in my work. I discussed this with them. However, that trip did bring the congress to Canada again—this time to Toronto. That was a positive outcome.”

Part 5

Salutogenic Design Principles: Application in Design for Elderly Care and Prisons, 2000–2008

An interdisciplinary salutogenic approach had been the main focus of Alan Dilani's work for over two decades. The practical application of this philosophy in the modern world of health, business, and daily life showed it could be adapted to a myriad of areas. In fact, the aim of its use was this: to decrease stress and improve overall health for people in workplace and healthcare facilities—both for patients and for those who care for them. In later years, Alan expanded the application of Salutogenics to the way entire countries view “health.” More and more, he has spoken with health ministers on ways to promote awareness that will greatly improve the well-being of their constituents. This expansion of Salutogenics has taken place in developed and developing nations alike.

This healthful philosophy provides a benchmark for how to live, work, and heal. “My vision,” Alan wrote, “is that the applied knowledge of design and health should be integrated into all healthcare training, to affect society's health and growth powerfully in the future. The overall objective is to contribute to a society where people live longer with optimal health, and with a higher quality of life and productivity.” Alan developed salutogenic principles to be applied for all types of infrastructure projects—ranging from city planning to creating offices as healthy workplaces, or improving environments for young people in their schools.

Between 2000 and 2008, Alan developed two major innovative research programs. The first applied his principles to care for the elderly; the second reached out to Swedish prison design for a nationwide project. The tangent into prison design was something new—and salutogenic guidelines for the built environment aptly applied to prison design, where they held potential impact for inmates, staff, and administration. This field had not been touched by other design researchers, despite the pressing need for it.

In 2008 with the departure of Stig Larsson as president of the Academy of Design & Health and the appointment of Per Gunnar Svensson, a public-health scientist, Alan also established a global network with the academy and created the journal World Health Design. He invited several publishers to discuss and develop this magazine. In 2008 Alan ended up publishing the new journal in London. It became a vehicle to disseminate his health design concepts, which were spreading worldwide. Its coverage of news about winners of the IADH Academy Awards encouraged more enthusiastic participation from architects and designers. The precepts Alan had researched and worked with for years continued spreading to an even wider audience.

1. Principles of Salutogenic Design

In the winter of 2002, Alan was invited to lecture on anticipated hospital trends before the Karolinska board in Stockholm; he spoke about the future hospital at Karolinska. Alan was now a respected advisor, following up with many developing hospitals all over the world—including projects in Canada, the United States, and Italy.

The principles and ideas of salutogenic design had greatly expanded over the years. Alan continued to refine and broaden the scope of these essential principles. He founded the journal *World Health Design* as one of the main scientific sources for healthcare design in the world. In 2015, *World Health Design* highlighted an article by Alan, “The Beneficial Health Outcomes of Salutogenic Design” (June 2015, pages 18–35), that summarized years of study, research, and application on Salutogenics. This benchmark article comprises a comprehensive explanation of Alan Dilani’s in-depth salutogenic concept, and is included here in full.

The Beneficial Health Outcomes of Salutogenic Design by Alan Dilani

We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us. —Sir Winston Churchill

There is an urgent and ever-growing awareness worldwide of the need to invest in healthy and sustainable infrastructure. By applying salutogenic design principles that seek to promote greater health, this landmark shift can begin to occur. The resulting and striking healthful outcomes of such existing structures bring these concepts to the forefront of global building opportunities. This approach now comprises the leading edge of change in our society. By embracing these precepts to shape our built environments and infrastructure, we engage in shifting the quality of such environments. Salutogenic architecture is taking its rightful place in the vanguard of preventative care strategies that have the potential to change our lifestyle for the better.

Health has become a commodity that is unequally distributed within society. Certain groups of individuals are more successful than others in gaining access to critical health-related knowledge and information. This data gathering is often supported by a healthier lifestyle, in combination with lower exposure to risk factors within the built environment.

The author discusses the principles and ideas for a salutogenic design approach in planning future built environments with one simple goal: to create a healthier society. For design professionals (architects, planners, designers, et al.), the focus upon and concern for designing a sustainable healthy future society is the most compelling task to be addressed and implemented in all societal sectors where human beings live, work, and play.

Introduction

In 1997, the World Health Organization identified that the health “arena” should include these frequently used priority spaces: the workplace, schools, hospitals, correctional institutions, commercial offices and public spaces within our towns and cities, and indeed our own homes, as the apex of health promotional activities in the twenty-first century.

During the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2011, the socioeconomic challenge of noncommunicable diseases was discussed for the first time. The author argues that built environments have a significant impact upon human health and states his commitment to bring this understanding to the design and health professions and help reduce the prevalence of lifestyle diseases that are becoming the major health problem on our planet. Embracing a salutogenic approach when shaping our built environments creates a preventative care strategy that changes the current health focus from risk factors and treatment of disease to a more holistic understanding and evolution toward a healthier society.

For this shift to occur, there must be an ever-growing emphasis upon promotion of a healthful society supported by investment in healthy and sustainable public, social, institutional, and domestic infrastructure. Research on the salutogenic direction highlights the impact that design factors can have, inspiring both designer and planner to create a healthy society.

For the designer, the compelling question is: How do we design for a sustainable healthy future? First of all, we need to envision how such architecture might look if it is to be sustainable and salutogenic. This query necessitates an expanded understanding by addressing the health consequences of architectural design’s functions and processes. This shift includes finding new models for design, seeking new construction and production systems, materials and processes, along with the action we must take to realize this new vision with comprehensive salutogenic strategies.

On a global level, businesses and industries face similar concerns—seeking to understand the environmental consequences of their workplace, with new business models, new production systems, materials and processes for better health performance.

The salutogenic design approach becomes an opportunity for the architectural profession not only to help the world with its problems, but also to stop creating new issues. Salutogenic design must become the core of all architecture, changing the way we design. But how should we shape our future environment, so it responds to the pressing demands of our society?

We are living in a post-industrial age amidst the explosive proliferation of knowledge; in this milieu, architecture should provide positive stimuli that promote creativity. Therefore, a new way of looking at the role of the built environment is required within the context of health and well-being: this new perspective is salutogenic design.

Salutogenic design highlights the impact of design factors that inspire both the designer and planner to create a healthy society: (1) by developing healthy urban design that stimulates healthy behavior and thereby (2) supporting the prevention of diseases and the promotion of health.



Eco-architecture Solaris, designed by Ken Yeang

Increased consideration of a salutogenic design approach leads to social innovation. Salutogenic design requires an interdisciplinary application of psychosocial factors with architecture that actually promote a healthy lifestyle. To reduce the global burden of disease in an efficient way, major investments need to be made in the promotion of healthy lifestyles and development of healthy spaces.

Theoretical Framework of Design and Health

Promoting healthy lifestyle and spaces depends upon ecological designs with infrastructure that creates clean air, clean water, clean food and clean land—through water management and retention, natural heating and cooling, and renewable energy—which in turn are necessary for human health. These life-giving principles

The world requires a new paradigm, and the creation of a healthy global society is a vision we should all embrace.

are intertwined with those of salutogenic design, which supports human health in daily behavior (Ken Yeang, presentation at World Congress Design and Health, 2012). Improving population health as the foundation for social and economic development will only be achieved through salutogenic and ecological design principles. Salutogenic design can provide social organization, structure and function in society while ecological design works to continually restore the natural environment.

Ken Yeang, the father of eco-architecture, linked the relationship between an ideal building and its environment to a human being with a prosthetic device. He considers that only if the device is in complete harmony with the body will it function optimally. In the same way, nature can be considered as the “host organism” to man-made infrastructure, with the same level of bio-integration required if the whole system is to succeed.

The world requires a new paradigm, and the creation of a healthy global society is a vision we should all embrace. Ecological design deals with infrastructure that creates clean air, clean water, clean food and clean land—and these ideals are focused on achieving an ideal interaction between the built and the natural environment.

Research has shown that well-designed and people-friendly spaces stimulate walking, cycling and the use of public transportation. High levels of greenery also encourage physical activity, which lowers blood pressure, decreases the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, and prevents falls in the elderly. Evidence also shows that attractive and open public spaces reduce mental fatigue and stress.

All these elements contribute to a reduction in the burden of disease, which may eventually reduce the costs of healthcare. “Global health means making major investments in the promotion of healthy lifestyles throughout the world and the development of healthy spaces to reduce the burden of disease,” said Julio Frenk, dean of Harvard University’s School of Public Health, in an interview with Alan Dilani for *World Health Design*, October 2010.

Largely informed by global recognition of the urgent need to reshape our built environment and tackle the twenty-first-century challenges of chronic and noncommunicable diseases,



With Dr. Julio Frenk, former minister of health for Mexico and dean of Harvard's School of Public Health

the International Academy for Design and Health has undertaken over two decades of dialogue and interdisciplinary research-based design. While significant progress has been achieved to understand the value of salutogenic and eco-design, there are still inadequacies when it comes to implementation.

One of the most pressing subjects is the rehabilitation of our existing cities and built environments into eco-cities that can create healthy societies. We need the new generation of designers, architects and engineers to learn how to apply ecological and salutogenic design principles in their work. In the meantime, we also need the support of governments around the world to understand the value of manifesting a healthy and sustainable society.

Science, research, and innovation in eco-design, as well as development of the built environment, includes hospitals, schools, workplaces, public places, and urban spaces, and must drive the policies and building practices of national governments. The author continues the search for a common strategy that is based on eco-design, alongside salutogenic principles, to effectively create a healthy global society.

The Principles of Salutogenic Design

Despite improvements in the health status and life expectancy of people from developed countries living in the twentieth century, global healthcare systems face new challenges. These are characterized by increasing healthcare costs, an aging population, and a rise in the level of lifestyle diseases, most notably diabetes and obesity.

We are living in a post-industrial age, known as the “knowledge” or “Google” society, where health policy should be focusing upon providing wellness as well as treating illness. We need to design healthcare infrastructure and city master plans that help prevent disease by creating an active life in which people walk and have exposure to positive stimuli from the beauty of urban design. This formula requires a new way to look at the impact of architecture and design, so it truly promotes and supports human health and well-being.

We call this the *health-promoting* or *salutogenic* design approach to architecture and urban planning; it is completely compatible with eco-design and sustainability. Greater consideration of the possibilities of salutogenic architecture lead to social innovation and economic growth through an interdisciplinary application of sciences, such as architecture, medicine, public health, psychology, design, and engineering in connection with culture, art, and music.

and industries are the main figures who are responsible to connect with designers and architects, planners, and engineers to discuss the following: How can science, research, and innovation in the field of eco-design and salutogenic principles drive the development of healthy built environments and city infrastructures in our society?

Let us explore here the principles of salutogenic design that lend clarity to the following topics:

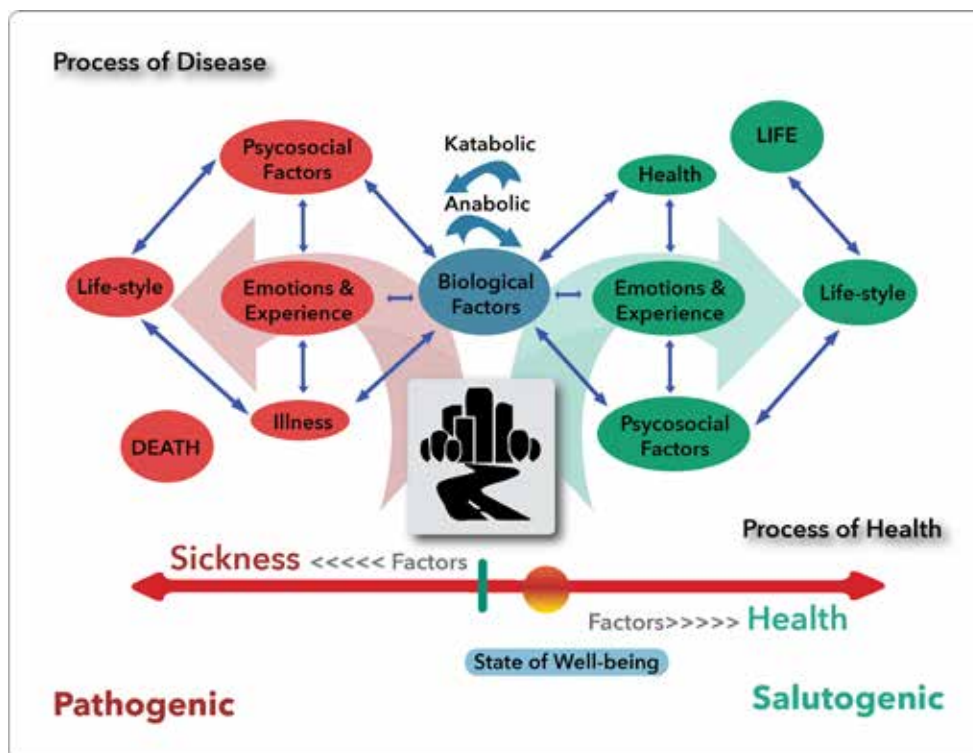
- How do we embed health, science, and innovation in the creation of healthy built environments?
- How do we plan our city, workplace, healthcare facilities, schools, and public institutions so they successfully support human health and well-being?
- How do we implement research-based design to promote health and wellness

Definitions of Health and Salutogenesis

According to Ewles and Simnet (1994), health is difficult to define since it is a subjective experience. It is affected by norms and expectations—and it is also formed by previous experiences (*ibid.*). The following are different definitions of health:

- Lawrence has defined health as “a condition where resources are developed in the relationship between humans and their biological, chemical, physical and social environment” (Lawrence, R.J. 2002).
- According to WHO, “Health is a state of *complete physical, mental and social well-being* and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
- “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being, without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition” (Preamble of World Health Organization Constitution, 1948).

Health is considered a process composed of psychosocial factors, lifestyle, emotions, and experiences that lead to either disease or health. But there are also the biological and measurable factors between them that determine the status of health or disease. The state of health for each of us is matter of the balance between the two processes. The salutogenic approach strengthens health processes, whereas the pathogenic approach highlights the processes of disease. For the latter, medical scientists have found 8,000 diagnoses or symptom of diseases; but medical science has ignored the search for the causes of health. They could also identify 8,000 *causes of health* or wellness factors that could lead to a healthier society.



The processes of health and disease, by Kristoffer Konarski and Alan Dilani

Emotions and experiences are central parts of the health process and can be strengthened by exposure to positive stimuli from surrounding environments where we live, work, and play. The places where we live and work and the way we interact with the built environment, along with exposure to the stimuli from the built environment, strongly influence our moods and thereby health processes, emotions, and experiences, our state-of-mind and behavior.

Health can be considered under two different perspectives: the biomedical and the holistic. From a biomedical viewpoint, health is considered to be a condition without diseases (Andersen, Göransson & Petersson, 2004). In the Western world, the biomedical perspective has been the leading perspective, and has therefore informed the medical and healthcare field (Nordenfelt, 1991).

The holistic viewpoint emphasizes multiple dimensions of health, including the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and social (*ibid.*). From a research perspective, health can be treated from a pathogenic and salutogenic starting point. Pathogenic research focuses on explaining why certain etiological factors cause disease and how they are developed in the physiological organism (Antonovsky, 1979). The primary aim of pathogenic research is often to find medical treatments (*ibid.*).

Salutogenic research is based on identifying wellness factors that maintain and promote health, rather than investigating factors that cause disease (Antonovsky, 1991). Together, the salutogenic and the pathogenic approach offer a deeper knowledge and understanding of health and disease (*ibid.*). To be able to answer the salutogenic question, we must ask: What is causing and maintaining healthy people?

Antonovsky (1991) developed the concept of a sense of coherence (SOC). It maintains that a person with a high sense of coherence chooses the most appropriate coping strategy in a stressful situation. For example, the person may decide to fight, flee, or be quiet, depending on what kind of stressor the individual is exposed to (*ibid.*). Research has shown that it is possible to measure a person's sense of coherence and thereby predict an individual's health (Suominen, Helenius, Blomberg, Uutela & Koskenvuo, 2001).

A strong sense of coherence predicts good health and a low sense of coherence predicts poor health (*ibid.*). In his study, Heiman (2004) showed that students with a high sense of coherence did not experience high levels of stress. The research also showed that coping strategies were significantly correlated with the individual's sense of coherence (*ibid.*). The concept of sense of coherence has three vital components: (1) *comprehensibility*, (2) *manageability*, and (3) *meaningfulness* (Antonovsky, 1991). A person with a strong sense of coherence scores high on all three components.

According to Antonovsky (1991), the term *comprehensibility* implies that the individual perceives the surrounding environment and that which is happening in the world as coherent. If something unexpected is happening, such as an accident or personal failure, the person who understands why these things are happening has a higher sense of coherence than one who cannot. A person with a low sense of coherence perceives himself as unlucky.

Manageability means that the individual experiences that she has all the required resources necessary to cope with a given challenge or demand. This means that the individual feels that she is influencing that which is happening around her and does not perceive herself as a victim of circumstance. Antonovsky (1991) believes that a person's sense of meaningfulness is connected with his or her perception that there are important and meaningful phenomena in life. *Meaningfulness* is the component that motivates a person's sense of coherence (*ibid.*).

According to the salutogenic theory, a sense of coherence is fostered by people's ability to comprehend the built environment (comprehensibility), to be effective in their behavior (manageability), and to find meaning from the stimuli and exposure from their built environment (meaningfulness).

Ken Yeang (2015) describes the key salutogenic components as the following:

(1) "Environmental comprehensibility" that requires environmental orderliness, predictability and legibility. This includes, for instance, the importance of creating visual order in the built environment with legible, intuitive wayfinding, the elimination of visual chaos, etc. (2) "Environmental manageability" requires effective family and social support, and (3) "Environmental meaningfulness" requires the provision of visual and aesthetic meaning, interest, satisfaction, and attendant spaces for contemplation in the urban environment.



Ken Yeang with other participants at the congress in Boston

The physical environment is not only vital for good health, but can also be a critical stressor for the individual.

Impact of Built Environment on Health and Well-being

There is an interaction between the health of human beings and their built environment. According to Dilani (2006), the physical environment is not only vital for good health, but can also be a critical stressor for the individual. Physical elements in an organization can contribute to stress, and therefore are essential design factors that can equally increase comfort as well (Dilani, 2001).

Despite this reality, the majority of humans in the Western world spend most of their time in indoor environments. There is a lack of knowledge about how these environments affect a person's health and well-being. There is a general belief that humans are always adapting to the environment (*ibid.*). Often called the *theory of adaptation*, this belief holds that people become less conscious of the environment the longer they reside or work in a given environment (Carnvale, 1992). A general belief is that if one lets oneself be affected by the physical surroundings, it is a sign of weakness.

In order to create supportive physical environments, it is crucial to understand an individual's fundamental needs (Heerwagen et al., 1995). It is also necessary for different professional disciplines to willingly cooperate in creating the best conditions for humans (Heerwagen et al. 1995; Lawrence 2002). Before a zoo is built, it is common practice for architects, designers, biologists, landscape architects, animal psychologists, and building specialists to collaborate in creating an environment that optimizes living conditions for the animals (Heerwagen et al. 1995). Factors such as materials, vegetation, and lighting are taken into consideration; animals need enough space to eat, sleep, and decide when to be social or seek solitude, and even their need for control and choice have been noticed. The aim is to create an environment that will completely support the animal's physical, psychological, and social well-being. Ironically, humans do not seem to make the same demands when a workplace for people is going to be designed.

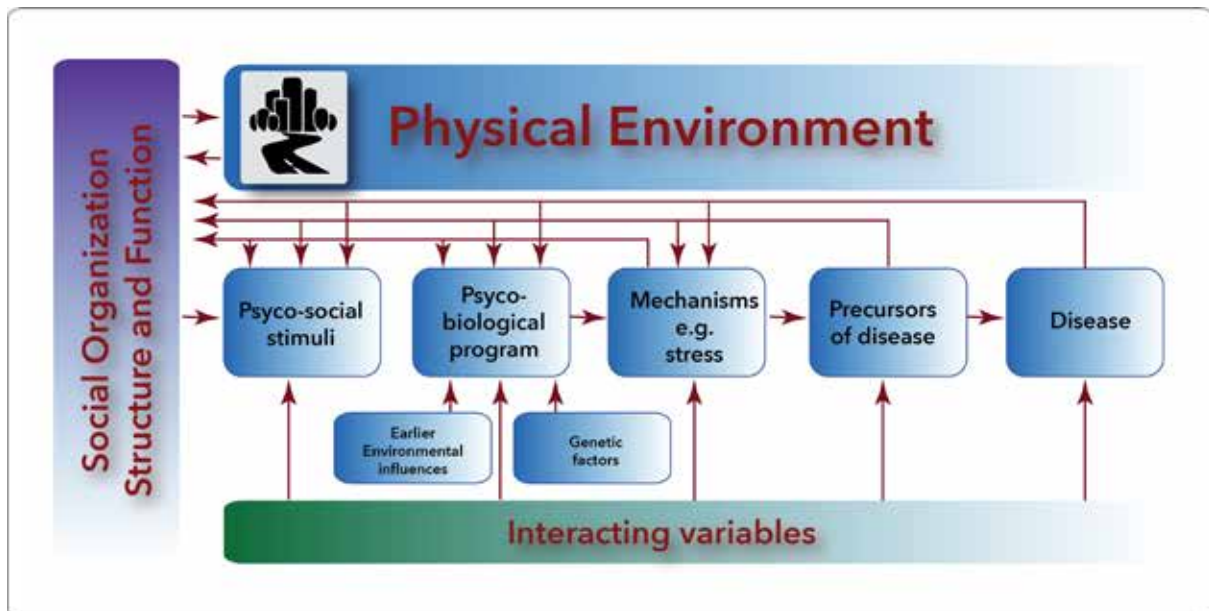
Heerwagen et al. (1995) created a framework and guidelines for a salutogenic design which highlighted the following factors: (1) social cohesion, both formal and informal meeting points; (2) personal control for regulating lighting, daylight, sound, temperature, and access to private rooms; (3) restoration and relaxation with quiet rooms, soft lighting, access to nature, and a good view.

Stokols (1992) also contributed with design suggestions for health-promoting environments that stem from three different dimensions of health: physical, mental, and social. Physical health can be promoted by an ergonomic design with nontoxic environments. Mental health can be promoted by personal control and predictability as well as aesthetic, symbolic, and spiritual elements. Social health can be promoted by access to a social support network, and participation in the design process.

However, within health research, it is not a new idea to view the physical environment as a health-promoting factor. During the nineteenth century, Florence Nightingale developed a theory of healthcare which emphasizes that physical elements are vital for an individual's health (SHSTF, 1989). For example, noise, lighting, and daylight were considered vital factors in affecting a person's mood (*ibid.*).

During the twentieth century, different researchers developed stress models that illustrate how the physical environment may affect human health and well-being (Levi, 1972; Kagan & Levi, 1975; Dilani, 2001; Dilani 2006b). Levi (1972) founded the stress theory, which was later developed by Kagan and Levi (1975). The model describes how the physical environment is the foundation upon which societal organization, structure, and function are built and in the long run is critical to the promotion of health or disease (Dilani, 2001). The model is based on a system that points to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the physical environment and different human components (Kalimo, 2005).

This model (Dilani, 2001, from Lennart Levi, 1972; see figure below) is used within the field of architecture to integrate design elements with health and well-being.



Model presenting theory for psychosocially mediated disease, from Lennart Levi, 1972

According to Kalimo (2005) the theory has developed a deeper understanding for the physical environment's effect on humans. Emdad (2005) has developed a model called Instability of Pyramids of Stress, where architecture and art are measurable variables. Emdad presents a new framework, which in relation to health in the workplace has taken neuroergonomics into consideration. For example, there is a risk that the employee will develop stress-related symptoms and disease if he or she experiences high demands from the surrounding environment but does not receive any reward. Furthermore, the employee will experience stress if the reward is too low or inadequate. The employee will also experience stress if he or she does not have any suitable effort strategies in relation to psychosocial factors, home and family factors, or neuroergonomics—that is to say: in work situations of high demand, the employee must have supportive psychosocial stimuli in place in order to manage tasks easily and prevent undue stress. The model integrates all these factors and focuses on health, burnout, and consequences for cardiovascular disease and short-term memory (*ibid.*).

Salutogenic Design Principles Create Healthy Built Environments

Salutogenic design principles serve to create settings that support users and the local community through the application of a holistic, knowledge-based approach in the delivery of healthy infrastructure. This approach is a systematic application of research-based knowledge with a focus on the wellness design factor, including exposure to positive stimuli experienced by users as enjoyable when activity promotes health, well-being, and quality of life. Salutogenic design environments stimulate and engage people, both mentally and socially, and support an individual's sense of coherence. The basic function of salutogenic design is to start a mental process by attracting human attention, which may reduce anxiety and promote positive emotions and psychological states. The principles of salutogenic design address a broad range of concerns that come to bear on building in healthful spatial features: space for social support and crowding space; the impact of nature on human well-being; supporting attentional restoration through creating restorative environments; the impacts of daylight, sunlight, color, noise levels, and navigational “landmarks” in built settings; the impacts on health of positive stimuli or opportunities for music, culture, and the arts; and salutogenic approaches to enhancing productivity.

Space for Social Support

Social support is an important factor when the aim is to promote an individual's health and well-being (Costa, Clarke, Dobkin, Senecal, Fortin, Danoff and Esdaile, 1999; Saito, Sagawa, Kanagawa, 2005; Jacoby and Kozie-Peak, 1997; Oginska-Bulik, 2005). Knowledge about and consciousness of social support and its relation to health increased during the decade of the 1950s (Fleming, Baum and Singer, 1985).

At the same time, researchers established that the ways the physical environment influences people's emotions, behaviors, and motivation are important to take into consideration when the aim is to

promote health and well-being (*ibid.*). It is therefore essential to identify design factors in the built environment and, through a salutogenic approach, create meeting points that can promote spontaneous social interaction and social support (Fleming et al. 1985, Connors 1983).

Crowding is closely linked with social support and is often defined as the number of persons in a certain area or how much space every individual has received in a certain area (Geas, 1994). Altman (1975) describes crowding as a condition where a person's private sphere is trespassed; for example, when a person or group is exposed to more social interaction than desirable. If there is too much undesirable contact, an individual may experience a sense of crowding. On the other hand, if an individual experiences too little contact, there is a risk that he or she may feel lonely and isolated (*ibid.*). This balance between social interaction and desired loneliness can be regulated and achieved if one can control his or her own levels of social interaction (Maxwell, 2006).



Space for social support



A crowded sense of space: Ketchum Hall School before renovations

Crowding Space

The sense of crowding can be reduced by creating buildings and spaces where the individual can exert some control and decide if they would like to be in privacy or participate in social interactions (Altman, 1975). For example, research has shown that a certain length and layout of student dormitories can increase the number of social activities and promote social interaction, creating a higher sense of control and reducing a sense of crowding (Baum & Davis, 1980). Even a high ceiling can contribute to a reduced sense of crowding. Even though the area of the room is the same, people perceive a room with a high ceiling as lighter and more spacious.

Therefore, if architecture and design can create space that minimizes the sense of crowding, they can reduce the experience of stress and promote social interaction (Baum & Valins, 1977). As stated, crowding can also constrain social interaction and social support (Geas, 1994), which are closely linked to health and well-being (Costa, Clarke, Dobkin, Senecal, Fortin, Danoff & Esdaile, 1999; Saito, Sagawa & Kanagawa, 2005; Jacoby & Kozie-Peak, 1997; Oginska-Bulik, 2005). This illustrates the importance of identifying factors in the physical environment that promote spontaneous social interaction and social support (Fleming et al., 1985).

Nature and Its Meaning for Health

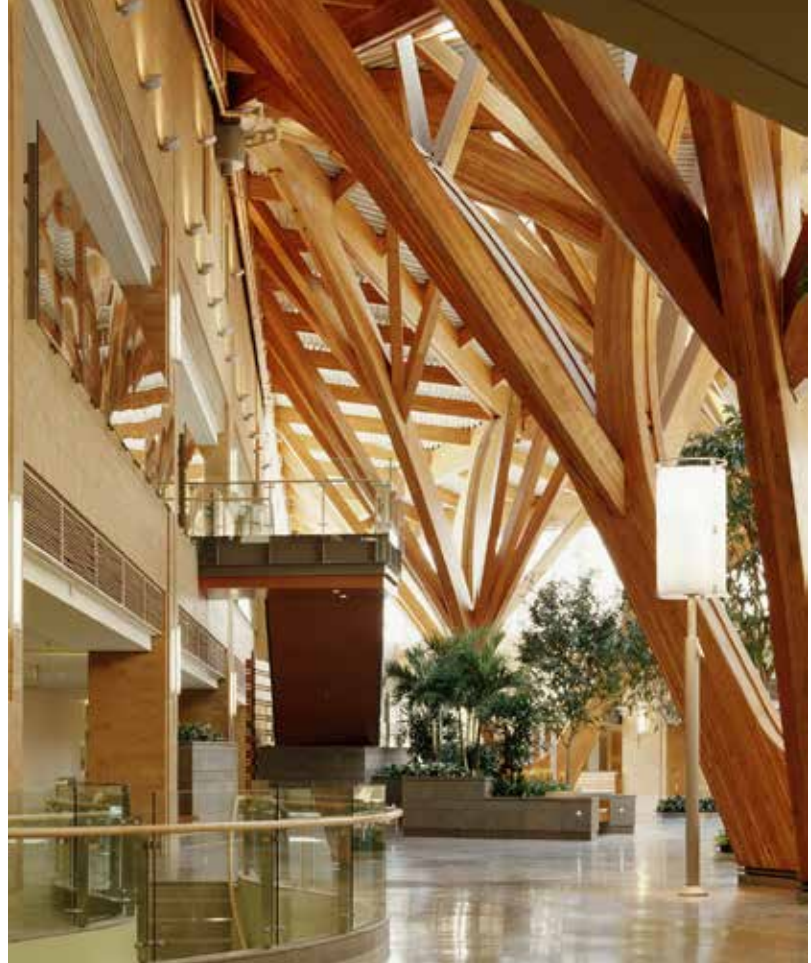
All people have some kind of relationship with nature and there are many people who greatly value diverse natural environments. There are also many people who want to get away from everyday life, during weekends and holidays, and regain their strength in relaxing amid natural recreational settings. What is it that makes people feel at ease in nature? Does the natural environment affect people in different ways? Is it possible to draw any general conclusions about nature's influence on human beings?

The Role of Direct and Indirect Attention in Restoring Well-being

Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) have developed the *Attentional Restorative Theory* (ART), which identifies two attention systems and how they are related. The researchers have chosen to call them *direct* and *indirect* attention. *Indirect* attention does not demand any energy or effort from the person and it is activated when something exciting suddenly happens or when one does not have to focus on anything in particular.



Redesign supports the learning environment: Ketchum Hall School after renovations, architect Tye Farrow



Design building with nature and art for positive stimuli; Tye Farrow, architect

Direct attention is activated as soon as a person needs to concentrate and focus on a task and simultaneously block other disturbing stimuli. After an intense period of direct attention, a person is in need of restoration; otherwise they will easily become mentally exhausted. People who have been using their direct attention without resting often become impatient and irritated; and it has been shown that a mentally exhausted person often commits so-called “human errors” (*ibid*). A person who does not have the capacity to concentrate often becomes careless, less cooperative, and less competent (Kaplan & Kaplan 1989; Kaplan 1995; Herzog, Maguire, & Nebel, 2003). Therefore, for a person to work efficiently, it is vital to have a well-functioning attention system and find time for restoration.

The Restorative Environment

In their studies, Kaplan and Kaplan (1989; 1995) have been able to distinguish the following four needs when individuals are in need of restoration and recreation:

1. The need for being away from everyday life and its surrounding routines, sounds, and crowding;
2. The need for fascinating stimuli which effortlessly draw the individual's attention and diminish the risk of boredom;
3. The need for extent (breathing space) which at the same time can create a feeling of being in a completely different world;
4. The need for compatibility while performing one's tasks (*ibid.*).

The restorative environment should be inviting and well balanced with an aesthetic beauty that allows people to reflect (Herzog, et al. 2003). Nature offers various colors, forms, and scents, which can encourage humans to forget about their everyday life (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan 1995; Herzog et al. 2003). Natural environments often offer an atmosphere in which the individual's needs for harmony and compatibility are met. It is therefore very important that natural environments are accessible at the workplace (*ibid.*). ART has been tested and confirmed by a number of researchers



Restorative workplace: X-ray room with daylight and nature, designed by Tye Farrow

Ulrich & Lundén showed that hospital patients who were staying in rooms with windows viewing nature were rehabilitated faster than patients who viewed a brick wall.

(Herzog et al., 2003; Tennessen and Cimprich, 1995). One of the studies (Herzog et al., 2003) showed that three of the four components—being away, extent, and compatibility—are seen as measurable indicators of how to create a restorative environment. Several studies have also confirmed that human beings perceive natural environments as more restorative than urban environments (Van den Berg, Hartig and Staats, 2007). Therefore, when human beings are tired and mentally exhausted, nature is the appropriate place for restoration. Other studies have shown that even viewing nature through a window has positive health outcomes (Moore, 1981–1982; Ulrich, 1984; Leather, Beale and Lawrence, 1998; Frumkin, 2001).

Daylight, Sunlight, Windows, and Lighting’s Effect on Health

There is a great deal of research on daylight’s positive effects on a human being’s psychological well-being (Evans, 2003). A lack of daylight can lead to both physiological and psychological difficulties (Janssen & Laike, 2006). One researcher studied a correctional institution in Michigan and found that inmates who had their windows facing the prison yard were visiting the healthcare facility more often than inmates who had windows facing the forest and farming fields (Moore, 1981–1982). Ulrich & Lundén (1984) showed that hospital patients who were staying in rooms with windows viewing nature were rehabilitated faster than patients who viewed a brick wall. Research has also shown that daylight in a classroom is necessary for the pupils to maintain a balanced hormone level (Küller & Lindsten, 1992).

Windows can have positive health outcomes on patients in other ways as well (Verderber, 1986; Lawson, 2001). For example, the window can contribute to improved health by allowing fresh air and daylight to enter, or by providing a view and a link to the outer world, thus satisfying a patient’s or prisoner’s need for connecting with the seasonal variations in nature (Verderber, 1986; Lawson, 2001). Another study showed that exposure to direct sunlight via windows in a workplace increased workers’ well-being and had a positive impact on their attitudes and job satisfaction (Leather et al., 1998).

Rooms without a window can affect human health and well-being negatively (Janssen & Laike, 2006; Küller & Lindsten, 1992; Verderber, 1986). One of the studies showed that blue-collar workers whose tasks kept them in rooms without windows experienced more tension and were more negative toward their physical working conditions than workers who had offices with windows (Heerwagen & Orians, 1986). Patients who are staying in rooms without windows can develop sensory deprivation and depressive reactions and exacerbate problems with perception, cognition, and attention (Verderber, 1986).

Since daylight positively influences human physiology, it should be prioritized more than artificial daylight, which claims to have the same effect. According to some research, artificial daylight in educational settings can positively affect students' cortisol levels and perhaps contribute to fewer sick days (Küller and Lindsten, 1992). Lack and Wright (1993) showed that exposure to lighting at certain times during a twenty-four-hour period can prolong sleep and improve the quality of sleep.

Energy consumption and costs can decrease if the individual has the ability to control lighting levels (*ibid.*), which in turn has positive impacts on environmental resources (Moore, Carter and Slater, 2004). Furthermore, individuals' general satisfaction has been shown to be higher when they had the ability to control the lighting levels themselves (*ibid.*). Küller's (2002) conclusion suggests that lighting will become more important in the future, especially since it is becoming more common to have buildings without windows that have no access to daylight.



Daylight influences human physiology positively and restores the mind; design by Niels Torp

The Impact of Color on Health

Color, some research has suggested, can affect the brain's activity and create a sense of well-being and originality within architecture (Janssen, 2001). Colors can also have symbolic value, and in that way contribute to a building's identity or cultural meaning. Colors should be of high interest to city planners, mainly because of their aesthetic values, but also because of their symbolic values, which can reflect an organization's philosophy (*ibid.*). The so-called warm colors (red, yellow, and orange) are considered to have an activating effect, while the so-called cool colors (blue, purple, and green) are considered to have a calming effect (Küller, 1995).

Küller (1995) refers to a well-known color study from 1958 in which researchers conducted a series of physiological tests to investigate the brain's activity during exposure to different colors. When participants were exposed to the color red, their brain activity increased more than when they were exposed to the color blue. The findings showed differences in blood pressure, breathing, and blinking frequencies (*ibid.*). Another study showed that restoration from exposure to a series of other colors was more complete when participants were exposed to blue light, which confirms that colors do affect brain activity (Ali, 1972).

Goldstein (1942) calls attention to an important viewpoint which asserts that an individual's previous life experiences can affect their emotions, actions, and behavior in exposure to different colors. There are geographical, cultural, and historical factors that may affect a person's color choices, and some colors have a religious meaning (*ibid.*). Berlyne (1971) and Janssen (2001) highlight that colors should suit the contextual environment, and it is important that color activation should be well balanced to match the environment.

The Impact of Design as Landmark on Health and Well-Being

Space is both what separates people from one another and what bonds them together (Lawson, 2001). It is the architecture, in the form of buildings, rooms, surfaces, dormitories, and facilities, that creates the prerequisites for individuals to cooperate, work in privacy, establish relationships, and fulfill their general social, psychological, and physiological needs (*ibid.*).

According to Vischer (2005), an organization's image and identity are viewed and expressed through its architectural facilities. Vischer (2005) also maintains that an employee's working identity and role are associated with the working environment and therefore, the architectural design impacts and plays a part in forming the employee's identity. Furthermore, the physical work environment's design has a pronounced effect on worker performance, and in the long run affects the organization's productivity. Physical, psychological, and functional comfort can have positive outcomes on employee performance and morale (*ibid.*).

Other design factors for well-being are *landmarks* in buildings (Dilani, 2004; 2006b). The presence or absence of landmarks—for both visual interest and spatial navigation—is closely tied with the



Color as a landmark to support wayfinding and navigation

perception of space in a building and correlates with levels of experienced stress (Dilani, 2004). Landmarks serve as reference points in the buildings for easy orientation and helping to create cognitive maps of the environment (Dilani, 2006b). Landmarks may be such features as sculptures, paintings, aquariums, or variations of color in different areas of the built environment that work as a GPS to navigate us and make wayfinding much easier.

The Impact of Noise Level on Health and Well-being

Noise is one of the most evident problems within public institutions. High noise levels can disturb sleep, increase stress, and complicate communication (Janssen & Laike, 2006). Studies have shown that noise can contribute to irritation, which can lead to stress and cause stress-related diseases (Dijk, Souman, De Vires, 1987). Research has also shown that noise can lead to increased levels of cortisol (Brandenberger, Follenius, Wittersheim & Salame, 1980; Evans, Bullinger & Hygge, 1998). Other researchers showed clearly that noise can increase an individual's blood pressure (Lang, Fouriaud & Jacquinet-Salord, 1992; and Evans et al., 1998). Noise can also negatively influence the healing process (Fife & Rappaport, 1976) and contribute

Colors should be of high interest to city planners, mainly because of their aesthetic values, but also because of their symbolic values, which can reflect an organization's philosophy.

Music has psychological effects and can unite people, open their senses, and help them cope with difficulties and trauma.

to mental exhaustion, which in turn may affect the amount of medication that a patient takes or requires (Persinger, Tiller & Koren, 1999; Yoshida, Osada, Kawaguchi, Hosuhiyama, Yoshida & Yamamoto, 1997).

Investigations have also established connections between noise, irritation, and lack of concentration (Dijk et al., 1987). Finally, other studies indicate that the perception of life quality decreases in a noisy environment (Evans et al., 1998), and that high noise levels can also inhibit social interaction (Mathewes & Canon, 1975).

Leather, Beale and Sullivan (2003) have shown that noise can have a significant relationship with how workers experience the sense of demand in their jobs; it has been noted that workers' perception of work stress decreases with lower noise levels. The researchers explain that workers in a less noisy environment need fewer coping strategies for adapting to the physical environment and can therefore focus their energy and coping strategies on other stressful events or on the tasks at hand. In this way, the physical auditory environment can be a vital factor in helping individuals cope with other stressors (*ibid.*). It is also important to realize that the experience of sound is highly individual (Staples, 1996). Kryter (1994), for instance, describes three variables that affect an individual's sound experience: volume, predictability, and possibilities for control.

The Impact of Music on Health

There are sounds that can actively promote health. Lai, Chen, Chang, Hseih, Huang, Chang and Peng (2006) maintain that music is one of these factors, since it may contribute to a decreased activation in the sympathetic nervous system. Music has psychological effects and can unite people, open their senses, and help them cope with difficulties and trauma. On a physiological level, music may lead to lower heart and breathing frequencies and increased body temperature (*ibid.*). Lee, Chung, Chan and Chan (2005) conclude that music can be an effective method for decreasing negative physiological effects, when people are suffering from anxiety and stress.

Music, either by itself or in combination with therapeutic treatment, can improve a patient's healing process (Nilsson, 2003). For example, McCaffrey and Good (2000) showed that patients who listened to music after surgery experienced less pain, anxiety, and fear than those who did not. Patients claimed that instead of leaving them in a state of frustration over pain and fear, music helped them to focus on healing (*ibid.*). In her research, Spychiger (2000) showed that more music lessons in school had positive emotional, social, and cognitive effects and that pupils with more music education cooperated better and had greater motivation for learning than pupils who had fewer lessons.

Paul Robertson (2001) suggests that music is humans' richest language that expresses complex emotional insight and that it has long been linked to human well-being. Robertson also describes how different music therapy programs are used instead of medicine in different treatment settings, where music's rhythm and melody attract a patient's attention away from perceptions of pain and reduce a patient's stress hormones. One challenge for salutogenic design, therefore, is to integrate space for music experiences in the built environment.

The Impact on Health of Cultural Participation

Participation in cultural activities has positive effects on human health (Konlaan, 2001). Konlaan's study showed that individuals who did not participate in cultural activities had a 57-percent higher mortality risk compared with those who participated in cultural activities. The research further showed that those who had not been participating in cultural activities, but who changed their behavior to become active cultural participants, had almost as good health at the end of the study as those who had been taking part in cultural activities from the beginning. This study demonstrated the close connection between active Individual cultural participation, health status, and an individual's self-rating or perception of his or her own health.

Another study showed that people who participate in cultural activities have the potential to live a longer life (Bygren, Benson & Johannson, 1996). Theorell (2000) concludes that cultural consumption is very important from a public health perspective.

Music can be a health-promoting activity in a built environment. Silber (2005) studied a choir project for women, where the results indicated that participation in a choir had positive effects on health. For example, the choir became a new social platform where the participants created social bonds with one other. The participants learned to listen to each other, receive criticism, and express themselves in a different way. Silber's (2005) research emphasizes the value of choirs and explains that the choir can help people to improve their perceptions and relationships to others, including authoritative persons (*ibid.*).

In a choir, the members have to follow and trust the conductor, which can be a good training for the person who has difficulty with authoritative figures. In an institution, conflicts can arise regarding power and control between director and employees. With the conductor, participants



Music restores the mind for medical staff after long hour of surgery

must cooperate and together strive for a common goal, which does not imply power or control (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the choir generates a dynamic interrelation between its members. Every member has to control his or her own voice and at the same time listen and cooperate.

To achieve this, members train their self-control, patience, intuition, and trust, which can strengthen participants' self-esteem and give them a more positive self-image. Pratt (1990) considers that music can create a new reality, which can make it possible for participants to find themselves in another context. Music can create a sense of freedom, which can give the participants new inspiration and strength to change their behavior. It can help the individual to survive, grow, and create both a personal and collective identity. Pratt also explains that the space created by music reminds people about their fundamental and psychological need for freedom. Music can enable a person to let go of worrisome thoughts and emotions, allowing them to live, even if briefly, in the present moment (*ibid.*).

The research on a choir's positive social and therapeutic affects in institutional and workplace environments is limited (Silber, 2005). However, further study may be fruitful. There are several reasons why it is worth investigating how a choir can be a good method for helping people to change their behavior, such as increasing self-esteem, empathy, and self-control, and decreasing aggression and the need for immediate acknowledgment (*ibid.*).

Art, the Healing Process, and Well-being

According to art historians, humans today live in a more aesthetic world, where art, fashion, and design offer countless aesthetic experiences (Leder, Belke, Oeberst and Augustin, 20004). When a person observes and appreciates different visual scenes, such as a piece of art, complex cognitive and emotional processes arise (Keith, 2001). In order to understand the meaning of a painting it is important to understand its different parts before it is possible to understand the whole. During the observation of a painting and in the process of understanding it, a person can for example experience joy, participation, discomfort, or interest. These emotional and cognitive responses are *aesthetic experiences* (*ibid.*) and often lead to positive stimulation, satisfying and rewarding experiences for the viewer (Leder et al., 2004).

According to Kreitler and Kreitler (1972), art psychology is an empirical, scientific discipline that focuses on a person's internal and external behavior and how these are related to art. There are several psychological theories that try to explain and describe an individual's experience of art. In summary, Kreitler and Kreitler believe that psychological models regarding art perception should be based on the homeostatic behavior model, which suggests that there is an optimal physiological condition in which humans strive to reach the balance between tension and relaxation. This condition of homeostasis can explain some aspects of the individual's relationship to art, and that the art experience can help an individual restore homeostatic balance (*ibid.*).

Art therapy (music, dance, painting, and drama therapy) has a unique potential to reach patients with psychosomatic diseases, who are otherwise difficult to reach with traditional therapeutic methods (Theorell & Konarski, 1998). For example, Argyle (2003) showed how a group of people, identified as being in the risk zone for mental illness, participated in different art projects and improved their social and mental well-being. The participants testified that the project had strengthened their self-esteem and given them a sense of belonging to a social group. This health-promoting art project is considered to be cost effective (*ibid.*). Gardner (1994) also maintains that participation in different art processes can give the individual the tools to express feelings and experiences in a way that is nonverbal and effective.

Salutogenic Design and Productivity

When an organization's management wants to increase productivity, they often focus on employee competence and personal motivation rather than on the physical environment and design (Heerwagen et al., 1995). In one study, Herzberg (1966) observed employee motivation and the relationship between worker behavior and the physical environment.

When the physical environment is perceived as disturbing, it can negatively affect employee motivation and thereby decrease productivity. Herzberg emphasized that it is necessary to have access to a physically supportive environment, which can contribute to employee motivation (*ibid.*). Maslow's (1987) theory of motivation is one of the most well-known theories related to human



Art and music in the postoperative room reduce both perception of pain and recovery time

need and motivation. Maslow's theory was developed to analyze and explain the social environment, but it can also be applicable to the physical environment (Heerwagen et al. 1995). For instance, the need for safety can be achieved through designed environments that allow people to have a good visual overview (*ibid.*). If humans are not stimulated by their surroundings, they can easily lose interest and this can result in reduced performance (Lawson, 2001). On the other hand, too much stimulation can lead to stress, since a person may not have the capability to deal with the overstimulation (*ibid.*).

Increased knowledge and consciousness about the relationship between improved health and increased profitability would affect how designers, architects, and managers design, build, and maintain buildings (Fisk, 2000). For instance, improved indoor climate can enhance employee health, decrease the number of sick days, reduce healthcare needs, and increase productivity—all of which in turn strengthens the human capital and leads to higher company profitability. Ergonomic improvement for employees has also been shown to increase a company's profitability (*ibid.*). For example, IBM invested \$186,000 in ergonomic education and implemented extended ergonomic adaptations, thereby changing the design of the workplace and various working tools (Helander & Burris, 1995).

The improvements contributed to better working positions, improved lighting, lower noise levels, and better support with heavy work routines. The project decreased sick days by 19 percent, which generated an annual profit of \$68,000. In addition, the changes contributed to higher productivity and improved quality, which led to an annual profit of \$7,400,000. In other words, investments and changes within the physical environment led to profits through an increase in health conditions and productivity (*ibid.*).

Discussion and Conclusion

As a consequence of our knowledge- and idea-driven society, fueled by the Internet, it can be argued that diseases are becoming more psychosocial and psychosomatic in nature. Credible research is also finding that people who frequently experience positive emotions are also more likely to be healthier—they have fewer heart attacks, for example, and fewer colds.



An example of healthy work environment by BVN Australia



Healthy office design by BVN Australia

With the link between a positive outlook and good physical health moving from hypothesis to fact, it is time to recognize that the way we live, where we work, and the way we interact with the built environment all have a tremendous impact on our emotions and experiences. These emotions and experiences are central aspects of the health process that may be strengthened and supported by salutogenic design and psychosocial design factors, within the built environment. And the most effective of these factors is nature: human exposure to the natural world.

The growing prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), or “lifestyle” diseases, is very much related to the quality of eco-design and built infrastructure and the design of the built environment.

Questions of how we can reduce NCDs such as obesity are one of the primary challenges facing the designer and planner. Aging populations and urban growth are two further huge challenges to which salutogenic design could be applied, to increase life quality, exposure to positive stimuli, and active lifestyle behavior for the elderly. We must focus on the innovative design and planning of ecological, sustainable, and salutogenic healthy urban planning around the world. It is the task of the designer and planner to reconsider the value of eco-design and health promotion with a knowledge-driven approach to salutogenic design.

The aesthetic value of our surroundings communicates the value of our society; beautiful places are not only stimulating, but have also been proven sources of enjoyment that make us feel less

anxious and less stressed. A well-designed built environment can positively shape the social, psychological, and behavioral patterns of our society: if we were to bring nature to the built environment through eco-design and fill our workplaces with art and culture, then we could optimize brain performance on many levels—cognitive, perceptual, and emotional—and restore our energies.

The approach of eco-design and salutogenic architecture promotes a healthy lifestyle by creating a built environment that focuses on wellness factors that promote health, thereby contributing to the realization of a healthy society. An increase in the consideration of the principals of eco-design and salutogenic architecture leads to social innovation and economic growth, not least of which occurs through its interdisciplinary approach, integrating sciences such as architecture, medicine, public health, psychology, and engineering with culture, art, and music.

Our challenge is to commit to the innovation and forward-looking ideas that will inspire architects and planners to tackle a demanding economic outlook. The eco- and salutogenic design perspective should be considered as a tool for designers to be more competitive: by designing highly salutogenic environments, we can reduce the rising burden of healthcare costs, and save and improve lives on our planet. As more scientific research comes to light on the link between eco- and salutogenic design and our health and well-being, it becomes even more apparent that we need to develop and apply more research.

Over the course of two decades, a series of studies on design for the office workplace, for care for the elderly, and for healthcare settings conducted at our research center have clearly illustrated how salutogenic design principles are compatible in creating built environments for a healthy global society. The research has shown that the salutogenic perspective forms a theoretical framework for designing our built environment that could stimulate, engage, and improve individuals' sense of coherence and thereby strengthen their coping strategies and promote health.

To implement such design principles, it is necessary that the whole organization, government, and/or policy makers understand the meaning of eco-design with a salutogenic perspective. Knowledge of which environment factors contribute to health and well-being

Eco-design and salutogenic architecture promotes a healthy lifestyle by creating a built environment that promote health, thereby contributing to the realization of a healthy society.



Eco-design that promotes health in the workplace

can thereafter be guidelines in making political decisions. In the process of making decisions it is important to have an interdisciplinary perspective where individuals with diverse backgrounds and knowledge work together in this field—people such as psychologists, architects, landscape architects, doctors, behavioral scientists, engineers, and health promoters.

Fortunately, it is becoming more common to use an interdisciplinary perspective as a central strategy (Barry, 2007). For example, the Internet technology sector recruits sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists who can study and explain how a product will be used in different cultural contexts. The application of an interdisciplinary approach to work may challenge existing ways of thinking, and may make research and innovation more democratic and receptive to public input (*ibid.*).

Decision makers should consider the following factors during the process of building: good lighting; positive interior distractions; and access to daylight and/or nature, art, symbolic and spiritual objects. Other important factors to take into consideration are the individual's need for control over lighting, noise, and indoor temperature, and the possibility of choosing when to seek social interaction or solitude. It is also important to create attractive and inviting spaces that promote social interaction and social support as well as creating spaces for restoration and private conversations. In order to motivate people to change their lifestyle, it is necessary to offer them activities that strengthen their self-esteem and self-efficacy. This can be achieved in part by participating in cultural activities.

In summary, our studies have shed light on salutogenic design principles that can create our cities and our built environment with infrastructure that can promote health and well-being and increase productivity and profitability. Second, we have shown that there is a need for more empirical studies that verify, investigate, and identify more benefits from eco-design and the salutogenic built environment. Third, we encourage decision makers to implement eco- and salutogenic design that in turn promotes health and well-being.

Finally, salutogenic design is still very much in its infancy. The totally salutogenic city does not yet exist—and neither has the complete application of salutogenic design principal been implemented. We can find some of those principles in the built environment, but no complete application in any kind of design that the authors have yet experienced. There is still much more theoretical work, technical research and invention, environmental study, and design interpretation that needs to be done and tested before we can have a built environment with an entirely salutogenic design.

We all need to continue this great search of our time. It is the most important scientific question of modern civilization, of the “Google society.” How do we maintain our health and quality of life far into old age? How do we reduce the burden of lifestyle diseases through shaping our city and built environment and infrastructure to actively promote health in our global society? This study frames the basic ideas and questions to be explored further as a future research agenda, and highlights the most important interdisciplinary research program to be developed and serve humanity in its future. The search for the application of salutogenic design to create sustainable global healthy society will continue!

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”—Mahatma Gandhi

2. Research Program on Elderly Care

Throughout his academic years in Italy and later during the career-building period in Sweden, Alan concentrated primarily on hospital design as it affected healthcare. At points he focused on other specialized areas as well—elderly care, prison facilities, and workplace design. Once he formulated the salutogenic design concept, he continued to research and apply these principles to other areas.

Having a firsthand experience of the dismal elderly care to which Satu's grandmother had been subjected years before, Alan determined to make senior care something he would later address. For years, he had traveled to Italy as a visiting professor at Florence University and spent time with a researching pioneer, Dr. John Zeisel. Zeisel's primary focus, for which he is known internationally and well respected, was the study of Alzheimer's disease and recommendations for Alzheimer's care. Alan spent much time working with him. Just as architecture played a primary role for optimal patient care in hospitals, salutogenic principles could also be applied to elder care, giving greater quality of life, stimulation, and nurturing to those staying in such facilities for extensive periods.

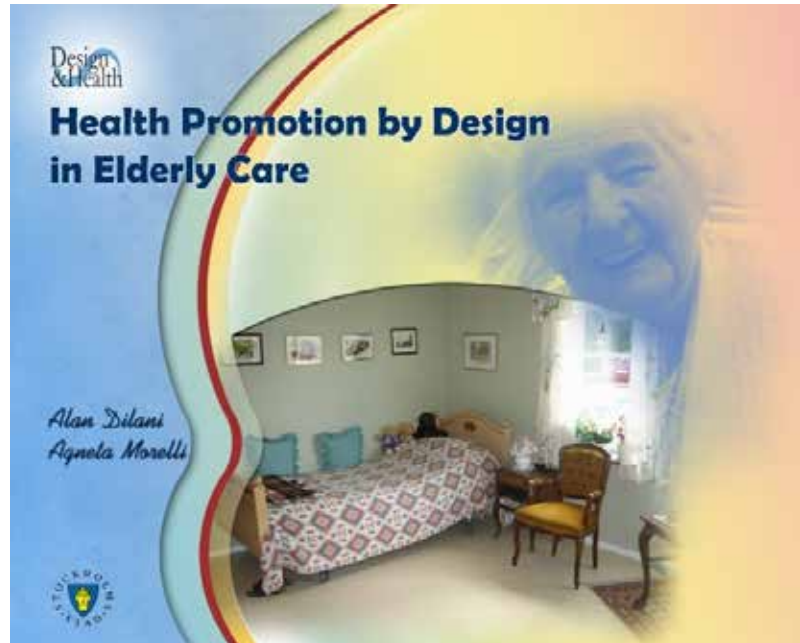
*Alan's research work, entitled *Health Promotion by Design in Elderly Care*, was published in 2005 by the Research Center for Design and Health at Karolinska. Following are some excerpted highlights that emerged from the studies.¹⁶*

Reality of a Growing Elderly Population

The elderly population is significantly and rapidly growing in Sweden, Europe, and North America, increasing the demand of healthcare services for this segment of the population. Simultaneously, attitudes and perspectives on aging are changing.

A conscious and well-educated generation with new points of reference is emerging. The prosperous Western society has created larger economic possibilities for an active and rich life for seniors far into old age. This development poses demands for changes both in health treatment and physical environments for the elderly. An additional challenge within elderly care is high levels of sickness-related absenteeism among healthcare employees as well as the shortage of a competent workforce. A well-designed environment can provide a supportive psychosocial work venue, attracting well-educated employees and encouraging healthy activities among healthcare staff.

Resources for health services and care for the elderly were now insufficient and strained in Sweden. Therefore, new methods for improving effectiveness and quality control needed to be developed. A report of current conditions from the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare¹⁷ described the current situation as problematic. Vast difficulties of recruiting and keeping competent staff were identified and constant high levels of sickness absenteeism mentioned in this context. The consequences of these conditions were difficult to assess, but the National Board of Health and



Health Promotion by Design in Elderly Care

Welfare warned that these changes would have a particularly hard effect on those the elderly with fewer resources.

The fundamental principle of the study conducted by Alan in 2002 was to meet the needs for humane living conditions among elderly populations by designing supportive care environments that promoted health and well-being. These values could be realized through the conscious design of physical environments based on experiences of staff, family members, and elderly residents. The goal included the analysis of health promotion using designed environments for the elderly in future planning. Elderly care facilities provide a living environment for aging residents and also constitute a workplace for employees. It is therefore essential that the improvement of environments for both be concurrent.

Alan's Experience with the Finnish Elderly Care System

Alan personally had experienced that active elderly people were capable of more than just coping in their advancing years. When he had spent time with Satu's grandmother years before,



Professor Almas Heshmati at the Design & Health symposium in Singapore

he witnessed that seniors could continue to live fruitful, fulfilling lives. She was a shining example of this. Alan followed his relative's process for eighteen long years. She lived to be 101 years old. He had also witnessed the throes of her undignified end of life.

As his colleague Almas Heshmati shared, "Alan is always kind to people who are older, perhaps because he didn't have the opportunity to spend time with his own aging parents. He shows respect, listens to them, and spends quality time with them."

Up until a certain point, Satu's grandmother lived alone, but was able to keep in touch with friends and family through a special telephone with large display numbers. At the time, this device was not commonly used in Finland. When she retired, she not only began to paint and sculpt, but also participated in cultural and artistic activities. Through these activities, she kept her mind very active and engaged. At age eighty-seven, she had her first art exhibition. This amazing woman created every piece of artwork in the show and was able to exhibit it.

Eventually, with deteriorating health, she had to check into emergency care in hospital because there was no place for her in elderly care. This "Medical Finished Treatment," as it is known in



Satu's grandmother in emergency care, with Alan's children, celebrating 100 years

Scandinavia, is the prevailing form of care for people in their final stage of hospitalization. In such “treatment,” elderly persons were not fed properly and did not receive adequate medical treatment. This population is treated with the lowest priority in the process of hospitalization; the attitude seems to be that the sooner they die, the better. the sad fact is that many have passed away from the lack of appropriate medical care at the end of their life. Satu's grandmother died at the age of 101 years after surviving six months in emergency care.

Elderly Care Beginnings in Sweden

When Alan returned to the Karolinska Institute NOVUM Science Park in 2002, he launched an innovative program in elderly care for the Swedish government. They agreed to provide ample funding of five million SEK for this project. Alan applied those funds toward the developing program.

His idea was to give workshops with the municipality to help develop a clearer vision for elderly care, taking into consideration the salutogenic context for healthful design. Alan insisted that healthy design needed to be based on a philosophical framework

for elderly care. Dr. John Zeisel had published a book on Alzheimer's and together they had discussed how to expand elderly care—an aspect of healthcare that's increasingly pressing throughout the world.

Right from the start, once Alan established the Research Center for Design and Health at Karolinska Institute, he emphasized the development of this research program on elderly care, considering it an important area that had not received enough attention.

A postdoc researcher from Korea joined his team at the beginning of 2000. The Korean Academy of Science contributed sponsorship to Alan's center with specific interest in the development of elderly care research. Today, over the past twenty years, comparative studies between Korea, Sweden, and Canada have taken place with the publication of several articles about elderly care. One of the major research programs in this field was developed in partnership with the Stockholm region. Its findings stand as a possible future guideline for the city on how to improve current elderly environments and plan for future senior care in Sweden.

Salutogenic Model for Elderly Care

Research on aging as a phenomenon has focused primarily on the problems relating to aging, rather than on a description for successful aging. Alan's empathy, coupled with his design skill and salutogenic principles, created a rich base of information which he brought to this specialized healthcare arena. Creating the optimal conditions for health and a good life in old age required access to a series of settings tailored to the needs of elders in different stages of aging and with special needs, including those with dementia.

Conditions for Optimal Senior Life

In Alan's view, "Seniors should have access to an *active life*, making sure the elderly person is stimulated and encouraged to remain active through occupational therapy, physical activity, or taking part in daily chores. Seniors also require a *contemplative life*, to nourish their inner life through social contacts, making sure they can participate in cultural and intellectual activities such as dancing, singing, and discussion groups. And a *restorative life* is equally important, taking care of physical needs for rest and recuperation, so seniors can have the option of peace and quiet in calm surroundings.

"Actually, older people should have access to both an active and a contemplative life. This translates into cultural activity," Alan explains. "So we developed a model design for elderly care housing. With this design, elders live with a sense of purpose and meaning, safety, choice, and independence. Based on salutogenic principles, we focused on shifting from a pharmacological to a non-pharmacological approach: enhancing the lives of elders with stimulating activities, we found, reduces the need for the use of medication, while giving the elderly more power over their own lives and hope for their future.

“There are lots of things we determined to bring about this change and make it happen. One was to compensate for functional roles. Some things we worked with were (1) compensating for medical treatment, (2) supporting and promoting healthy activities, and (3) providing space for quality environment experience. In some of the spaces we created, there were no corridors. People were given a fireplace, and at the same time they had the option to spend time outside. This was truly the best model. There are several such examples in Scandinavia, but this model is very effective. The Japanese later copied it as well and applied it in their country.”

Another important characteristic to this model was the restorative aspect. “We looked at ways we could quantify activity for aging persons and we knew that physical activity produced mental stimulation. For instance, dancing is very good. So, every two days, the staff joined their patients and danced with them. In all our design for elderly care, we also included the need for social participation, along with cultural and mental stimulation. A place was also provided, when they needed it, to withdraw to rest and relax. This could be outdoors. Restoration, integrity, and safety were the three driving principles when working with older people.

Visionary Help

“We had visionary people who came to us, interested to design facilities for the elderly. So we educated them on how to apply this knowledge and build the best elderly care venues. However, in the U.S.A., this does not happen. I have visited places around the world regarding the elderly—Australia, Canada, the U.S.A., Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong. In all those countries, including Scandinavia and the Netherlands, I found no one with the interdisciplinary knowledge of elderly health as a designer and architect. No one knows how to implement this knowledge. We discovered this following the last twenty years of research with an interdisciplinary approach and the help of many people from all over the world.”

Future Workshop

The elderly care facility Alan worked with had two main design functions: as a home environment for the residents and as a work environment for the healthcare staff. His research on life conditions and living environments for the elderly *vis-à-vis* the working environment of healthcare staff in elderly care used a combination approach based on the “future workshop” model developed by German researchers in the 1970s, a model especially conducive to group problem-solving and creative vision and planning.¹⁸ Much of what he put forth through his research and design work for the elderly is now being recognized and acknowledged in various parts of the world.

The study was carried out at Vårbergs Nursing Home in Stockholm, in 2004. The reference group, consisting of thirty persons representing both staff and patients, participated in a series of workshops, seminars, and field studies. A questionnaire directed to healthcare staff included

subjective measures of health using the Sense of Coherence Scale, a Health Index Scale, and a section of questions developed by the authors regarding the experienced physical environment. Specific and essential design requirements for healthy living and working environments in elderly care were identified and recommended.

Two Main Design Functions

The elderly care facility has two main design functions, as a home environment for the residents and as a work environment for the health care staff. These dual functions place complex demands on the character of the physical environment. A homelike environment may promote health, increase overall satisfaction and support the remaining abilities of elderly residents. However, the space as a work environment also places specific requirements on the physical environment which may be conflicting with the criteria for an optimal residential environment.

Creating the optimal conditions for health and a good life in old age requires access to the following components:

Vita Activa—to be able to work and experience participation in a productive context, to make sure the elderly person is stimulated and encouraged to an active life through occupational therapy, physical activity, or taking part in daily chores.

Vita Contemplativa—to nourish the inner life through cultural exploration, to make sure the elderly person is given the possibility to participate in cultural and intellectual activities such as dancing, singing, and discussion groups, or visiting museums and attending concerts.

Vita Restorativa—to take care of physical needs for rest and recuperation, to make sure the elderly person has the option of peace and quiet in calm surroundings.



Conducting a future workshop with staff on elderly care in Stockholm



Elder persons engaged with a handicraft daily activity



Elder people engaged in daily contemplative life also dance with staff and/or visitors

Human understanding of the surroundings is dependent upon an individual's sensory and cognitive abilities. The physical environment naturally affects the aging individual. Limited sight, lost memory, and impaired concentration usually occur at some point in the aging process.

Demands of Dementia

Dementia disorders also bring a number of specific difficulties which are related to the physical environment. The sense of space, orientation ability,¹⁹ difficulty processing information from the



A place for restoration and social interaction



"My room is my home"

environment, and reduced recognition ability²⁰ are some examples. A lost ability to comprehend and understand the surroundings presents a feeling of unsafety which in turn may lead to negative health effects such as stress and depression.²¹

Living Environment

The living environment is fundamental in daily life for the elderly and must be designed to meet their needs as they experience difficulty understanding the environment. The home may be understood as a sphere of integrity and self-governing. The home has a symbolic value in a deeper sense. Furnishings and personal objects are reminders of one's life history anchored in various episodes of life. During the later years of aging, reminiscing is of great value, which makes these items even more essential.



Supporting handrail developed by our team increased safety and mobility for the elderly

A relaxing and safe milieu is not only about creating comfort but also a strategy making the most of the remaining abilities of the elderly resident with dementia.²² The homelike environment has a therapeutic function aiming to strengthen residents' resources to postpone the degeneration of cognitive abilities.²³ According to Ericsson,²⁴ the homelike physical environment is important for the elderly with dementia in the following ways: encourage independence, support social belonging, provide safety, arouse recognition, offer physical activity, orientation, and stimulation of the senses.

A supportive surrounding gives residents the possibility to use more of their energy for social interactions rather than for orientation. In this way they can become more socially involved.²⁵ A feeling of safety and control in the physical environment is a psychosocial factor which may reduce various stress symptoms. Psychosocially supportive living and working environments may strengthen the individual's ability to manage situations which are often experienced as demanding.²⁶

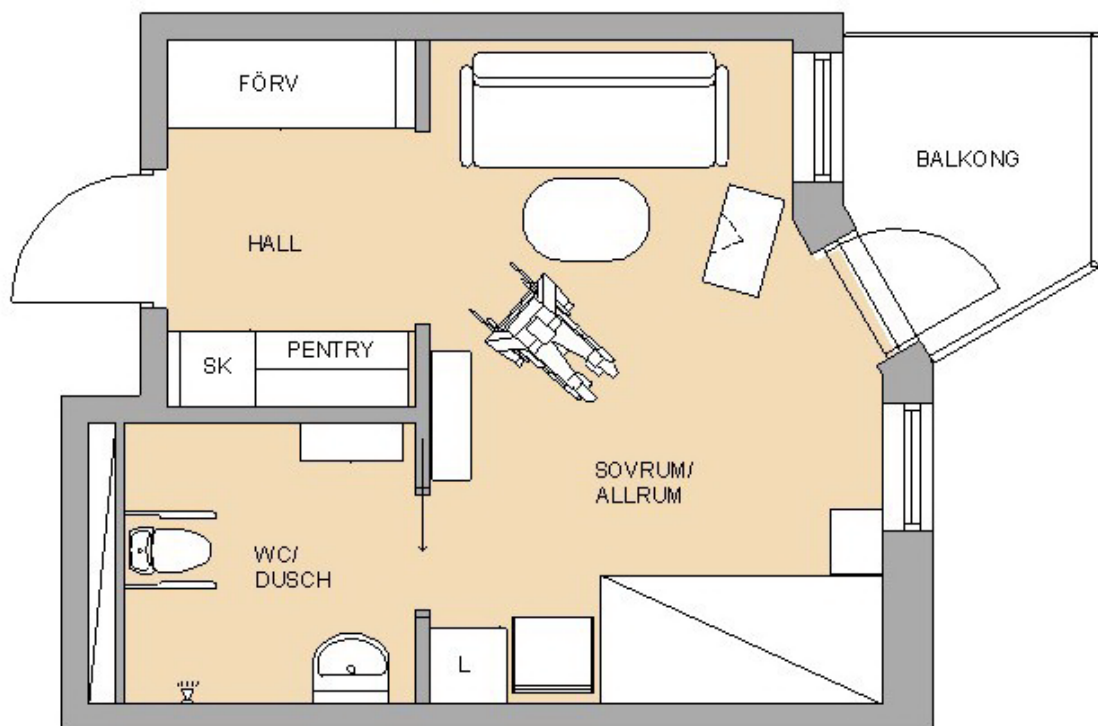
Health Promotion by Design in Elderly Care

The residential setting has an important role as a platform for the immediate social milieu, a meeting ground where the mealtime is one of many arenas for interaction. The desire for food is clearly

influenced by elements in the physical environment, in the social atmosphere, and in connection to new relationships.²⁷

Outdoor activities promote health, contributing the experience of joy and meaningfulness. The possibility to reflect in nature stimulates senses and cognitive abilities for the elderly. There is also value in viewing the outdoor environment from the inside, especially for the elderly with functional restrictions.²⁸ Creatively active elderly people seem to have a more positive outlook on the remaining years of their lives. This may be due to the sense of being an active maker of one's own life instead of being a passive victim of the aging process, according to Smith.²⁹

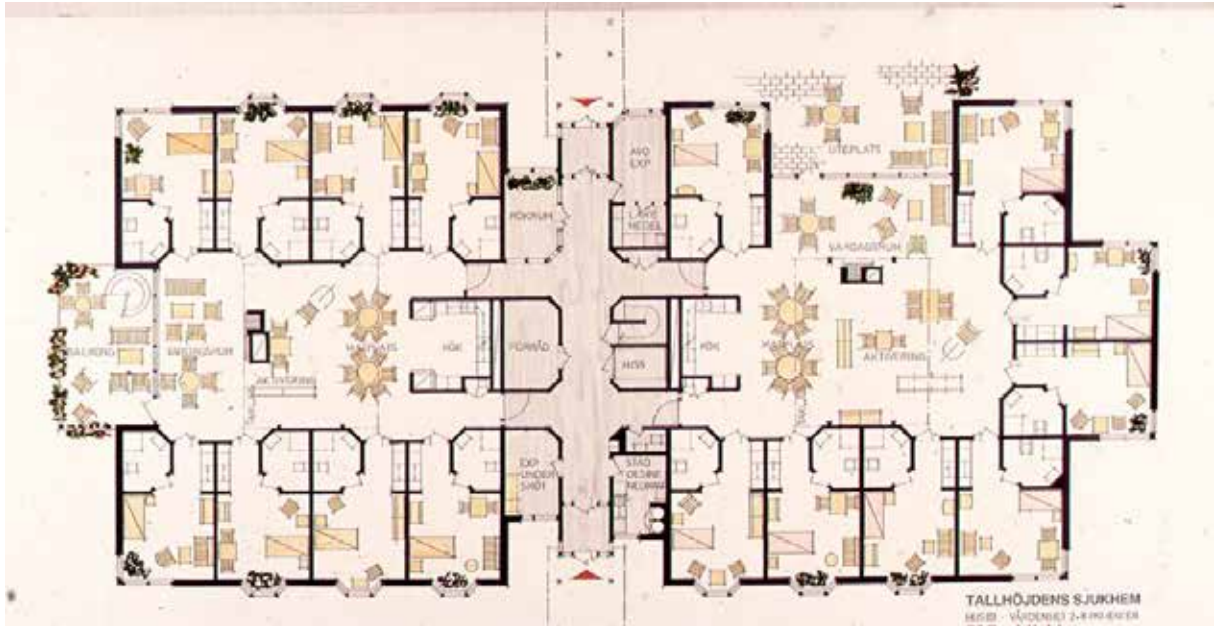
Music may be used actively (to create music) or passively (to listen to music) with the sole purpose of promoting health. Therapeutically, music may reduce stress, anxiety, and pain for the elderly.³⁰ Music may also be used by healthcare staff to add a calming element to an agitated situation. Sound and music may also provide a relaxing and comforting function to assist with sleeplessness as a complement to pharmacological treatment.³¹ Music in combination with exercise has proved to have positive cognitive and physical effects for the elderly.³²



SÄBYHEMMETS TYPLÄGENHET 28,5 kvm

SÖDRA BERGEN ARKITEKTER

Optimal room design for elderly



Optimal design for elderly with dementia

Color, form, and lighting collectively contribute to the overall sense of space. Light is an important aid for the elderly who often have some form of sight impediment.³³ Perception of color is according to Wijk³⁴ well retained in old age, including the elderly with dementia. The use of colors in residential environments has been used successfully to support the elderly in daily life and is a tool in compensating for lost abilities. Most of the cognitive limitation and sight impediments can be compensated for by a more comprehensible visual environment.

Pets may have several important functions for the elderly in the residential environment and serve in health promotion. Pets help the elderly maintain an active lifestyle, to quickly recover from disease, and help in improving the immunity system, according to Bergler.³⁵ The psychological benefits of pets in the residential setting include improved sleep and reduced depression and anxiety, as well as less aggressive behaviors.³⁶



Outdoor environment for elderly



Everyday music with positive cognitive outcomes



Pets as social support for the elderly

3. Prison Design Research Project, 2005–2009

Background to Swedish Prisons

Prison design is very fascinating, as prisons are critical public institutions that play a key societal role. It is also true that the values of our society are reflected in our legal system. In modern Swedish prisons, it is important to achieve a balance between social protection and rehabilitation of inmates. To look at the whole system and at the same time put human beings at the center of the discussion is essential. Since the length of incarceration for inmates is greatly affected by how well their reintegration into society works, such facilities, in addition to meeting current safety requirements, should be designed to provide conditions for a good working environment, while offering an environment where rehabilitation is based on humanistic values.

Since many buildings in Sweden were built in the nineteenth century, a total of seventeen different construction projects were in progress at the outset of 2000. A precondition for continued public trust was to achieve a balance of social protection and respect for the circumstances of the inmates. The main focus was to be on long-term thinking, when new prison buildings have a life span of at least fifty years. The design should enable rehabilitation and meaningful efforts based on individuals' conditions. The environment must also create conditions for institutional development characterized by trust, openness, and cooperation.

The physical environment provides a framework for a prison's efficient operation. Its design creates the image such organizations consciously use to communicate their governing values to the world. The prison environment is of crucial importance as it also forms part of the rehabilitation process. Also, on a practical level, the conscious investment in architecture and good design, by improving comfort and reducing stress among the staff, can also improve prison operating costs.

Despite the good intentions of the Kriminalvården, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, design of the prison environment had not been a primary consideration. The physical environment was assessed solely by measurable properties for functionality, without considering crucial psychosocial needs. The human health perspective needed to be reflected in the prison designs, so they could result in discernible individual, organizational, and financial gains.

The Project

A salutogenic approach affects human behavior in various ways and increases motivation, desire, and ability to manage stress. My research was to systematically bring together, deepen, develop, and apply knowledge of how health, welfare, and growth can be promoted in all situations. With the support of psychosocial supportive environments, the salutogenic approach could be applied to designs of all kinds of built environments.—A.D.



Publication on prison design

It is well known that prison environments are stressful to both inmates and those who manage those incarcerated. While Alan had worked extensively with healthcare design and elderly care environments in Sweden, in 2005–2008 he took on prison design research.

“There was no research on how the staff dealt with stress in prisons,” Alan noted, “so I wrote a proposal to Lars Nylén, general director of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, on how to apply the principles we work with at Design and Health. My intention was to reduce stress and enable staff to always be alert in situations without consuming a lot of energy.” When Alan met with Lars Nylén to explain the intention of his research, he determined that prisons needed more attention. Alan saw that the principles of salutogenic design could offer promise to redo basic design elements in prisons, creating a more healthful, less stressful environment.

He was asked in 2005 to lead a research project for the corrections division of the Prison and Probation Service. More than five million SEK were given to the Research Center for Design and Health at Karolinska Institute under his leadership to analyze and provide the latest knowledge on global prison design. In the end, he published a book entitled *The Vision of the Healthy Prison Environment*.

As Alan shared, “This is the structure of the prison: you have two hundred prisoners and two hundred staff working in a very intense environment. This staff find themselves in anxious, sometimes very dangerous situations. They must have access to help immediately, if needed. The building environment could easily help them by engaging their mind, shifting activity from the left to the right side of the brain, to promote relaxation. At least when their neural activity is not dominated by those stressful areas, they could be relaxed; they could restore the tranquility of their mind.”

Prison Research

“I gave a lecture at the head office of the corrections division and was invited to work with the research,” Alan continued. “The goal



Suffolk County Jail, in the heart of Boston

was that the prison design support the staff and rehabilitate the inmates. My team was composed of an architect, a health planner, an educator, and a nurse—all working together. We analyzed literature on prison design globally. It was an extensive project and we visited several prisons in Sweden, Canada, the U.S.A., and other parts of Scandinavia.

Project Goals

The purpose of Alan’s research was to develop a physical environment that contributed to increased psychosocial health in Swedish correctional institutions. His overall goal was to develop new physical environments for prisons in 2009 by applying international knowledge and demonstrating new ways to improve all future Swedish facilities. To do this, he needed to develop understanding based on perspectives of the users, both staff and inmates.

The purpose was conceived with two prongs:

First, to develop and apply psychosocial supportive design factors in the environment through active involvement in design and consultancy meetings, seminars, workshops, and study visits.

Second, to evaluate the new prison environment’s needs after construction and occupation, based on the overall experience of the project.

“Inevitably, the prison staff were stressed,” Alan shared. “They needed access to supportive environments that could shift their awareness. We dialogued with the staff and identified the



Prison cell with window facing outside



The view of the outdoors from inside a corrections cell in central Boston

problems: to reduce stress and bring increased alertness without exerting excessive energy.”

The project’s subgoals were:

To create a prison environment of high international caliber, with high human values.

To contribute optimal activity through design and modern architecture and reduce relapses in crime, thereby increasing societal security.

To contribute to an ongoing reconsideration and redevelopment of resources by evaluating the building’s functionality so it achieved quality performance.

Research Findings

“There was a high-security jail in Boston close to Harvard Medical School that impressed me,” Alan noted. “All the cells had windows with a view, which is not common. Salutogenic ideas would have worked in this setting. I was sure of it from the extensive research we had done.

Termination of Alan’s Prison Research Program

After two years of working with the wide-ranging project, Alan and his team had made nine visits to different prisons in Scandinavia, Canada, and the United States, as well as to Finland with a Swedish delegation and a representative from Sweden’s Prisons and Parole Services to carry out their extensive research. Despite their agreement to have the research finalized in 2010, at the end of 2007 the project was suddenly halted. Following the World Congress in Frankfurt, Alan was informed the prison research project would be terminated. In addition, Kriminalvården, the Prisons and Parole Services, refused to pay Alan the remainder of what it owed him for the work he had done with his team.

Back in Sweden, a new development director had been put in place at the corrections division who did not agree with Alan’s project to develop the research program on prison design. This

new director also discovered that the head of construction was not able to account for a large sum of money that was missing. So he scrapped the entire project—in an obvious breach of contract.

Alan felt his research center should not lose the important one-million SEK project due to construction-industry corruption in the corrections division of Prison and Parole Services. Even the Karolinska Institute went along with this decision to not pay what it owed. This, Alan did not accept.

Pursuing Legal Action

Controversy ensued. Alan went to court in the Solna Municipality with his legal issue. The former president of Karolinska Institute, Hans Wigzell, advised him not to do this, but for Alan it was a matter of principle. By pursuing the lawsuit, he wanted to expose the inherent corruption in the system.

He decided to bring the Karolinska Institute to court along with the corrections division of Kriminalvården. The corrections division wanted to stop the project but keep the rest of the money. They still owed him more than two million SEK. “We had done more than seventy percent of the work and received only fifty percent of the money,” Alan explained.

Alan’s lawyer sued the Swedish Prisons and Parole Services corrections division for a breach of agreement and asked that they pay \$1.5 million SEK in compensation for the breach. Eight weeks later, the court delivered its verdict: Alan had lost. The judiciary too was corrupt. Karolinska agreed to pay only \$20,000, but Alan did not accept this. In the end, Alan paid 60,000 SEK (\$10,000) in lawyer fees. He also lost the \$200,000 which they had offered as a settlement and never received a crown of what was owed.

A few years later, a government advisor came to this conclusion: There was much discrimination in the country within all government institutions. Alan concluded, “The Swedish system is very conservative. This court case was just a game for them. They did what they wanted. My aim was to bring this out in the open.”

A Startling Conclusion

Two years later, corrections property director Rolf Swenson could not explain and justify the disappearance of 20 million SEK and he was jailed for corruption. Swenson was sentenced to three years and two months in prison.

An article in *Aftonbladet*³⁷ in January 2011 described how authorities entered Swenson’s office in the corrections headquarters in Norrköping looking for evidence in this corruption case.

“In front of shocked colleagues, seven government officials entered the property manager Rolf Swenson’s office and took all the documents from his room. Binder after binder was placed in boxes and carried out. It was May 18, and a few hours before the search was carried out, the

property manager had been arrested in his home. Rolf Swenson, who for many years had planned for accommodating and projected Sweden's new incarcerations, was now himself facing justice. Rolf Swenson has received millions in various bribes. In exchange, he could have given entrepreneurs very lucrative currency contracts.

“The investigation is very extensive and is expected to be completed by spring, one year after the arrest. According to chief justice Gunnar Stetler, the case is unique in modern Swedish history. Never before had a government official been suspected of such extensive and serious corruption.

“During a building project for new prisons in Östersund and Haparanda, the funding allocation had been increased by three hundred million Swedish kroner—and looking into this, the Office of the General Auditor found a number of strange circumstances. Although the government office for contract logistics and procurement had a framework agreement with several companies, none of these had been used for the project. Instead, one and the same architectural firm, Fojab Architects, had been commissioned without any public bidding process. The sole manager and author of the invoices was the property manager, Rolf Swenson, who had been commissioned by the Prisons and Parole director general, Lars Nyhlén.”³⁸

Despite the unexpected and unsettling outcomes in this prison research project, Alan continued to avow that salutogenic design could be adapted to help improve life quality for those in even the most disadvantaged situations.

Upswing: Going Global

The work of IADH continued unabated. The 4th and 5th Design & Health World Congresses would take place in Frankfurt and Glasgow. In the end, Alan would leave his work in Sweden and begin focusing on the global development of the Academy of Design and Health.

Toward this end, Alan decided to concentrate on organizing symposiums. He launched into work in earnest with Australia, and was invited to hold symposiums there in Sydney and Melbourne. Eventually, he would also conduct events for the first time in South Africa, and in Singapore as well. Years of initiative, intense learning and research, outreach, and forward-looking design efforts were poised to bear fruit in a time of tremendous expansion.

Part 6

International Congresses and Symposiums, 2005–2017

Alan Dilani's vision for a healthier world took shape over many years. Its evolution concretized in a major way through twelve successive IAHD World Congresses. Held under his direction, these vibrant international forums became a successful vehicle to explore the subject of human-centered healthcare design. "How can we put the people in the center of this dialogue and make them the focus of this work?" he queried. Alan's architectural skill, ability to network across silos, concern for improving both health and healthcare worldwide, and his expansive, inclusive quality drew talented, creative professionals to the International Academy for Design & Health and the IADH World Congresses.

With every event, the international community shared more research and ideas relevant to this ever-expanding field—and this included key government health ministers and officials, academic forerunners, industry leaders and interdisciplinary professional contacts from an extensive business network. The IADH congresses drew participants from over fifty countries and took place in Trondheim, Stockholm, Montreal, Frankfurt, Glasgow, Singapore, Boston, Malaysia, Brisbane, Toronto, Hong Kong, and Vienna.

Since its founding by Alan Dilani in 1997, the International Academy for Design & Health (IADH) has become a leading global, interdisciplinary community dedicated to the stimulation and application of research and interaction between design, health, science, and culture. It's now a highly visible global forum for ongoing exchange of research findings among scientists, designers and industry, working in close partnership with an international network of governments, universities and commercial organizations. All of this has taken place due to Alan's determination and far-reaching vision. The goal of IADH: to promote human health and well-being.

Founded at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm after the successful 1st Design & Health World Congress in Trondheim, Norway, the IADH continues to provide an international platform for research exchange among scientists, designers, health professionals, industry, and ministries of health worldwide.

Faced with twenty-first-century challenges of chronic disease, aging populations, and rising healthcare costs, global health systems are constantly seeking new ways to address growing threats to a healthy and productive worldwide society. The IADH addresses these challenges.

The salutogenic health concept was emphasized and broadcast in Dilani's events. This overarching idea expanded as Alan has spearheaded ongoing and relevant urban, national, or thematic elements and contemporary developments and applications. It has been a focal point of his career and he has worked tirelessly to get the word out.

1. Groundwork: Symposiums

The two-day regionally based international symposiums preceded Alan's larger global congress gatherings. Organized in partnership with universities or governments, they catered to local cultural identities within a global perspective, and included a sophisticated level of knowledge and well-respected speakers. The symposiums tested the waters of a geographical area and captured the interest of relevant parties, taking place in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Australasia. Networking through the symposium format allowed Alan to prepare a country for a larger IADH World Congress to follow.

The goal: to bring global knowledge, adapted to the needs and issues of a specific geographical location and conditions. IADH symposiums explored various aspects of global salutogenic principles to enhance health, well-being, and quality of life through design.

These global symposiums supported development of healthy infrastructures. Each symposium was unique, contributing an understanding of a specific culture amidst challenges. Alan's approach was to address a nation's lifestyle, education, and health policy, as well as issues its government was facing in creating a healthy society.

Regarding implementation of the salutogenic approach to design of healthy infrastructure, primary care's role in prevention and promotion was key. One significant theme that emerged from the IADH symposiums was this: the impact of an unhealthy lifestyle may be caused by a city's infrastructure and urban planning. Therefore, attention must be paid to the built environment. This connection first aired during a heated debate in Brisbane, then Toronto, and finally Qatar. These ideas were further developed at the Hong Kong congress, with focus upon the global health agenda of the United Nations. This emphasis has become a key part of IADH activities.

As an example of the scope of the Design & Health symposiums, the event in Qatar in 2013 explored global perspectives on the planning, procurement, and design of healthy environments and communities across the entire Middle East. Like many emerging nations, Qatar has witnessed rapid changes in countless respects, including a significant growth in its national economy and per capita income. These changes have heavily impacted urbanization and the Qatari lifestyle. Lifestyle-related or noncommunicable illnesses (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes, and obesity have become leading causes of morbidity and mortality in Qatar over the past two decades.

Over the course of eight years between 2008 and 2016, IADH symposiums were held in London, Sydney, Toronto, Cape Town, Brussels, Helsinki, Melbourne, Singapore, and Beijing.



Design & Health symposiums in a number of countries

2. Design & Health World Congresses

My vision is that the applied knowledge of Design and Health be integrated into all healthcare training to powerfully affect society's health in the future.—A.D.

Each World Congress involved months of organization by Alan and his scientific, business, and academic teams. When an event was announced, a call for papers was issued and the selection process ensued. Every paper was anonymously reviewed, with the final assemblage of choices indicted in the program. In addition to presenters, many delegates held poster displays of topics in venue lobbies, their authors available to discuss subject matter with participants. The aim was to include as many participants as possible in sharing relevant information to spread research and inspiration. A full schedule of presenters and discussion forums comprised the several-day IADH Congress.

Alan incorporated aspects of geographical areas and cultures in his preparatory congress work or symposiums. “Everywhere I go,” he says, “first I



Alan Dilan's vision

listen to that country in a variety of ways. I consider the government's health policies, the nation's needs, and the demographic changes within it. Important also is the economic growth there. All these aspects are essential to understand a given geographic location. Based on my findings, we'd design the congress accordingly. Each event was geared toward addressing issues to improve built environments for overall healthcare.

“I would discuss the national vision toward health with its ministers to understand needs. Based on such factors, including a country's weaknesses, a dialogue was opened about how best to address certain areas, while expanding existing ideas and creating future plans. It was a multi-pronged approach. This method has proven highly effective and successful for both residents of the country and congress participants.”



Australian architect Nicola Bertrand

Alan's Personal Intention

“My intention with the congress format was always very clear. I never got involved in discussion with the audience. In the beginning, I gathered that I had to focus on listening. This was a lesson for me. It was always my intention that I not be the center of attention in the congress. Instead, I wanted other people to feel *they* were the center. In the congress and symposiums, I always put forward the participants, guest speakers, and people from our network.

“People know that I am behind the event, so I stay in the background. At the Hong Kong congress, for example, I made only one comment. I never spoke up when people shared in the audience. I wanted to give participants a chance to share. I’ve observed in countless congresses the way people are working and what best facilitates the forum.”

Nicola Bertrand, an Australian architect who attended the Frankfurt congress as a newcomer, shared: “Even though I was so green, the congress was very inspiring to me. Typically, you come back from these congresses newly invigorated to go back to your work. You get enlivened by all the right things. It’s a big energy burst, and a spark gets reignited.

“What I really got a lot out of as an architect and now a project manager is this: at your work, you’re involved in the daily grind—cost cuttings, budgets, the programs, risk management—the nitty gritty, real world of healthcare building. The theory is well and fine, but you sometimes forget what underlies it all. You can lose sight of that. It’s good to come to the Design and Health congress and get that true perspective back. I always go home refreshed and new again.”

3. Germany: 4th Design & Health World Congress: Frankfurt, 2005

In Frankfurt, the first IADH Academy Awards took place, raising the bar and making future designs competitive. It was there that Alan created the term salutogenic design, already launched in the Second Congress in Stockholm, and developed it as a scientific term that many speakers came to use in their presentations.

In 2003 Alan attended a program in Germany at the Bauhaus-Universität entitled “The Health Priority,” or “The Advantages of Being Healthy.” “We discussed everything from the standpoint of health rather than disease,” Alan explained. “For the first time, we spoke powerfully in Germany about Salutogenics because people at Bauhaus also discussed environmental factors. Although the Bauhaus design method is not geared toward health, with neither curves nor organic structuring, I introduced salutogenic design there.”

This experience would lay the groundwork for movement toward development of the Design & Health World Congress. “Bauhaus and Germany were aware of *Gesundheit* (health), the advantages of moving toward better health, and confirmed much interest in the subject. Amid television and journalist coverage, their enthusiasm was palpable. Two years later, we came together in 2005 at the Hilton Hotel, a beautiful venue, where we held the Frankfurt congress.”

Themes of the Congress

- The congress achieved a number of outcomes:
- Creating the salutogenic design concept
- Consolidating knowledge and further strengthening the IADH network
- Discussing healthy workplace design
- Including considerations of cost effectiveness, economical hospital design, and a theme of Elderly Care: Planning and Culture
- Evaluating a number of hospital building environments
- Reviewing the use of public/private partnership (PPP) and how to develop it
- Reporting on the status/successes of several large global hospital projects: Norwich Hospital in England, Trondheim Hospital in Scandinavia, and super hospitals in Canada—McGill and others
- Increasing the number of recipients and topics for IADH Academy Awards

“Later, we published three thousand collections of those talks and people appreciated receiving the information.”

“Focusing on future trends is always important for us,” Alan shared. “We have always asked people for papers discussing forward-looking trends in hospital design. For our network, this topic is crucial. It’s always been essential to approach these subjects from various angles and disciplines.”

Planning Considerations

As the congress events became increasingly international, the need for translation became apparent, and this was an issue in Germany. “Many Germans did not speak English. We didn’t have the presentations translated. That was a big problem. We realized this had to be made a top priority for future congresses.

“We also worked on building up the variety, strength, and freshness of key speaker topics,” Alan noted. “Later, we published three thousand collections of those talks and people appreciated receiving the information. They were well received. Each delegate received a copy and we still continue to sell publications from past events.”

4. Scotland: 5th Design & Health World Congress: Glasgow, 2007

My goal in Glasgow was to advance the knowledge of the salutogenic concept and for this, I brought reputable people on board to support us.—A.D.

Alan had been working with various UK architects since 2005 to set up a congress in London. In the end, several architectural firms invited IADH to Glasgow, since they had a huge project there. One of the major Scots supporters was the renowned architect David Stark. “There was always a good reason to choose our next venue. We were very open and not dependent on institutions. We made decisions about future events ourselves.”

Glasgow Congress Focus

With Karolinska Institute as a partner, in the Glasgow congress Alan spoke about and unpacked the definition of health—based on his research. “My main contribution at this congress was further development of the salutogenic concept,” Alan explained. “I wanted to establish this as a main component of each congress since it’s the inspirational source for our architects. Because it is scientific, it’s become the point of departure, pinpointing the interrelationship of health, stress, and psychosocial factors with the built environment. At that time, these factors had not been considered by architects, nor developed within architectural schools. So my primary goal in Glasgow was to advance salutogenic knowledge.”

The congress at Glasgow saw the following developments and focused on the following questions or concerns:

- Further development of the salutogenic concept
- What is a healthy workplace?
- What is a healthy community?
- Unpacking the definition of health
- Creating architecture that is pro-health and well-being, in which infrastructure, design, and construction support these concepts
- Regional hospitals, with the drivers of public-private partnerships and investments

New President for the Academy

In Glasgow, Per Gunnar Svensson was introduced as the newly selected president of IADH. A public scientist and physician who had just retired from the directorship of International Hospital Federation in the UK, Svensson brought in doctors and nurses from the healthcare industry. He had invited Alan to speak at many International Hospital Federation events, promoting salutogenic design. Svensson would hold the position until the Singapore congress in 2009.

A final noteworthy “first” for the 2007 5th Design & Health World Congress in Glasgow was the launch of the first issue of the journal *World Health Design*—to great acclaim.



Prof. Per Gunnar Svensson, Public Health Scientist the president of Academy with Singapore Minister for Health Mr Khaw Boon Wan and Alan



First issue of World Health Design, the journal published by the academy

5. Southeast Asia: 6th Design & Health World Congress: Singapore, 2009

The rapid growth of Asian economies over the past half century has helped to lift billions of people out of poverty and indigence. In particular, Singapore has been at the fore of social and economic development in the region and been recognized by the World Health Organization as possessing the sixth best healthcare system in the world, despite spending just 4 percent of GDP on health. This compares with 10–12 percent in Europe and 18–20 percent in the United States.

By 2030, Asia will account for over half of the world's elderly population and about half of the global burden of noncommunicable or lifestyle diseases (NCDs). By 2040, Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong, which have the highest rates of aging among their populations in the world, will have fewer than two people of working age to support every person aged sixty-five or older. A steep decline in fertility rates also means that birth rates for South Korean women average only 1.39 children, while for Hong Kong and Singapore the birth rate is just 1.14 and 1.37 respectively. New and innovative ways will need to be pioneered to lighten the cost burden, keeping people healthy and supporting more active living for the elderly. Redesigning health systems to better integrate care with an emphasis on policies that promote health and well-being will be needed not only in Singapore but across Asia.

The Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, designed by CPG Consultants, receives the Salutogenic Hospital International Academy Award.

Small Initial Meeting Morphs into a 200–Person Conference

Alan had been invited to give a seminar by the Singapore director of health. He was told it would be a meeting with a few aides, but when his car pulled up to the hotel, he was instead greeted and led into what had turned into an unscheduled conference for two hundred people—at which he spoke about hospital planning.

During this session, Mr. Liak, director of Alexandra Health Systems, explained the way the country's current health standards had been built. For instance, staff hired on at the hospital had to be nonsmokers, or to have stopped smoking within the past six months. It was required that patients have healthy behavior for admission to the hospital and to receive medical treatment. Alan discussed with the assembled group how design and health could be reflected in Singapore.



The Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, Singapore

How It Happened

At this point, Alan had been invited to many countries as a keynote speaker—Japan, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia and Malaysia—as well as to cities like San Francisco and Taipei. He had come many times to Singapore, had spoken at the International Hospital Federation, and was actively engaged with pertinent people there.

“We went to Singapore because I had been invited by several places there to give seminars at the university. I met Professor Lee Wei Ling, director of National Neuroscience Institute and daughter of the founder and first president of Singapore. She encouraged us to come and was highly supportive of our efforts. The Ministry of Health was also involved. It was the first time we engaged the government so actively. We saw they were truly backing us and discovered ways we could involve them directly by including more active, influential government ministers,” Alan shared.

The concept of salutogenic design, previously introduced, was more deeply developed as a scientific term by the speakers. As had become customary, all the submitted papers had been evaluated anonymously. Several ministers and notable government officials were in attendance.

Professor Lee Wei Ling encouraged Alan to return and was very supportive of his work. She understood the salutogenic approach to design of future infrastructure and hospitals.



During his first meetings in Singapore



Answering questions after his first lecture in Singapore



With Dr Liak, Singapore



Design & Health World Congress at the Ritz Carlton Hotel

When Alan visited a country, he often offered lectures at universities, in the public health departments of medical schools, and at architecture schools. In Singapore, he gave a seminar at the National University of Singapore's Department of Architecture and School of Design and Environment, wishing to inspire future leaders and students to learn about salutogenic design and healthy built environments.

In July 2009, the 6th Design & Health World Congress took place at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. As always, Alan sought a high-quality venue for the lectures and preferred that there be ample daylight

throughout the event location. The hotel in Singapore was elegant and provided these requirements for the ensuing congress. Four hundred to five hundred people attended the event.

Focus of the Singapore IADH Congress

The congress included a strong emphasis on environmental concerns, and the agenda addressed the following:

- A human approach to healthcare, as well as sustainability and the impact of nature
- The impact of clean air and water, zero energy and conservation of energy
- The introduction of showcase presentations during congress breaks

“The government was actively engaged and strongly supported us,” Alan said. “They always have many projects that are interesting. That was a definite highlight. We had also invited Lord Nigel Crisp, former CEO of the National Health Service (NHS), the largest healthcare organization in the world, and member of the House of Lords.”

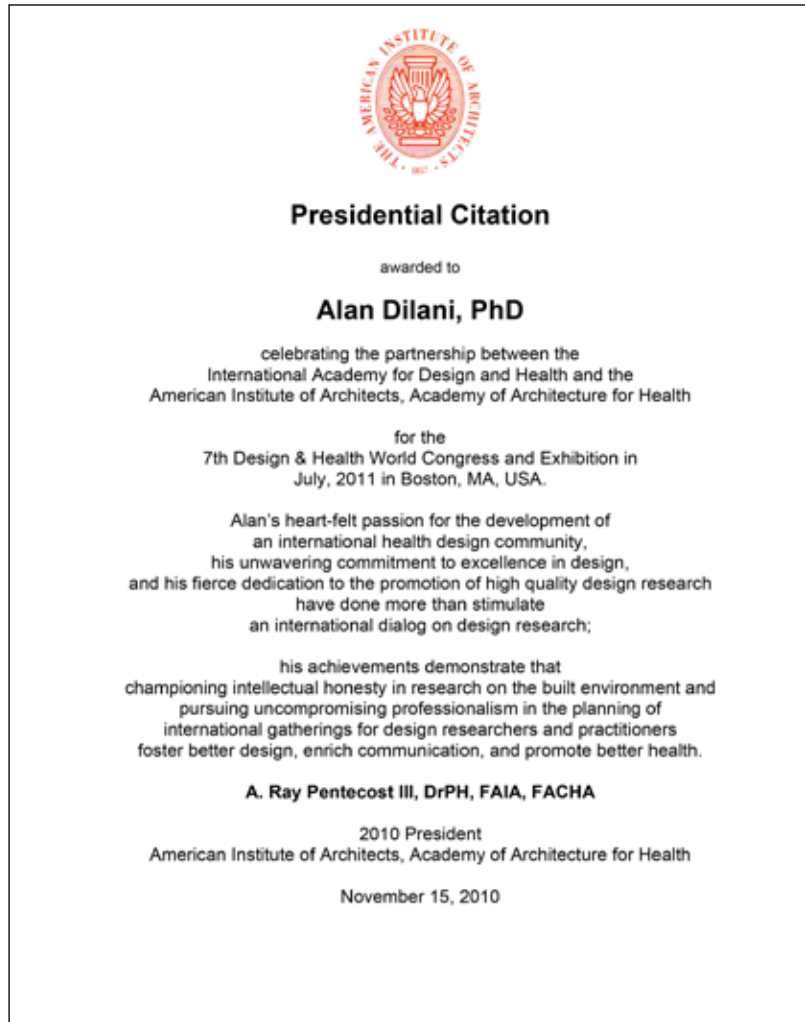
A Follow-up Symposium: Design & Health Asia Pacific, in March 2013

Following the 2009 Singapore World Congress, Alan returned in 2013 for another symposium held at the IADH Academy Award-winning Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Singapore, the most sustainable green hospital in the world. Interest in salutogenic architecture ran high as exploration unfolded on global perspectives regarding the planning, procurement, and design of healthy environments and communities across the Asia Pacific.

Looking Ahead

IADH had now organized congresses in Europe and Asia, and Alan was clear that it was time to look toward the United States and its healthcare design. He had been invited by the Harvard

During this period, Alan received an award from the American Institute of Architects.



American Institute of Architect AIA award, 2010, for engagement in U.S. healthcare design

School of Public Health to discuss design for the future, and by the U.S. Academy of Science in Washington D.C., to discuss the salutogenic approach and network with the American Institute of Architects there. As always, he combined his trip with lecturing at well-known American architectural firms. During this period, Alan received an award from the American Institute of Architects.

6. United States: 7th Design & Health World Congress: Boston, 2011

When I was in America, I discussed public and private funding of U.S. healthcare systems, including their weaknesses and what we can learn from them. That has always been my speech in the United States. I spoke about moving toward health in built environments, the way this could shift society, and how incentive-wise, it targeted the “business of health” rather than the “business of disease.” That was politically and geographically relevant and what people in the U.S. and Canada were interested to hear.—A.D.

The 7th Design & Health World Congress was organized in partnership with the American Institute of Architects, with support from the Harvard School of Public Health, Harvard School of Design, and Harvard Business School. The Boston congress included a pre-congress session with the International Facilities Management Association and became a global forum on how the interaction of facilities management and design processes can impact the quality and efficiency of operations to improve health outcomes.

One interesting project IADH included for the Boston Congress was publication of the book *Healthy City Design*, an essay collection on designing cities in ways that enhance the overall health of inhabitants. This volume drew in a spectrum of disciplines to voice their perspectives.

Australian Anthony Capon, director of the International Institute for Global Health in Kuala Lumpur, had worked on healthy community and built environment for the last twenty years and had been very much engaged with the congresses. He recalled, “I was asked to edit the five essays presented in Boston, one of which I wrote. This was the beginning, I think, of really trying to engage with neighborhoods and cities in a meaningful way. This happened at the Boston IADH Congress.”

For the first time, the congress included a panel discussion involving government officials and ministries of health from the UK, South Africa, Malaysia, Finland, and Canada. As well, Kurdish physician Rang Shawis spoke about the Erbil Children’s Hospital in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). This trend, to involve government health representatives so they become more aware of their responsibility in creating healthy societies through design and infrastructure, continues to the present day.



Anthony Capon, of the International Institute for Global Health

Alan Addresses Healthcare Design in the United States

In his lecture at Harvard School of Public Health some years later, in 2015, Alan would speak of how as the global economy evolves and changes, it becomes increasingly important for healthcare planners to understand the economic drivers of healthcare and healthcare design decisions. “It is well established that increased spending on healthcare does not necessarily equate with better healthcare or enhanced well-being,” Alan explained. “That was an important message to our American colleagues. The U.S.A. spends twice as much as other industrialized nations on healthcare, yet its system arguably performs poorly by comparison.

“Life expectancy is lower and infant mortality is higher than in many other wealthy countries. Many countries with significantly lower GDPs offer high-quality healthcare *and* are more effective in keeping their populations healthy. Obesity is an epidemic in the U.S.A., seriously impacting the health of 64 percent of the

population, including more than nine million children. One third of all U.S. citizens are living with a chronic health condition. At the same time, only four percent of healthcare expenditure is used to fund preventive healthcare approaches, while twenty-five percent of healthcare costs are administrative.

“The basic structural and operational constraints of a healthcare system, population health, and well-being are significantly related to, and influenced by, the designed environment. Using the environment as a strategic tool is one of the most cost-effective and enduring approaches to reducing illness and improving health. Our mission was to spread awareness through the value of salutogenic design as a foundation for improving Americans’ health and well-being.”³⁹

Alan explained what it was like for him is to lecture in North America. “When I speak in the U.S.A. and Canada about salutogenic design, people go, ‘Whoa!’ like it is completely new. It is not new for us. They believe everything is ‘evidence-based design.’ If you don’t have a setup for patients to have a single room, you believe, then there is a risk of infection. But we have only a few hospitals with single rooms in Scandinavia and we never have infections because we wash our hands right there in the patients’ rooms. We always have sinks there and doctors wash their hands. It’s a matter of culture and there is no risk of infection. When you create a single hospital room because it’s business, it’s because you simply want to charge the patient more. The patient has to pay more for this, but in a double room, they pay less. That is the way the administrators and planners justify it. The architect is responsible for this kind of design.

“You must go more deeply into the political and social behavior of society to understand the reasons behind things. It’s not a matter justified by the price since it’s not a matter of quality. As long as you have a credit card, in a hospital, you must pay for an exclusive room.

“In our country, hospital patients in single rooms had no interaction. From many scientific observations, I concluded that two-bed patient rooms contributed to increased social interaction. Elderly people in care do not want to be alone because they feel afraid. In many ways, we observed that patients helped other patients before the staff came around. My daughter, Sara, fell down and



Government panel discussion in Boston



At Harvard University

What we do
is encourage
future
generations
to further
develop ideas
to create more
healthful
concepts.

after her knee operation other patients came to her aid before the staff even arrived. If she had been alone, she might have been even further injured.

“But arrangements in the U.S. are categorized through definitions of “healing environment”: they manipulate people to accept a particular notion of what’s the best-quality healthcare. We have analyzed it scientifically and our viewpoint seems more realistic, more correct. What we do is encourage future generations to further develop ideas to create more healthful concepts. Science should always be looking for something new, so people can learn about and critically review it. If you don’t provide the knowledge, how can people have access to fresh ideas? Scientific findings all need to be put out there for the good of society. This is why I post all the materials on the IADH website. People from Africa and the U.S. have equal access to it all. I had to argue with others to make this happen. It usually comes down to money. You cannot always do business to be a visionary and have greater impact. You must sacrifice sometimes. I have chosen this path.

“I don’t want to do business. If I procure the money to survive, I want to use it to have a greater impact. That’s always been my vision. That’s why I wanted to share with my network and work with them to better society. We have done this in many ways—through the journal, congresses, symposiums, lectures, and articles. Because at the end of the day, what’s your impact? Not how much money you earn. Not what you produce. Your impact.

“This has been a clear priority for me—to have a real impact. I have found meaningfulness in my life by helping others to find real meaning in their lives.”

Working in the United States: Pros and Cons

“If I were in the United States, I would be very successful, because this country has a lot of business along with the freedom of ideas,” Alan said. “If it’s not in one state, another state will take interest. For instance, California is such an inspired state and has supported us all these years with major sponsorship.

“Even without the government’s support, our major sponsorship comes from America because many universities believe in the



With Julio Frenk, dean of the School of Public Health at Harvard

knowledge we put forth. Many of them apply it. I have given lectures in major American cities and discussed ideas with people. Every time I contact these institutions, they are pleased when I go there. We have a continuing dialogue with universities and industries. Such dialogue is crucial.”

A Primary Issue for the IADH Congress in Boston

“In 2011,” Alan went on, “the World Health Organization ran an urban health campaign and with UNHABITAT (the UN urban settlements program) released a major report on global urban health inequity. In the coming years, most urban population growth will be in low- and middle-income countries. Tackling urban health inequity is essential for achieving healthy, sustainable cities.”

Alan developed these ideas when he visited Harvard’s School of Public Health in discussions with Julio Frenk, dean of that school and former minister of health for Mexico. Overall, he noted, there is a growing shift and better understanding of how the design of the built environment, in all settings from healthcare to the places where we live, learn, and work, truly affects our health.

“Critical Path,” Boston Congress

In a brief piece in the journal *World Health Design*,⁴⁰ Alan wrote, “The Seventh Design and Health World Congress in Boston offered a collaborative, supportive environment for leading international experts and faculties to discuss the science of salutogenic design, thereby promoting well-being

The salutogenic approach is the only way to improve health in the country, creating living environments that will impact people's behavior in a positive direction.

through healthy buildings and infrastructure. As well as fostering a culture of knowledge exchange, it's important that in its events IADH also critically reviews the actual healthcare sector, its organizational structure and design trends.

"This was especially pertinent in Boston, since as was pointed out during the congress, American society can be considered far from healthy. Ranking last of nineteen industrialized nations for preventable deaths, despite twenty percent of its GDP being consumed by medical expenditure (the highest in the world), its healthcare industry is dominated by a profit-motivated private sector. Developing long-term disease prevention, and promoting health, is of no interest to these businesses. As a result, seventy-eight percent of U.S. healthcare expenditure is on treatment for lifestyle-related disease, and Americans in the aggregate now consume some 25 million pills per hour.

"Instead of the *commercialized sicknesses* of the current situation, the U.S. could move toward a system of *commercialized health*, by creating a health industry that incentivizes the prevention of lifestyle diseases. The salutogenic approach is the only way to improve health in the country, creating living environments that will impact people's behavior in a positive direction.

"Designers and planners are crucial to creating these healthy environments, but this issue has not been critically reviewed and discussed. Firms that design 'progressive' patient rooms with their own terraces, media walls, and separate rooms for families are influenced by the pathogenic-focused culture of the medical industry, which seeks to increase the cost of medical treatment while making no impact on health promotion.

"Such design developments are rarely criticized in the U.S., but accepted and presented as highly successful achievements," said Tobias Gilk, questioning the institutionally bad planning and "style over substance" approach of American radiology units.

"The U.S. has arguably the world's best scientists, best hospitals, and best medical treatment. I am confident that, with dynamism and creativity, it could easily develop a more pragmatic, salutogenic approach to health. Transforming U.S. society from sick to healthy will in turn lead to a more sustainable, productive economy," Alan wrote.



Professor Richard Jackson, Boston Design & Health World Congress

Healthy Places, Healthy Lives

Six visionaries in the field of design, health, and urbanism discussed a new paradigm in Boston focusing on the prevention of disease and promotion of health, rather than on medical intervention and the treatment of disease. Professor Richard Jackson, pediatrician and chair of environmental health sciences at the University of California Los Angeles, declared: “Our health is determined in large part by our environment—what we eat, drink, and breathe, and where we work, live, and socialize.”⁴¹

The new paradigm, Professor Jackson noted, is creating a new landscape which in the future will recognize the architect, designer, and developer of physical environments as key collaborators with nurses, physicians, and public-health professionals in the improvement of individual and population health.

Lord Nigel Crisp, former chief executive of the UK’s National Health Service and author of *Turning the World Upside Down: The Search for Global Health in the 21st Century*, spoke about the paradigm shift needed for a new definition of health. He identified three distinct strands for such a paradigm: the need for independence and self-determination at the individual level; the state of our interdependence and mutuality at a family, community, professional, national, and international level; and the belief that individual and national health are a human right that governments should protect and promote. This shift



Lord Nigel Crisp, Boston congress



Dr Julio Frenk, Harvard University



Professor Clayton Christensen, School of Business at Harvard

irrevocably alters the way we think about and operate the core features of traditional Western scientific medicine—professional competence; scientific discovery; commercial innovation; and massive spending.

Dr Julio Frenk, dean of Harvard’s School of Public Health, outlined how the dominant health paradigm of the twentieth century, based on the provision of healthcare, had reached its limits, shown by the fact that health outcomes are no longer improving despite larger percentages of GDP being invested in this area. Dr Frenk called for the new paradigm to be based on attention to health prerequisites—financial sufficiency, housing, food, social interaction—and health promotion, identifying the need for consciously shaped healthy environments as a key factor.

Disruptive Innovation in Healthcare

For Clayton Christensen, renowned professor at Harvard Business School and author of *The Innovator’s Prescription: A Disruptive Solution for Healthcare*, what he termed “disruptive innovation”—defined as “the transformational force that has brought affordability and accessibility to other industries”—is vitally needed in healthcare as well. “How,” he asks, “can we make healthcare affordable?”⁴² For patients with chronic health conditions and unhealthy life practices, central to Christensen’s thinking is the need to develop *user networks* that enable them to learn how they can help themselves, finding the motivation and desire to do so.

In his view, with hospitals focusing on diagnostic services and provision of standardized care, and wellness coordination driven downstream to specialized clinics, care will be taken back to the community, to primary care physicians and



Dr John Spengler, Harvard School of Public Health



Mohsen Mostafavi, Harvard's School of Design

nurses with new sets of responsibilities. As health-systems reform around the world is driven by recognition that health starts at home, in the settings where we lead our daily lives and not in the hospital, greater attention will be paid to the factors that both cause disease and create health.

Promoting Improved Air Quality through Sustainable Development

Research conducted by Dr John Spengler, Harvard School of Public Health, revealed that people spend 65 percent of their time in their homes, 25 percent in some other indoor environment, 5–7 percent in transit, and usually less than 5 percent of their



Alan with his mentor Derek Parker receiving the Lifetime Leadership Award, and Eberhard Zeidler, former Lifetime Leadership Award winner.

time outdoors. It is clear that contaminant levels encountered in indoor environments are important contributors to exposure to toxins, discomfort, irritation, and negative health effects. Spengler explored ways to promote improved air quality through sustainable development strategies to reduce stresses on the Earth's environmental ecosystems, both human and nonhuman, and to integrate environmental knowledge into all aspects of society—commerce, government, education, and religious spheres.

With a focus on the sustainability of cities linked to health impacts, Mohsen Mostafavi, dean of Harvard's School of Design and author of *Ecological Urbanism*, discussed how an ecological approach is urgently needed both as a remedial device for the contemporary city and as an organizing principle for new cities. He described how design provides a key to bring together ecology with an urbanism that is not in contradiction with its environment.

These six visionaries from the fields of design and health contributed to the most successful congress to date, expanding understanding and the level of discussion, supported by an innovative scientific program.

Participant Perspectives

Australian architect James Grosse attended the 7th Design & Health World Congress in Boston, where a building he had worked on was to receive awards from the academy. “When I was there,” he said later, “I became more intrigued by the congress.” He heard many fascinating talks like that of American urban designer Mark Johnson, with whom he would later collaborate in a project in Sydney.

Grosse found he shared values with the IADH vision. For him, “The most compelling part of buildings has always got to be the way people react within them and how structures can build communities and shape relationships between people. I became aware that our values were very similar and decided to become a sponsor because the IADH was due to do more in in Asia. So our sponsorship, which was substantial, was really targeted at Asia.”

As an overview, Grosse also felt that the academy, in giving more focus to the built environment, might do well to engage more with architecture. Attending IADH, he shared, promoted the sense of being part of a community which is beneficial.

Meeting Alan in 2010, said architect Mark Johnson, was an entirely random event. “I had been invited by North Carolina State University to make a presentation. After the lecture, this fellow comes up to me and says, excitedly, ‘You have to come speak with me.’ At this point, I have now spoken for the seventh time at these events. My first congress was in Toronto, next was Boston, then Helsinki, Brussels, Melbourne, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

“You know how it is. People come up to you after a lecture and it’s in one ear and out the other. But to my surprise, two weeks passed and Alan called, asking again if I would speak at a congress. I really had no idea why he so wanted me to come talk. He said, ‘I want you to give a presentation in Toronto.’ My first thought was: Why? I’m about changing cities and not about health, per se. Fundamentally, my subject is more about equity and justice. I believe that the bottom line globally is that equity and justice ultimately trump everything else, because the growing global inequities are so stark.



Architect James Grosse at the
Hong Kong congress



Mark Johnson, American architect, at the Boston congress

“In fact, it is to a significant degree that I started thinking about the issues of public health because of Alan and this academy. I was asked by Harvard, which is where I went to school, to participate in this working group on sustainable urbanism that included senior professors from design, of which I’m one, theology, education, the School of Law, the Business School—and talking about what are all the factors that go into making cities more sustainable.”

7. Africa : IADH Initiatives, 2011-2012

Improving health for Africa's people in the twenty-first century depends upon recognition of its existence in an international context. In a globalized and interdependent world, continuous improvement of the life quality for African citizens will be founded on one thing: the recognition that a healthy population is the underpinning for social development and economic growth. While the continent has not yet seen a formal Design & Health World Congress, IADH initiatives were hosted by South Africa during 2011 and 2012. Alan traveled to Africa many times between 2008 and 2015 to address the region's pressing issues from the IADH perspective.⁴³

Eleven percent of the world's entire population inhabits sub-Saharan Africa. Yet the continent presently carries 24 percent of the disease burden in both human and financial costs, while benefiting from less than 1 percent of global health expenditure.⁴⁴ At the same time, almost 50 percent of the world's child mortality for children under the age of five occurs in Africa. Only a few countries in the region can spend the \$34 to \$40 per person per year that WHO identifies as the necessary minimum to meet a population's basic healthcare needs.⁴⁵

South Africa has undergone a remarkable transformation since the demise of the apartheid regime and its nonviolent transition to participatory democracy in 1994. Despite significant progress made in the improvement of the well-being of its people since 1994, much remains to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations. These are incorporated in the UN-defined Sustainable Development Goals for Africa 2030 that include the elimination of poverty and other major benchmarks to shape Africa's future.⁴⁶

In recent times, across the continent of Africa, improved political and macroeconomic stability and microeconomic reforms, combined with rising oil prices, have reduced government debt. In addition, a flourishing private sector has helped to create an economic surge that's seen the pan-Africa GDP rise on average 4.9 percent every year since 2008.

Over the next decade, it is estimated by the World Bank Group's International Finance Corporation that twenty-five to thirty billion dollars will be needed toward new investment in healthcare assets, including hospitals and clinics, to meet growing demands on the healthcare market in sub-Saharan Africa—the cost of which is set to double by 2016, rising to \$35 billion.

This competition would provide valuable information to support future health facility planning and implementation decisions.

IADH Symposium in Cape Town, 2011

Design & Health *Africa 2011* was an IADH international symposium that explored ways wealthier countries can learn from those that are poorer. It suggested that instead of talking about international development—where the rich help the poor—it is essential to think in terms of codevelopment, where one learns from the other.

This symposium brought together an interdisciplinary group of world experts to share their knowledge and create a new health vision for Africa, based on interdependence: Africa's desire for independence and their rights and accountabilities as citizens of the world.

IADH Design Competition for South Africa, 2012

In July 2012 the International Academy for Design & Health and the Ministry of Health of South Africa announced an international design competition for the redevelopment of the Nelson Mandela Academic Medical Faculty and King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban, the largest city in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province. This competition would provide valuable information to support future health facility planning and implementation decisions.

Geographic natural features of KZN—rivers, wetlands, game reserves, mountainous terrain, and the scattered distribution of homesteads in the rural areas—pose unique challenges for health-service delivery. Availability and access to health services, transport routes, referral patterns, the burden of disease, and disease trends had therefore to take into account population characteristics and distribution to ensure equity in resource allocation.

KZN is the second most populous province in South Africa, with 21.4 percent of the total population. The uninsured population there, dependent on public health services, is estimated at ±88 percent of the province's total.

The competition's invitation and design brief set the requirement that design submissions reflect the vision for creating a healthy

society in Africa based on a salutogenic approach: to enhance healthcare provisions as a foundation for social and economic development in South Africa. The entire process—from expression of interest to pre-qualification, briefing, and evaluation—supported the collaboration of South African and international firms, to ensure the latest global knowledge being transferred into the process.

The international design competition specified that submissions include a master plan and schematic design for a prospective hospital. The winner of the competition would develop the detailed design and execution of the project. IADH convened an expert international jury for objective evaluation under leadership of the South African Ministry of Health.

The competition ensured that the best design solution was realized, elevating the quality of healthcare design in South Africa. It sought to establish a standard of excellence against which all healthcare architects could measure and ensure that the National Department of Health deliver a world-class central hospital and a medical academic faculty—dedicated to improving healthcare for all South Africans.

Health-promoting Lifestyle Center

Several meetings were held with the health minister of South Africa, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi; the ministry’s director of planning, Massoud Shaker; and Alan. The group decided to develop a salutogenic health center that could promote health and prevent disease through encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle.

The conclusion was reached to hold a competition that pulled an interdisciplinary team together to discuss what makes people healthy and how to organize a health center that promoted this outlook. IADH organized the competition and the winner was to receive €40,000 for developing the most innovative health-promoting lifestyle center rather than a traditional health clinic.

Announcement of Winning Designs in Cape Town, November 7, 2011

The winners of the international competition to design the “Health Promoting Lifestyle Centre” for South Africa were announced by IADH together with the Ministry of Health in Cape Town in late 2011. The competition was the first of its kind to be held in Africa. It provided an open brief: entrants were asked to design an innovative facility that emphasized a preventive rather than a remedial vision.

Focusing on health promotion in a primary-care setting, the design brief called for a friendly, welcoming facility that empowered the community to move toward self-care. Entrants were required to show an understanding of salutogenic health principles, ways the physical environment could be a valuable tool for preventive medicine, and an environmentally supportive design.

Together with health promotion, required features for such a center included educational facilities

for assessing individuals' lifestyles, an outpatient area, counseling areas, and a recreational infrastructure to support active lifestyles.

Shortlisted entrants were assessed anonymously by an international panel chaired by Alan Dilani of IADH and Dr. Massoud Shaker, South African Ministry of Health. The winner was announced during the Academy's Design & Health Africa 2011 International Symposium in Cape Town October 25–26.

The winning design, Protea Health, was submitted as a joint venture by Farrow Partnership Architects, Clark Nexsen, and Ngonyama Okpanum & Associates. The group received the €40,000 prize, while two highly commended designs, Triple Embrace by Nightingale Associates and Phila Kahle ("Live Well") by HLM Architects, received €20,000 each.

"All three finalists showed an understanding of the visionary and salutogenic approach of the HPLCs and also responded to sensitivities of the local climate and culture, allowing for flexibility according to location and future need,"⁴⁷ Alan shared later. Though funds were set aside for design development and a prospective build of the winning design, with further discussions underway about the possibility of piloting all three schemes as a collaboration between the winning entrants, it was never implemented.

"The South African Ministry of Health and the IADH," Alan wrote, "both feel the competition could change the health paradigm across the African continent, providing a model for a new type of health center—one that is focused on health promotion in both low- and high-income countries."⁴⁸ This would come about through the introduction of new concepts of preventive healthcare in the country.

A Look at the Award Winners: Protea Health

Protea Health puts the national flower of South Africa, the Protea, at the core of its structure as a metaphor for hope, healing, and renewal. Its form sits at the heart of the HPLC, open to the sky and flaring upward as a beacon for its users.

Outdoor features of the design included sheltered waiting and circulation areas, gardens, areas for worship or meditation,



Farrow Partners, Okpanum and Clark Nexsen's winning concept for health promoting lifestyle center in South Africa. Image: Farrow Partners

and a “learning kitchen.” Indoors were outpatient clinics (prenatal, dental, TB/HIV/AIDS, and traditional healing), retail and education space, specialty departments, a library, and a theater. Classrooms would be used by local people and for training health workers.

The central flower-shaped opening in the building was to facilitate passive air circulation. Further sustainable features included roof-mounted solar photovoltaics, composting, and rainwater collection. Farrow's, Okpanum's and Clark Nexsen's vision was for a “Centre of Influence” equivalent to the hospital-based concept of a “Centre of Excellence.” The winning proposal by the three designers stated of their proposed design: “It will set an international standard for promoting the full range of upstream causes of health, which will be seen as appealing, understandable and accessible to everyone.”⁴⁹



South African health minister Aaron Motsoaledi awards the design competition prize for the first health-promoting lifestyle center—a prototype for future salutogenic health centers in Africa



Other Kurdish scientists were engaged to support Africa; here, with health minister Aaron Motsoaledi of South Africa and engineer Jamil Mardukhl, from Toronto, at IADH's symposium in Duha



With Dr. Massoud Shaker, special advisor to the health minister of South Africa, and a keynote speaker

8. Malaysia: 8th Design & Health World Congress: Kuala Lumpur, 2012

The IADH Congress in Kuala Lumpur was the first with over a thousand delegates at its opening. The initial speech was given by the health minister of Kuala Lumpur. The event was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Health Malaysia, with the support of the Public Works Department Malaysia, the Construction Industry Development Board Malaysia, and the Malaysian Institute of Architects. It included a pre-congress symposium with the Construction Industry Development Board of Sustainable Engineering and Operational Efficiency in Hospital Planning.

As the world undergoes a significant economic and demographic shift, the Asian region is moving increasingly into the center of world affairs—socially, economically, and politically. Many Asian countries like Malaysia have set the target to achieve the status of developed nation by 2020. They have recognized that progressive societies aiming to achieve strong, sustainable economic growth must also be healthy societies.

Growing awareness of health promotion and a need to invest in healthy and sustainable public, institutional, and domestic infrastructure are placing Asian countries at an opportunity forefront. They are at the leading edge of change. Deputy health minister Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin announced Malaysia's bid for success: "The selection of Malaysia as the destination for the IADH Congress was based on the government's commitment to improve the health of its people and the country's health facilities. With emphasis on transforming people's mindsets to adopt healthy lifestyle habits and not just pay attention to aspects of physical health, this is what our country needs to go forward and compete on the world stage in many fields."

How the Malaysia Congress Came About

In 2010, Alan held a workshop with the Malaysian government, which invited three hundred participants from all over Malaysia. The goal of this workshop was to identify the country's problems and find a future vision. Prior to the congress, Alan held several preparatory seminars.

"Malaysia is a country with a dynamic future vision. However, I visited one hospital and saw the health infrastructure was of low quality, in some areas poorer than Africa, yet very costly," Alan observed. "The amount of knowledge in this country about healthcare was undeveloped. Hospital rooms were like boxes in a building. Medical doctors were working with no windows nor AC. I saw this as a weakness and felt I must speak with the government. Because of low quality in their buildings, hospital staff were not productive."



Inauguration of the Kuala Lumpur Congress with Malaysian health minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai

Alan spoke with a physician from that hospital’s emergency department, who confirmed his findings, citing countless aspects of the hospital that didn’t work. She was knowledgeable, with firsthand experience. “A colleague of her stature should be involved in these discussions,” he thought. “The officials hadn’t involved the hospital staff in the building plans. I recommended that instead of reworking this hospital, a cheaper solution was to demolish it and build a new one. Otherwise, the annual cost to run their hospital would simply increase over time and give poorer care quality.”

A “Future Workshop” Prior to the Malaysia Congress

“Professor Abd Rahim Mohamad was the director of infrastructure and future planning in the Ministry of Health. He invited me to speak, to address certain issues. The workshop organized in 2010 was professional and held in a beautiful hotel. I invited knowledgeable people from our network—those who support us, who hold corporate membership, and are also informed. It was a three-day workshop. For two days, we had seminars and discussion with an audience of doctors.

“The method I used was the ‘Future Workshop,’ developed by



Abd Rahim Mohamad, director of infrastructure and planning at the Ministry of Health

Robert Jungk, Ruediger Lutz, and Norbert R. Müllert in the 1970s as a method enabling a group to develop new solutions to social problems. This group was working to identify problems in the country. The questions were: What are the country's issues related to the knowledge we have discussed? What works in the country? Be creative and visionary looking toward the future. How can we tackle such problems and find the best solutions? The society and governmental institutions have not taken care of these problems, I noted. You are the ones, I told them, who hold the solution because you're knowledgeable and informed.

"I knew their problems in advance and invited attendees who could address specific issues. Dr. Rahim, his team, and I brainstormed to determine the most pressing problems. It was very exciting."

Alan's Proposal

"In Malaysia, the pressing issue, due to the climate, was ecological design. Though they were aware of the need for green design, they had not even begun to implement this knowledge. When speaking with the government, I showed them our *World Health Design* journal: 'Come on!' I told them. 'You can have one hospital model as a benchmark for the country, as a point of reference. I

know someone who will design it for you based on salutogenic and ecological principles you already have in this country: climate variables and building efficiency. This will bring synergy. Other people will learn from this model and hopefully continue to replicate the knowledge.”

Themes of the Malaysian Congress

The congress in Malaysia, as it evolved, developed the following focuses:

- Implementation of salutogenic design in the context of public health to augment fundamental aspects of Malaysian healthcare and society
- The importance of a healthy community
- Prevention, and the need for a philosophy of care that is integrative
- Improvements in primary care for future hospitals in Malaysia

“We spoke about several hospital case studies from other countries, including large successful Australian projects. We offered climate and building environment issues as examples of regional green design. Architect Ken Yeang, originally from Malaysia, was a keynote speaker. He spoke about ecological design and showed several exciting buildings.

“We also discussed for the first time the concept of the *double façade*—where you have two façades with air distances between them of fifty centimeters, one to maintain the air conditioning and climate control that allow for natural ventilation and zero energy. This kind of technology was being introduced for the first time in Singapore. An engineer came from ARUP, one of the largest British consulting companies, and discussed the double façade as it had been implemented there.”

Alan’s Report on the 8th Design & Health World Congress in Kuala Lumpur

“The 8th Design and Health World Congress reconfirmed the IADH’s vision for a healthy society. While significant progress has been achieved to understand the IADH’s values of salutogenic design, there are still inadequacies when it comes to implementation.

“One of the most pressing subjects,” Alan noted at the congress,⁵⁰ “is the rehabilitation of our existing cities and built environments into eco-cities that can create healthy societies. We need the new generation of designers, architects and engineers to learn how to apply ecological and salutogenic design principles in their work. In the meantime, we also need the support of governments around the world to understand the value of a healthy and sustainable society.

“The world needs a new paradigm and creation of a healthy global society—a vision we should all embrace. Exchanging knowledge to influence government policy, change commercial incentives and encourage positive changes in people’s lifestyles through the design of the built environment is the new future path. With an interdisciplinary approach, architects, designers, engineers, public



Offering a gift to Malaysian health minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai health scientists, psychologists and economists could alleviate the human condition by creating stimulating, enjoyable and sustainable environments that enhance health and well-being for all,” Alan wrote.

Lessons in Local Social Traditions

“This was quite a ceremonial congress,” Alan shared. The health minister came and in accordance with their culture, gave me a lovely gift. That is the Malaysian tradition; so I went to the shop and found an exquisite pen, book, and journal to express my gratitude and appreciation for all their help. I wanted to pay attention to the culture and honor the social customs in the way people offer respect.

“One of the people I had invited to this forum was Ray Pentecost, at that time the president of our academy. He met one of the deputy ministers and hugged her. I said, ‘My God! You should not do that! You don’t even give your hand to shake in a Muslim country like this. The lady must stay behind. If she gives you her hand, you give yours. Otherwise, you do not do this.’ There is such a diversity of culture throughout the world. This is something we are sensitive to when we hold the congress in any international city.”



Deputy health minister Datuk Rosnah binti Haji Abd Rashid Shirlin with IADH president Ray Pentecost

Further Backstory to the Malaysia Congress

“The first time I went there was many years ago. In 2007, I was invited to the International Islamic University in Malaysia by Professor Norwina M. Nawawi from our network. She’s an ambitious woman, working hard to bring experts to her university. Norwina is a highly motivated professor at the school of architecture there.

“The Malaysian Islamic people are very modern and pragmatic. Women are powerful in their society and very active as professionals. Seeing so many professional women was not customary in the Middle East. This was a new world for me. This fact piqued my interest in their culture. Norwina is a professor and her husband’s a politician. She has seven children, all of them very well educated with high degrees from universities. Plus, she was a member of the Public Health Group UIA-PHG of the Union of International Architects. Norwina impressed me greatly and I had respect for her as a source of inspiration for others. Malaysians, I have seen, are committed to their beliefs and very healthy, quiet, and dedicated people.”

Logistics and Congress Quality

Charlie Olofsson, a Swedish colleague who worked with Alan on multimedia presentations at the congresses, had praise for this congress and the way it was organized. “The Malaysia congress was superior because we were at the National Convention Center and their only business is conferences. When Alan began planning this congress, the Malaysian government wanted him to use a newly built center outside the city, far from hotels. There were only government buildings there. Alan refused, saying he wanted to stay in the middle of the city. It was a wise decision because it made logistics much more easeful and allowed participants to enjoy the city.

“Malaysia,” in Olofsson’s estimation, “was the most important congress. It was so well attended, and government ministries were involved, helping organize and ensuring ample attendance. It was high quality because people worked hard, and were present in all ways. Everything was perfect—the food, organization, vendors. It was an international venue, and people gathered from all over the world.”



Charlie Olofsson, IT director for the congress has been awarded for his many years support to Academy



Ken Yeang, father of ecological design

Ken Yeang's Ecological Design

One highlight of this congress was the speech by architect Ken Yeang, a planner and pioneer of ecological design. Describing Ken Yeang's accomplishment, Alan said that his work and vision "achieves an ideal interaction between the built and the natural environment, where buildings are not add-ons to the ecosystem, but an active part of it.

"Nature can be considered as the 'host organism' to manmade infrastructure, with the same level of biointegration required if the whole system is to succeed. Ecological design deals with infrastructure that creates clean air, clean water, clean food, and clean land through water management and retention, and natural heating and cooling.

"These principles are intertwined with those of salutogenic design, which support human health in daily behavior. Improving the health of entire populations as a foundation for social and economic development is only achieved through salutogenic and ecological design principles. Such design can provide social organization, structure and function in society, and work to continually restore the natural environment," Alan concluded.



Architect Calvin Luk, Hong Kong



Angela Lee, of HKS Architects

Colleagues' Perspectives

Kuala Lumpur was architect Angela Lee's first congress. She was invited to accept an award for a project by her firm, submitted alongside that by an Australian counterpart. She's an American architect whose firm, HKS, had been aware of Alan's work for the previous decade.

"It was only when our firm branched out internationally that the congress made sense," she said. "That's when we understood why this congress takes place, who the players are and why we should be supporting it. This conference is different because it's more research-based, and it's a place where more knowledge is shared.

"A lot of conferences I attend are engineers and architects talking about how to design hospitals. This one is deeper because really, we have one thousand-plus people attending, including four hundred healthcare architects. It's hard for us to send more people to attend a conference, unless we have something specific we can contribute and get a return from our investment. It's a give-and-take. For me, it's about research. It's the knowledge, and it's also the community—to me, the value is the same. Also I consider, 'What can I learn here to bring back to my client?' Kuala Lumpur was a very successful event."

Architect Calvin Luk, from Hong Kong, shared that when he saw the heading *Design & Health* on the website, "That was the light at the end of the tunnel for me. Three very simple words, but they fit exactly what I'd been searching for. I attended the congress for the next three years. The Kuala Lumpur event was mind-blowing. It was the best, with the best mix of people. The venue was fabulous and matched the theme very well—because it had a huge expanse of green in front, and picturesque twin towers. But the most important thing was the quantity of knowledge and expertise, and the *vision* of IADH—which was what I'd been searching for."

Annik Sloommaekra, a Belgian architect who works in China, had this to say: “We were really blown away by the salutogenic concept. I think the whole way of thinking—focusing on disease prevention and then on healing—was novel for me. Being based in China, the traditional Chinese medicine system and way of thinking is so similar. But you don’t hear about this often in the marketplace, especially in the United States; healthcare is a business there.

“It was the salutogenic aspect that stood out for me, as well as the way Alan carries himself. His first speech was very sage. He was passionate, yet so straightforward. He’s not just making up pretty ideas. After that, we were hooked.”

9. Australia: 9th Design & Health World Congress: Melbourne and Brisbane, 2013

Australia is a country that is open to everything. These people wanted to apply all the knowledge.—A.D.

A series of circumstances and steps that would lead, ultimately, to the 9th Design & Health World Congress in Brisbane began with contacts and invitations in Melbourne. There, in March 2013, Alan lectured at the Melbourne School of Design with support from Lyons Architects, enthusiastic proponents for increasing the focus on healthcare and hospital facility design. Alan Pert, the director of the Melbourne School of Design, reviewed Alan's lecture in Melbourne in *Australian Design Review*.⁵¹

Alan, Pert noted, spoke on “the interdisciplinary application of architecture; design, engineering, medicine, public health policy, culture and psychosocial factors, which combined, are directly supporting improved health outcomes for society.”

Pert went on to share a little backstory: “In 2011 at the Design & Health International Academy Awards in Boston, a number of projects from Singapore and Australia were cited as new standard-bearers for health facility design. Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Singapore was awarded a double prize, with the Ballarat Acute Mental Health Facility in Australia by Billard Leece Partnership winning the Mental Health Design Award; high commendations were also awarded to the National Heart Centre in Singapore and the Brain and Mind Research Institute—Youth Mental Health Building in Sydney. All of these successes point to a very significant period of major health capital investment, with many new benchmark facilities across Australasia.”

Refocusing on Alan's current talk in Melbourne, Pert wrote: “Alan Dilani's talk as such reflects a growing interest in the work of practices and policy makers in Australasia but the conversation is so much greater than the need to improve the design of healthcare facilities. A preventative approach suggests a much broader understanding of societal needs and the changing patterns of everyday life in our cities but also across more remote and rural areas. Shifts in attitudes to health are now required as well as an understanding of the changing patterns of physical and mental well-being.

“Beyond the hospital walls we are seeing a changing landscape of spaces responding to changing societal needs and changing patterns of well-being. Cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory and liver disease might still be dominating hospital environments, but we are also witnessing the emergence of new building types and new technologies that respond to changing needs of patients, cares and medical services. We have access to a wealth of new information sources, new services, new ways of connecting with each other, and new ‘health apps’—applications—which are demanding a radical rethinking of our built environments and the buildings that support well-being.



Professor Alan Pert, director,
Melbourne School of Design

“As Professor Dilani points out through the Lancet report published in 2012, the health status of people living in Australasia is one of the highest in the world, with rising life expectancies. Australia is third in the report behind Spain and Italy. However, an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare study published in 2006 found the number of years Australians spent suffering from a disability was rising. ‘As people are living longer, they are living a greater part of their life with a disability,’ author Dr Xingyan Wen reported. Men could expect on average to experience 18.6 years of life with some disability, while for women the figure was 20.7 years. This suggests the region’s healthcare systems face similar challenges to the rest of the developed world, characterized by increasing cost pressures, an ageing population and a rise in the level of lifestyle diseases, most notably diabetes and obesity.

“In 2010 an intergenerational report projects that by 2050 the population will increase to 35.9 million Australians. But it also predicts that the proportion of Australians over 65 will grow to more than 20 percent of the population from 2.5 million to 7.1 million by 2050.

“These are frightening statistics and beyond the economic implications on healthcare and pensions. This data suggests there will need to be a radical rethinking of the built environment capable of serving the needs of this growing population who are less mobile. Professor Dilani does not discuss the specific challenges of population ageing but Philip Goad’s introduction to the talk at least acknowledges the work of Professor Brian Kidd, who has worked tirelessly in this area over a prolonged period. Brian is part of an interdisciplinary research group working on best-practice design guidelines for future aged care environments as part of a national initiative. The lecture hints at this much bigger issue, which will require a similar interdisciplinary approach to tackle the future shape of our homes, streets, neighborhoods, and public and civic spaces. We risk the burden of ill-health and dependency, as well as lost social and civic life that comes with social exclusion and the associated ill-health and withdrawal of older populations.

“Planning for an Aging Population is an area of growing concern, but it is a reality, which will require designers to consider more than just ramped access and a lift core if we are to fully embrace the

future and understand the spatial consequences of the published statistics. This is an area of research which requires innovative partnerships and creative solutions if we are to embrace Professor Dilani's 'holistic' approach and build on the previous work of people like Professor Brian Kidd. The [*Design & Health*] World Congress in Brisbane could be a perfect opportunity to expand on this global issue, as without adequate attention, opportunities for imaginative new developments will be left behind, with issues of environmental planning and climate change dominating discussions.

"Alan Dilani, at the end of his talk, dismisses 'evidence-based design' as a marketing opportunity but he agrees that we now have a unique opportunity to gather evidence from these recently completed projects, which can inform the future design of health-related facilities. There is also increasing pressure on architects to validate our work in the context of a more competitive and risk-averse construction industry. So, there remains a question over what architectural (design) evidence is but there can be no doubt about the important role research evidence can play in capturing the 'story' of these projects. There needs to be more dissemination of these projects and others and it needs to be unbiased, pointing out what works and what doesn't through post-occupancy evaluations. There is still not enough published research on the analytics that go into designing a space.

"Too often design is reduced to aesthetics within mainstream architectural press when attention given to decisions based on costs could go a long way to informing future decision making. Critical writing and design dissemination desperately needs new platforms for encouraging debate amongst practitioners, academics and health organizations and the Academy has an important role to play in this regard. If we consider that by the end of this decade we will be completing thousands more facilities across the globe—building, retrofitting, infilling, extending, demolishing for new and rapidly shifting purposes—then, just like the labs that inform clinical practice, we require new design 'labs' that will challenge not just practice but design teaching, research and the focus of research funding bodies."

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The Melbourne Symposium: Linking Global Perspective with Local Identity

Alan's goal of bringing together the best people in their field has always paved the way for ongoing communication among those who attend his seminars. Perhaps without realizing it, Alan has impacted many professionals' careers in ways that have opened new perspectives and avenues of research and work. The Melbourne Symposium brought together a group of professionals who found their work was connected. One of these was Australian public health scientist Anthony Capon, who discovered that these meetings allowed colleagues to share ideas and connect.

In his lecture in Melbourne Professor Capon said, "I've introduced others from my networks to the academy. When I was heading up the School of Public Health, one of my team members was employed in occupational therapy. She was working with an institution that provided residential care for people with dementia and was interested in the role of a fish farm in a particular village as a way of engaging residents. It was put up for an Academy Award.

"In these forums, people from industry and government engage, whereas at most academic events, you hardly see any people from industry or government. If they do come, they're only there for a session. Here it's essentially a community for practitioners, for policymakers to engage with scholars. But not all scholars are prepared to interface, since academics aren't necessarily rewarded for these sorts of events."

Looking back on his own experience, his colleague, American urban designer Mark Johnson, added: "I didn't really understand it until I spoke in Melbourne, where Tony and James Gross spoke, and Tony Capon and I paired, just like we did today in Hong Kong. I started to realize something—which caused me to then change how I was talking about this topic—that I had known for a very long time: that modern city planning has a directly negative impact on public health.

"To me, the symposium we had in Melbourne was a turning point in that, having been at seven congresses by now, I had enough history to identify this realization. I think it had to do with a variety of factors. One was certainly Australian architect James Gross and another architect Tony Capon, in particular.



Brisbane—a salutogenic city

“There was also a woman who is an architecture critic with a big city newspaper in Sydney who is very acerbic. Her explanation, as a critic of architecture, helped me understand Alan’s core premise: there’s *pathogen* and *salutogen*, and how do we bring these elements together? It’s city designs that are the petri dish where pathogens and Salutogenics come together. In fact, the public-health world focuses mostly on epidemiology and the statistics associated with it while the design world is the opposite of a data-driven world.

“In Melbourne, I started to see the alignment of the global set of issues and how those issues need to be interpreted with design in the making of systems and the making of places. The first two or three congresses were more heavily weighted toward the interior environments of clinical facilities. This is something you expect because in hospital design that has been a big issue for a long time. There’s been a lot of work on the clinical care environment, moving toward the well-being environment, and now toward the built world. I see this progression, and Melbourne was a turning point for my thinking on it.

“But having been to an earlier symposium, the first at which I participated as a speaker, I listened to what people were talking about. Then I started doing my own research, and when I came back the second time, I had added a lot more information. This was based on other studies that I related to my work in the design of cities. This progression has allowed me to articulate those things with my clients and with the communities I work with.

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“The environmental aspect became more important in the Toronto and Boston congresses. I was the only person talking about the *environment*. Then by Melbourne, I was not. Globally, I may have twenty competitors. But I’m the guy that’s all about issues. They’re all about beauty. I’m about the people.”

The 9th Design & Health World Congress: Brisbane, July 2013

Australia is a leader in the eastern Pacific region for Design & Health and delivery of international high-end standards—and the city of Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland, provides an excellent destination for conventions.—Alan Dilani, in his bid proposal submitted for the Brisbane Congress

“Brisbane was a fitting location for the 9th IADH Congress,” Alan said. “It’s one of the most beautiful cities in the world, being a very friendly city with sandy beaches, by the river, in the center of town. People in offices go out there at lunch time. I was amazed by this. It was a safe city. You felt this wherever you went. People are relaxed, without stress. Communication and everything is easy. You can travel by boat, bicycle, taxi, walking. Everything is available.”

Austrian architect Gunther De Graeve, who would be chosen to succeed Alan in IADH leadership, said of this choice: “The Congress was in Brisbane because Brisbane is a salutogenic city. It was the first time that we probably raised that term. When everyone was there, people said you are right, this is a salutogenic city and it’s a salutogenic environment, rather than a building or a hospital.” More than five hundred people attended the Brisbane congress, where the focus was on sustaining a healthy community, starting with the salutogenic approach in global health policies.

Australia’s Unique Architectural Accomplishments

Alan found Australia to be the most advanced country in the world politically, socially, and scientifically. He had asked most of his network, academics and decision makers in the country, to help in the creation of a book titled *Australian Healthcare Design*



At the congress inauguration, offering the Australian minister of health a book on Australian design

2000–2015, to illustrate the face of Australia and address the nation’s architectural accomplishments.

“What has this country done from 2000 to 2015?” Alan asked. “We published this book on Australia because of our congress. The first night, I offered it to the health minister. He didn’t know we’d prepared it. It was a complete surprise. The Australians sent it to several embassies, including China’s, to market the country by showing images of the health infrastructure.”

Preparing for the Congress

IADH held several workshops prior to the congress including a preparatory symposium entitled “Future Health Lab: Designing Our Future Health System and Infrastructure.” Describing the process that led up to the congress, Alan said, “The bidding committee—the committee from Australia asking for the congress to be held there—was composed of ten people and chaired by Gunther De Graeve, who was very committed and



Professor Ian Frazer

determined. They invited me to a meeting in Sydney. This marked the beginning of the Brisbane congress. The Health and Design Congress does facilitate the people in our network doing business with the government. These people shoulder all the preparation and logistics of hosting a congress, and they also derive benefit from the opportunities that arise. It's a win-win. We invite many clients; and for them, it's the best marketing."

The deliberation in this congress would focus mostly on "how to create a salutogenic society, inspired by city planning infrastructure and a stress-reducing society," Alan shared. "We are now working more on global health policies—how governments should apply salutogenic design. Australia was already so well informed about this, urging us to have the congress in their country.

A Scientific Advocate

"There I met Professor Ian Frazer, a renowned scientist and a very humble and knowledgeable person, who invented the vaccine against cervical cancer. He was named a Companion of the Order of Australia, established by Queen Elizabeth to recognize Australian citizens of meritorious service. He mentioned that our work was important because we were working to create a context for a healthy society. They had just completed construction on their beautiful and immense research center." Frazer told Alan and his colleagues, "What we are working on is to cure diseases. These two things are very different. Your task is important for us."

Alan invited Frazer to the congress. To this invitation, Frazer responded, "Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity. Because I've been waiting for this. It's about time that you all actually act on this, as in your industry [of health-related design] thirty percent of the problems are related to biological factors. Leave that to us. That's what we are here for. We will sort that out. But the other seventy percent is yours and related to the built environment. There is absolutely nothing I can do about that. If you guys won't do it, we need to keep coming up with Band-Aids but that's all it is . . . just Band-Aids. I can't win this war on my own. Nor can we. It's you who need to start lifting and taking responsibility."

Presenting IADH to Australia

“The officials in Sydney created an impressive PowerPoint presentation on Design & Health,” Alan reported. “It was held in a large restaurant with representatives from several companies in attendance, as well as government officials and professors from several universities. The whole meeting was professional and elegant. In these forums, the level of intellectual interaction with government, industry, and educational institutions contributed to the sponsors’ respect for the academy.”

Gunther De Graeve shared, “I came up with the idea of organizing a congress in Australia. That wasn’t clear-cut for the academy, because it was a very long way for people to come. We weren’t sure it was going to be economically viable, and it might be extremely risky.

“But we put together an official bid and I mobilized the industry and politicians. We had letters of support from the prime minister and many other officials. We created a bid fund, and this helped to offset the cost of organizing the congress, which was wonderful.

“Then we mobilized the industry. Australia is very competitive internally. We got together as an industry and came out to the rest of the globe as a capable Australian venue for the rest of the world. That brought all of us together as well. If you bring people together in that way, you can achieve an enormous amount. You create political momentum. That sends an enormous political message if an industry is in alignment rather than presenting as heaps of individual voices.”

Seeing the academy provided with all the facilities and a generous sponsorship to which the Queensland state government and city contributed, Alan readily accepted. “I am honored and speechless regarding your hospitality toward us,” Alan said. “I will write to the IADH board and get back to you in a few days.”

Brisbane Congress Organized and Confirmed

De Graeve continued, “I’d come to really think that we hadn’t taken up our responsibility as a profession, and this [Australia’s enthusiastic invitation] motivated us to bring the congress to Australia. All the people in design professions should have salutogenic factors and outlook embedded in what they do. If you look at architecture, we’re all following the same principles that were written down by Vitruvius. He says three things: Architecture needs to be structurally sound. It needs to be aesthetically pleasing. It needs to be functionally efficient. What he’s not saying and doesn’t talk about is the idea of regulations or standards that could prevent you from making a piece of architecture or design or equipment through which you might cause harm. When you really think about it, that’s astonishing that we haven’t stood up against such a possibility of harm through design. We can actively design something, use materials, and we can harm your health—and you’re on your own with it.

“The second thing is we can’t even measure it—whether something is salutogenic or not. We can’t even calculate or define it. A lot of people are saying, ‘I’ve done something salutogenic.’ And you



Gunther De Graeve

feel in your belly, ‘That’s right. That’s salutogenic.’ But how salutogenic is it? Nobody knows. How much is it to that ‘no harm’ point? You can’t calculate it. In the design industry, we are two hundred years back in the past. We haven’t evolved at all. We’re using fancy technology. But has our architecture achieved it? Nothing. We’re still doing things the same way. That’s why this work is so important.”

Alan Starts In to Work with the Australian Team

As soon as the congress was confirmed, Alan began working with the team. Preparation included adding to the development of a book focused on design in hospitals in Australia during the years 2000–2015, to be given to the health minister during the congress.

“The next time I returned to Australia,” Alan said, “I visited all six states in the country and met with government policymakers and industry in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, and Canberra. In Brisbane, I found the minister of health, Lawrence Springborg, to be a focused, knowledgeable politician who wanted to address healthcare by working on primary care. The minister’s advisor



Laurence Springborg, Australia, Queensland health minister

listened attentively and understood the importance of our work. Though he didn't utter a word, I understood he was the right person to provide all the scientific information to his boss.

"In my subsequent trip, we held a workshop with Minister Springborg and the industry to discuss how to incorporate salutogenic and primary care into their health policy. I brought the same message to the central government in Canberra.

"This meeting was more government focused and they were very engaged. We opened the first session with a very powerful discussion and the minister contributed a great deal. Then Ian Frazer spoke about the scientific aspect and how to apply such research to reality. We call applied research *transitional*. It was effective to see the interdisciplinary aspect in action.

Brisbane Congress Exhibitions

More than five hundred delegates attended the Brisbane Design & Health World Congress. The sponsors organized the logistics, hospitality, music, and all the program details. It was very polished, and the exhibition gallery was fully booked in advance.

“In the beginning, we had many exhibition booths from the industrial arena,” Alan explained. “There were even more from the Australian industry than at any congress we had ever held. In total, there were around fifty. However, there were not many government exhibition booths. Some did come from Brisbane, but it was not financially viable for other county governments to participate. Every county, every state was represented. Most were from Queensland.

“In Malaysia, we’d seen exhibition booths from all the countries attending. But in Australia, they didn’t have the money for this. Given the election that had just happened, the government did not provide a budget for them. We couldn’t let them come for free because they felt it was unethical. They are very correct, very respectful.”

The Brisbane Congress: Addressing Challenges to Health and Healthcare

The Australian Hospital Health Care Bulletin cited the congress as the first time Australia had hosted a “leading edge scientific program to underpin the future of professional practice in health promotion by design.” The congress was recognized as “an opportunity to not only showcase the latest Australian research, projects and experts in health design, but to learn and be inspired by international contributors.” The *Bulletin* cited the congress’s organization in “partnership with state health departments and supported by renowned academic institutions and health industries worldwide.”⁵²

Reviewing the challenges to be addressed, Alan wrote, “In recognition that a healthy population is the foundation for social development and economic growth, Australasia is undergoing a policy shift that is addressing the need to redesign its health systems and to embrace health promotion and embed a preventative approach based on better education and research. At the same time the region is enjoying a period of major health capital investment, with many new benchmark facilities recently opening or due for completion.”⁵³

For his part, Alan spoke about the ways governments can apply salutogenic design as a tool. “I mentioned in Brisbane that my task now is to work with several governments. I have brought the principle of salutogenic health policy to the Swedish Parliament—introduced it as legislation. People at the Brisbane congress asked, ‘Where is the legislator here in the audience? We have no legislator, no other ministers. This is not only the task of the health minister but also of the education and planning ministers. How does the interdisciplinary connection between various ministers work, since they are the policymakers?’

“Lawrence Springborg acknowledged IADH. Lawrence was a very humble person and listened carefully, staying all day with us.” Alan’s focus on government policy had begun to some extent in Malaysia, yet in Kuala Lumpur he did not feel he had adequate support from policymakers, government, and ministers. “In Australia,” he said, by contrast, “we were able to apply the principles because people were open and informed.

“Australian officials wanted to learn how to apply the knowledge. It was the first time we have seen ministers participating to this degree—and during the coffee breaks, there was ongoing dialogue with the delegates. That gave me great understanding about the way this country runs. I also met the president of the Parliament in Brisbane and many other politicians.”

There was a major shift in the congress message in Brisbane. “The shift was away from a focus on hospitals and primary care to a broader view of society, to health policy and infrastructure. All of this became crystal clear in Brisbane,” Alan said.

“That was the theme we chose for Australia because Brisbane was interested in exploring society, healthy infrastructure, and innovation. Innovation comes up much of the time and here the approach was prominently interdisciplinary. I made several trips there and lectured at different universities and was always inspired during these sessions. As I traveled, I made sure to get exercise and stay fit. So I felt very good and this energized me to give the best presentation.”

High-level, Clear Communication in Australia

“In Australia, communication with the audience was great, and of extremely good quality. I always focus on the audience and their interest: what do they need, and what’s their interest? For example, I cannot go to Africa and think about Sweden. I go to Africa to speak about their problems and how this knowledge can be implemented in that place. I’ve always had the approach of bringing together a global perspective with local identity. I constantly ask myself: What knowledge can I bring, based on the global scientific approach? How can I adjust and adapt it to the condition and culture of the particular country? These were powerful questions that led to compelling presentations in Australia.”

“I also gave lectures for the industry and they became corporate members, corporate sponsors and partners for the congress. That was their contribution. Everyone said they want less stress and a stress-free country. In Australia, people do not worry, and this creates a societal policy for them. People feel safe, compared to

The shift was away from a focus on hospitals and primary care to a broader view of society, to health policy and infrastructure.

the United States, where people work very hard, but they have no safety net and only two weeks of holiday per year,” Alan commented.

“Australian society was an ideal society. It’s a dynamic country where you find people interested in absolutely anything you share with them—culture, politics, everything. They feel good about themselves and where they live; that is the focus, and everyone supports each other in this worldview. I never witnessed this in Scandinavia. The only drawback about Australia is that it’s so far away from other places that I could not live there. I can only travel there once a year,” Alan concluded.

A Colleague’s Perspectives on the Congress

Austrian architect Albert Wimmer had been following the papers presented at the congresses online. He had received an award for a project at the Australian congress. “The reason we came to Australia was very explicit,” he explained. “We were following up on the paper. I knew there was a big hospital in Adelaide that had been like Karolinska—its building process took as long as building at Karolinska had taken.

“Australia is the most open place in terms of development. From the political and economic points of view, it was possible to get a picture of the whole country and society at any congress. You learn about the operational, planning, and implementation side, how things are being done and why.

“In terms of networking, all my expectations have been fulfilled. It’s a very open organization and very interdisciplinary,” Wimmer added.

10. New Zealand: Wellington and Christchurch, 2013

Topic focuses in New Zealand were science, research, and innovation in design and development of the built environment for hospitals, schools, and workplaces, and public and urban spaces. All these must be included in policies and implementation by national governments in the effort to create a healthier society.

“In 2013, one year after the earthquake in New Zealand, I was invited by the University of Canterbury’s Faculty of Public Health Sciences in Christchurch and by Massey University in Wellington to give several lectures. I also met with government officials. The university visits were organized very well and there was a good turnout, with media coverage. In the two days I was there, the reportage went very well,” Alan said.

“I was happy to be able visit New Zealand because it is a very progressive society; the principles of IADH were readily received and they had a hospital project. I spoke about interdisciplinary culture and public health, and lectured at the medical branch of Massey University. Many professors from other fields and universities attended. I left with the distinct impression that this is an advanced country whose citizens are actively engaged, compared to other nations. The common level of science in New Zealand was palpable. So I was in Australia for forty days and in New Zealand for two. I combined this visit with meetings in Singapore.”

A press release announced Alan’s presentations in Wellington and Christchurch, stating that he would present his latest findings about the impact of the physical environment on human health and well-being. Government municipal and health departments, universities, health providers, and industry were invited to the discussion on how science, research, and innovation could drive the development of healthcare and city infrastructure in their country.

Discussion focused on how to plan the city, workplaces, healthcare facilities, schools, and public institutions to support human health and well-being; how to implement research-based design to promote health and wellness; and how to embed science and innovation in the creation of healthy built environments.

11. Canada: 10th Design & Health World Congress: Toronto, 2014

The Toronto World Congress was organized in partnership with the Ministry for Research and Innovation, the University of Toronto, the Canadian Urban Institute, and other leading universities and private industries. Events there included a pre-congress symposium entitled “Healthy Cities 2013: Reshaping the Supply Chain to Improve Health and Quality of Life.” Also featured was a panel discussion with Canada’s ministers of health and of research and innovation, and participants representing the health ministries from South Africa, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and Vietnam.

“We were invited to return to Montreal, to network and bring the congress back to Canada,” Alan recalled. “Before deciding, we wanted to explore several other cities. However, I found Toronto the most attractive location for the congress because most of our network members lived there, both corporate members and several interested universities. Plus, it was centrally located. The most suitable venue was the Fairmont Hotel. Even while it was old-fashioned in terms of design, it was very elegant.

“An election had just taken place and a new government had come in, creating a huge impact on the city. So while we had originally expected seven hundred attendees, we had to reduce the number of delegates to around four hundred, because the Ontario government had pulled out. In the end, we had a crowd of four hundred and fifty with more than forty exhibition booths.”

Focus of the Toronto Congress

Alan concentrated congress focus on healthy policy, infrastructure, and cities—all three resonated strongly as themes, along with the corollary of healthy city design in North America. The congress also delved into the impact of healthcare upon urban planning, including innovation in healthcare.

Canada, like other publicly funded nationwide healthcare systems, had strong and advanced healthcare, with several innovative hospitals. IADH drew upon Canadian case studies, and congress discussions centered on the role of government. Several Canadian ministers held a panel that included policymakers. Delegate response saw this as a great approach for Toronto, that salutogenic design provided a strong framework to organize a healthcare building policy.

For architect Mark Johnson, the keynote of the Toronto congress was breadth of focus: If Brisbane’s key takeaway was “the salutogenic city or neighborhood, Canada took it to the next level: How do we plan for entire regions to be salutogenic?”



Ministerial panel discussion at the 10th World Congress in Toronto



Dr. Reza Moridi, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation

“That interlinking is where you really start,” he added. “For example, Richard Jackson, he will ask you: ‘Give me your zip code, and I’ll tell you how long you’re going to live.’ In the Toronto congress, it was that kind of thing that really came to the forefront. There was a lot of evidence. I remember one presentation in Canada where they had changed something in the transport system, which

brought in the importance of urban design—the planning system about road access, cars, where we drive, where we don't drive, where we put the school. There had been an intervention—I think it was in Montreal—where they actually saw for the first time that as a result, the diabetes level was starting to come down, to retract. There you go! We all felt it!”

Kurdish Contacts in Toronto

Often during congresses and in the process of laying the groundwork for them, Alan would invite local Kurdish colleagues and friends from the past. The work of many past associates currently intersected with his own and they had much to discuss. As the congresses developed, these forums became increasingly international, with attendees from a wide variety of countries.

“In Toronto, we met the minister of research and innovation, Dr. Raza Moridi,” Alan recalled. “Now everywhere I go, I discuss relevant topics with local Kurds. For example, Dr. Moridi invited us to Parliament to meet with him and Jamil Mardukhi, engineer of the CN Tower in Toronto.”

“Moridi mentioned that his brother is now living in Sweden and as an atomic physicist has become the minister of research and innovation there. He reiterated his support and strongly encouraged us to come to Toronto. As often happens prior to selecting a congress location, I still had not decided, but was weighing various possibilities.

“Minister Moridi offered official government support. Network, industry, and government support enhances the event in many ways. During the decision-making process for the congress, I helped to produce a video interview with Amir Hassanpour, a renowned Kurdish scholar in Toronto. I also gave a lecture for the Kurdish community.

“My Toronto talk focused on exemplifying salutogenic design with all kinds of facilities, including school environments. This was to concretize and make explicit principles of salutogenic design in the built environments of cities.

“I spoke about comparing two types of healthcare societies in the world that have public funding—Canada and Australia—with countries that have private healthcare, like America. I encouraged a new approach to show the world that the publicly funding healthcare system ends up being more robust, rational, reasonable, and scientific.”

One point Alan particularly emphasized: “The government should pay attention if you get sick. This is the task of the government; it is not the task of private organizations who commercialize disease. Sickness should not be a source of business with the patient becoming ill-cared-for due to the lack of government services. Or because people, owing to their economic status, live in a disadvantaged environment or lack the information to keep themselves healthy. This was my main message: Salutogenic design can be implemented with public funding to demonstrate and move toward a healthier society.”

Basically, we moved from the symptoms to the causes of a problem, while still looking at healthcare.

Participant Perspectives

For Australian architect Nicola Bertrand, “Attending these events was important because I could see what’s happening, gain knowledge from around the globe, and find out who’s doing what. I want to see what is being developed: What is the research? How is the research being applied in a commercial environment? I feel very strongly that if research can’t be applied in a commercial environment, it’s useless. There are research papers and it might take a couple of years for them to see the light of day. That’s the reality with actualizing new things.”

For her, the congress now has a more holistic view of healthcare, “like on a city-planning, public-health level. For example, how do we reshape cities like Toronto? Last year was amazing—with a pre-congress symposium the day before the congress that was about city planning. How do we reshape cities, for example, so people perform more physical movement, to fight obesity and the health issues that emerge? We go straight to the core problem and try to get everyone in the room to think about it. How can the future be shaped? Basically, we moved from the symptoms to the causes of a problem, while still looking at healthcare.

“Attending the congresses, I made great connections within the industry. I think it’s such a lovely environment. The Academy for Design and Health is not a stiff environment. People are very open, easy to approach and quite friendly. I found it easy to stay in contact afterward with the people I met.

“The key points are always inspirational through the presentations, and they zoom out of the micro into the bigger picture. I think that’s something this conference does well. It’s a realistic and holistic picture of health and I think this has been developed over the years.

“Alan’s talk is great for newcomers because there are always many of them, as we saw for example in Hong Kong. It gives them the basics, the foundational aspects of Salutogenics. Also, a lot of people have never heard of the IADH, so for them, it’s a new and important contact.”



Architect Nicola Bertrand



Roderick Lawrence

A Shift in the Congress and the Direction of the Academy

Swiss scholar Roderick Lawrence noted a shift between Boston and Hong Kong in the direction and interest of the IADH. “The first day of this conference marked a shift for me because it was strongly focused on the urban environment and urban health challenges. These were related to important trends at the international level, including the goal of sustainable development,” he explained.

“I came as a speaker to each of the congresses, and my main concern was how we develop stronger relationships between the research community, practitioners, and the basic stakeholders, including users. I feel that these relationships are not well defined in many agendas. But they should be omnipresent in the definition of the built environment for promoting health and quality of life.

“I think we have people presenting individual projects, and I think there has to be a shift to more transdisciplinary contributions. We saw some very interesting examples from Mark Johnson’s work in the Bronx to Albert Wimmer’s presentation on the redesign of a hospital in Vienna today. These for me are beacons for change that should become mainstream in the future. I don’t have the magic wand that enables us to make that shift, but I think it’s a very important goal for the academy to reach for.”

12. China: Beijing Symposium, 2014, and New Initiatives in China and Vietnam, 2018

China has one of the longest recorded histories of the practice of medicine of any civilization. Rooted in ancient Chinese philosophy, the methods and theories of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) date back over twenty-five hundred years. It is a unique system of medical theory focused on holistic approaches to disease prevention and health preservation that are complementary to modern salutogenic approaches to health promotion. In the past hundred and fifty years, Western medical theory and practice, based on the pathogenic approach to the diagnosis and treatment of disease, became dominant in developed countries, and subsequently began to influence medical practice in China too.

Beijing Symposium and Conference in Hong Kong

“IADH delegates and corporate members had been engaged actively with business in China,” Alan said. “They wanted us to go there and I agreed. I contacted the universities and was invited to offer lectures at several universities. To test the location before launching a congress, the initial symposiums are vital. The symposium in China was conducted in November 2014 in Beijing.

“This was the only symposium we held in China in 2014, and though there weren’t many speakers it was successful. Instead, I created a more relaxing environment with more time for discussion; that allowed for more involvement. It was held in the beautiful Marco Polo Hotel Beijing. It was enjoyable and reflective. Since I knew the subject, to discuss the vision of a healthy society in China in 2020 from a salutogenic and global perspective I invited the relevant participants. Increasingly I’m discussing the application of these topics in each symposium from a broad perspective.

“During my talk, I spoke about healthy cities and research-based design. the symposium had to start from education because their research for these areas is not extensive. In China, the main concern is the aging population. We tackled the following issues—aging population, research-based design, salutogenic global health and health infrastructure, art, and science. This kind of approach was very welcomed as they have never had this type of symposium. People said they were all happy to be there.

“The researchers in China had scanty understanding of these issues because they are unfamiliar with them. The problem is the language. They don’t speak English and all the knowledge publicly available is in English. In addition, I was told the government needed to know the names of all the speakers in advance. All their talks had to be translated beforehand. Everyone was required to send



The Beijing Symposium

a CV of their background and no one from Taiwan was allowed. Participants needed to pay a hundred and fifty dollars for a visa.”

After analyzing the logistical and cultural difficulties to get the congress to happen in Shanghai, Alan decided it was best to hold it in Hong Kong. “Hong Kong architect Vivian Mak arranged everything. In December, I went ahead and announced that the congress would be in Hong Kong. Then I called for papers and abstracts.” Preparation for the congress in Hong Kong would finally bear fruit the next year, in 2015.

Participant Perspectives

Gloria Ma, a doctoral candidate who attended a conference on elderly care Alan convened at Hong Kong’s Chen Yu Tung building in May of 2015, prior to the Hong Kong congress, expressed her gratitude to him in a letter. She spoke of his kindness, his mentoring, and the invitation he extended to her for the lecture and meetings. “I have been enthusiastic about architecture and well-being since I was small, probably because



Alan with Health Minister Mr. Chen Xiao- Hong

of my life experience and participation in advocacy many years ago,” she said. “That’s why I’m determined to take it as my main research goal and area of expertise.”

New Endeavors in China and Vietnam, 2018: Meeting with the Health Minister of China

Following the 2014 symposium in Beijing, Alan visited China several times for a number of conferences. Recently he was invited by the University of Beijing as the keynote speaker for the China Hospital Construction and Development Conference held April 20–23, 2018. His speech was very well received and after the conference, he was invited by the health minister of China, Mr. Chen Xiao-Hong, to his Beijing office for more discussion.

Alan later shared: “I discussed a possible new health policy for China—mainly about the built environment’s impact on their citizens’ health. The other timely topic concerned ways to develop strong primary healthcare that could prevent lifestyle-related diseases. After a comprehensive lecture on these subjects, I was invited by the minister of health to be government advisor to work more closely with their country—applying salutogenic architecture within many levels of Chinese society.”

Minister Chen Xiao-Hong asked Alan, “Where you have been these past ten years? We have been searching for a person like you, to establish a future health vision for our country by 2030.”



Alan during the workshop with Vietnamese minister of health in Hanoi

“It is never too late to revise such a vision!” Alan responded. He is not a businessman, he added, but does consider himself a visionary scientist who wants to have the maximum impact upon the world and is happy to contribute his knowledge to China.

Vietnam

Alan has also visited Vietnam several times and worked closely with Health Minister Dr. Pham Le Tuan arranging a workshop supported by the World Health Organization on health policies and infrastructure. As part of this project, Alan visited rural areas and emphasized the role of strong primary care for prevention and the promotion of health. Vietnam is a very interesting country because they are in the midst of immense economic development, as well as developing nationwide healthcare structure to care for the considerable elder population who suffered greatly during America’s conduct of the Vietnam War during the 1970s.

13. Hong Kong: 11th Design & Health World Congress: Hong Kong, 2015

The 11th Design & Health World Congress was held in July 2015 in Hong Kong with support from leading academic institutions and healthcare industries worldwide. It received strong support as well from the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and in pre-congress events engaged its departments of Architectural Services, Housing, Health, and the Hospital Authority. In addition to participants from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, the congress included Dr. Ko Wing-man, secretary for the department of Food and Health; Professor E. K. Yeoh, former secretary for Health, Welfare, and Food; Dr. Massoud Shaker, South Africa's minister of health; Vietnam's deputy health minister Professor Pham Le Tuan; and Dr. Ken Yeang, developer of the field of ecological architecture.

Pre-Congress Events

“Since there was a limited time before the congress,” Alan reported, “I visited many towns near Hong Kong. Every time I gave a lecture at a university or industry, I was accompanied by Vivian Mak. She had tremendous knowledge and was committed. Vivian sent many emails per day and introduced us to key people. Her husband is an architect and they work in the same office. His field is housing and hers is healthcare design. She is also a very gracious person with wonderful manners.

“She inspired me and worked very hard. On a return trip, I brought James Barlow, president of IADH, to visit Hong Kong with me. We met with one of the main directors of the firm P&T, where Vivian Mak worked, said who said, ‘We support you. This work is very important.’ They agreed to work with us immediately and gave us thirty-two thousand in HKD. ‘We also support you intellectually,’ he told me.

“We created a network and we trusted Vivian from the start. When colleagues are supportive and there is understanding between you, trust develops right away. When I trust someone, I give them everything. The work flourishes and I become very intrigued about where things are headed. I liked what happened with Vivian. She had some good ideas. When I had a question, I would call her immediately and we would find a solution.

“The brochure we printed for the event was very interesting to them, since the topic of the symposium was geared to the government. I was fully booked for the whole trip. During one of my last trips to the university, I suggested we have a future symposium there and invite some of our corporate members. I also recommended we invite some people from the government. That symposium went very well. It was entitled ‘Supportive Environment for the Elderly with Dementia.’ They had



Speakers on Elderly Care in Hong Kong

wanted to call it ‘Healing Environment’ and I disagreed because elderly people, I said, are not sick. I always work carefully with the wording of these workshop and research definitions.

“I met Dr Stanley Tam, a specialist in geriatric medicine. He was interested in our approach. When I organized a program focused on the elderly, he attended with interest. We had a three-and-a-half-hour symposium with a hundred and eighty people that was very fruitful. This led to us speaking at another university.

“From my experience, I realized that the Chinese in Hong Kong were economically driven in a limiting way. They are sophisticated and efficient, but their financial mentality is very ‘Chinese’: they are very driven to achieve their business goals. They want to acquire your knowledge for nothing. That was clear.”

The Hong Kong Congress and Its Key Message

The Hong Kong congress was held in the Hotel Crowne Plaza Kowloon East, far from the city center. There were three hundred delegates and twenty-one exhibitions. Five of the IADH’s primary partners were there. There was equally good support from Australia because corporate members and several students attended, as well as colleagues from the United States.



With Dr. Ko Wing-man, Hong Kong minister of health, at the congress

Charlie, the multimedia tech for the congress, had an interesting perspective on the event. “Having the hotel venue far away from the city could have affected the attendance overall,” he reported. “One Australian woman said she was disappointed in Hong Kong because the locals were not networking. It was the first time she had that experience. Some of the high-end speakers came, gave their presentations and left—spending only minutes there. People in Hong Kong have so much to do. They didn’t have time to give time and focus to a visiting conference. I remember people being distracted, sitting and working on their tablets constantly.”

“The key message of the Congress,” Alan said, “was to promote the role of design to support creating a healthy society. The twentieth-century dominance of the medical and pharmaceutical industry has led to a commercialization of sickness that we can no longer afford.

“We must now look for ways to ‘commercialize’ better health and explore how the designed environment can facilitate healthier lifestyle choices. Global health systems are seeking ways to address the new century’s challenges of chronic disease, aging populations, and rising healthcare costs. The congress explored a new paradigm that focused on the impact by the physical

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Congress session chaired by Professor Innocent Okpanum

environment and our lifestyle choices in the prevention of disease and the promotion of health. Therefore, we need new ways to design salutogenic hospitals that operate more on prevention and on health promotion.”

The congress opened with a speech by Hong Kong’s minister of health, Dr. Ko Wing-man, followed by keynote speeches from global experts from both academia and industry on the latest research findings and their application.

Highlights of the Congress

“The first morning, people were very impacted by the discussion about the challenges worldwide: the necessity for clean air, clean land, and clean water. These are the main resources of our planet and we must start from there. They are foundational principles to create a salutogenic, healthy society. If you don’t have them, you cannot even begin to build structures that are salutogenic,” Alan remarked.

“Mark Johnson and Anthony Capon spoke about healthy urban planning, healthy spaces, and healthy cities. The challenges for Hong Kong, the health of its population, depend on many factors. This was apparent in our discussion. The day before, we talked about the problems in Hong Kong, debating pressing challenges and finalizing the session with a presentation by Ken Yeang. The

congress showed that it's possible to address these factors; knowledge and the interpretation of ecological design can address this very clearly.

“The second day, the congress moved to global challenges in Africa, Australia, and India. People loved that session. Why? Because no matter where people live—in Australia, in Africa or India—the same problems are present. Human beings need exposure to salutogenic environments to encourage better health for all. The outcome is the same through different cultures. This reality is based on the science of Salutogenics and the factors that contribute to making people healthy.

“One participant spoke about acupuncture, another about Ayurveda, and someone else about practicing meditation and yoga for health. The Indian delegates spoke about low-cost healthcare. Salutogenic means ‘what makes people healthy’ no matter what city, nation, or culture is being referred to—and discussions centered around how to adjust cultures to these principles. It was important to note the ways each culture addressed different approaches. This generated ideas for other participants.

“Later we discussed the challenges of the elderly, the problems of aging populations. We finished up with brilliant research about diversity and the brain. A speaker from Tasmania, David A. Techau, discussed the neuroscience of architecture and showed how we can design offices to augment the brain's capacity for productivity. Another speaker, Debajyoti Pati of Texas Tech University, demonstrated how certain designs enhance brain activity. Pati won three IADH Academy Awards.”

The Hong Kong Congress, Alan felt, “crystallized the direction of Salutogenics toward a healthy society, what it means to have a healthy city with good urban planning, healthy workplaces, and care for the elderly. I felt the last twenty years of work with salutogenic design were summarized in this congress very clearly—with evidence and science.”

IADH Evolution from Hospitals Toward Society

The evolution from a focus on hospitals to a view of society more broadly has been a steady development in IADH. “Where before we were looking at sick patients, now we are dealing with whole societies that are sick,” Alan explained. “The emphasis has shifted from the patient to the whole society. From a sick patient to a sick society. The entire society has now become the patient. This was the conclusion we reached in Hong Kong.

“Hong Kong government's Architectural Service Department was very involved. They benefited a great deal from hearing the different lectures. They had brought their best people and now they have the videos of the whole congress that they can continue to draw upon.”

Another outcome of the congress was that Hong Kong architect Vivien Mak had become a key person for IADH. “She is a passionate person and can grow a lot in the global arena,” Alan mused. “I think she will contribute to the academy and can become one of the leaders in the future from that area.”



Vivien Mak at the congress



Designer Natalie Walsh at the congress

Participant Perspectives

Architect Mark Johnson considers what Alan has done as “extremely impressive if you look at the quality of what we’ve seen today in Hong Kong. There were only a couple of presentations that did not connect clearly to the whole, which is very good. That is an excellent indicator that his idea about connecting design and health around wellness is widely relevant. And the promotion of public *health*, as opposed to the prevention of disease, is moving in the right direction.”

Australian interior designer Natalie Walsh came to the congress after accessing the journal for her university research. She contacted Alan and they established an ongoing communication. She finally got to meet him in Hong Kong.

“I’m an interior designer, but I have a background in clinical and academic healthcare. I first read *World Health Design* in 2012. With my academic background, I was looking for journals with substance and I thought this one really stood out. I particularly valued the European perspective that the journal offered.

“This is my first IADH congress. I just graduated from my design degree in 2014. I had contacts in Sydney but wanted to expand; I wanted to fast-track my career in healthcare design. I was absolutely astounded at how encouraging Alan was from the start. Within a few days, we were on Skype. I was very excited by his response, interest, and enthusiasm.

“I feel very fortunate to be a part of this congress. It’s an unusual mixture of academic and industry approaches—and I really like the hints of transdisciplinary approaches. That is the way forward to innovation and providing answers to very complex problems which healthcare definitely presents.



Architect Angela Lee at the congress



Designer Kate Okrnaski at the congress

It's extremely valuable to be up to date with emerging trends alongside industry partners . . . If you're marketing yourself to future clients, you embrace the right approaches, too," she concluded.

For American architect Angela Lee, "This conference has been an opportunity to hear from the academic world at this level. I've heard things that I'm interested in from people who are taking deep, deep dives into those topics. It's an opportunity to explore a range of subjects from a range of perspectives—from that of population health to an economic perspective.

"This is not information we typically have access to. It takes a lot of digging to get reports and journals that are published from proceedings like this. So it's great to hear it firsthand. Then to be able to walk up to an author and actually talk to them, get their business card, is incredible. It's exciting to think about the synergy that's created—and that you could potentially collaborate with them in the future."

American-born Kate Okrnaski, who lives in the Netherlands, found about the conference through the call for papers. Having done her master's research in global health, she specialized in rehabilitation design and how to involve patient participation in healthcare design. "This is my first international opportunity to share my research. I was looking for opportunities to publish because I'm transdisciplinary. My research doesn't sit in one institution. I looked into presenting and found out about the congress online, while looking for publishing possibilities in healthcare and design. Those were two nice code words prominent throughout the IADH website."

Guy Perry, from AECOM Technology Corporation—an American multinational engineering firm that provides broad-based design, consulting, construction and management services, and that was



Guy Perry at the congress



Architect Nicola Bertrand and writer Carol Prunhuber

a corporate sponsor of the congress—offered a practical, professional perspective. “This is a really worthwhile subject, an intersection of two themes which I think are critical as to how we design in the future. What I really appreciate is the breadth of angles that are brought in together. I think it’s so important that we’re looking at not just individual buildings or individual rooms. Here we saw some eloquent presentations about those issues. But we can also take this to the level of the city or the level of the planet. These aspects are all interrelated and that’s what I’m most satisfied with.

“I’m learning about details that I wouldn’t know otherwise... I’m used to a world where maybe you’re going to get at best maybe ninety percent of the pieces and you need to make decisions anyway. In places like India that are going through unprecedented growth—as China did in the last decade—decisions must be made now.

“Forums like this provide a way of aggregating quite a bit of relevant data. I’m not saying it’s all you need to be able to produce a new urban environment or a new building. But at least it elevates your awareness of the issues and will probably have a positive impact in creating something more sustainable in the health dimension...

“For me, the plot is people’s well-being while they exist on this planet. Whatever your belief in what’s going to happen later, we still have to deal with how people exist here and now. For me, the key criterion is: Do you feel good about being here? Do you feel good about your life? Are you healthy? Are you surrounded by a community that’s supportive? Are you feeling like you’re contributing? And that can happen whether you’re in a room or in the city.”

Patricia Tzortzopoulos, professor of architecture at the University of Huddersfield, UK, found the congress to be enlightening. “They paint the big picture and are basically describing the main



Final panel discussion with ministers and academics, July 18, 2015

niches that I think everybody should be looking at, everyone who is working around design and health. It's great to have the IADH as a vehicle to actually spread those very good ideas, because this is one of the problems in architecture."

For her the sense of community in the congress is essential. "I think providing the environment where these ideas are shared and then cross-fertilizing those ideas will give people different insights to similar problems."

The 11th Design & Health World Congress concluded with the inspiring message that a holistic view of the broader topic of health was needed by more entities than just the healthcare industry. Active input by policymakers, city planners, and urban designers is essential to create healthier societies, with a lower burden of lifestyle diseases. Individual congress sessions clearly showed the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to understand the impact of the city and the urban environment on our health and well-being. The congress culminated with an insightful panel on how to create healthy societies for the twenty-first century.

IADH president James Barlow requested evaluation and feedback from all congress participants. "I had very good responses from our corporate members," Alan said. "I met with some of them as well. They said they received pertinent knowledge.

Alan felt he had achieved his vision to establish a global network. It was time, he felt, to pass the torch...



Prof. James Barlow, President of the IADH

“I have had good discussions with the Institute of Design in Hong Kong about developing a center of excellence, an interdisciplinary center between universities, government, and industry,” Alan said; “I proposed the same thing in Malaysia. The IADH could be a partner to set up global knowledge, bring expert information every year to discuss specific subjects. It would be a scientific discussion to spark innovation in the country. Of course, we would also discuss what is going on in the rest of the world. They are interested, and I had a meeting before I returned with the chairman of the institute, Dr. Loo, a well-respected artist. He invited me to become an honorary department chairman for the Institute. He said we can put IADH into our activities in the future.”

The Academy Seeks a New Leader

After a successful congress in Hong Kong Alan felt he had achieved his vision to establish a global network. It was time, he felt, to pass the torch to another person who could offer a new and fresh perspective to further development of the academy. His decision: to step down in 2017.

During the Hong Kong congress, the IADH board and advisory team had a very fruitful discussion about its future. Soon after, the following announcement was published:



With Gunther De Graeve before the Le Corbusier statue in Cap-Martin, southern France

The International Academy for Design & Health provides the most dynamic platform for knowledge communication and networking with the academia, industry and governments in this field. The Academy is seeking a new leader to take responsibility and help address the challenges of the new era and continue the work of the Academy in providing a leading forum to discuss critical issues of healthy built environment. The new leader should have interdisciplinary background and clearly understand the value and impact of salutogenic design in the promotion of healthy society in the twenty-first century. Therefore, the Board of the Academy is searching for an enthusiastic professional with proven track and well-documented experiences in the field of Design and Health to lead the Academy forward.

“I received several applications, but the most interesting and qualified was that of Gunther De Graeve,” Alan explained. “He convinced me that he was right person to lead the academy forward. After several meetings with the board at my home in the south of France, I decided to give him this task.”

Prior to the 12th Design & Health Congress in Vienna, the following announcement was published on the Design & Health website:



**Gunther De Graeve, Managing Director Destravis Group
appointed as CEO to lead the International Academy for Design & Health
The Founder and AIA Award winning Alan Dilani, to Retire**

Professor Alan Dilani will retire as founder of the Academy on 15th of July 2017 during the 12th World Congress on Design and Health in Vienna, Austria. He will continue as advisor to the Executive Board. Alan's dedication and passion nurtured the Academy to become a leading global knowledge network, recognizing excellence in salutogenic design. This legacy will be carried forward by Gunther De Graeve as he assumes leadership of the Academy going forward.

As the founder of the Academy, Dilani has greatly impacted the world of Design and Health. Over the past 35 years, his esteemed international career has included: founding the Design and Health Research Centre at Karolinska Institute Medical University in Stockholm; developing research on elderly care, correctional institutions, office design, healthcare design, and learning environments; and advocating for healthy built environments across the world from Australia to Canada and U.S.A., South Africa, China, South East Asia and the Middle East.

Dilani has developed and implemented Salutogenic Design theory which became a widely adapted as a successful design method; demonstrating the impact of built environment on human health and well-being. Dilani has lectured globally in various academies worldwide, from Harvard University to major academic institutions of medical, design, and public health, educating the new generation of interdisciplinary scholars to positively impact the future of our healthy planet.

Throughout his career, Dilani championed the sharing of knowledge for the greater public good. He facilitated the free exchange of knowledge between ministries of health, industries and universities worldwide to improve health and social innovation by design.

Of his tenure at the Academy, Dilani reflects "I had the privilege and enjoyment of working with extraordinary colleagues; creative talented leaders who supported and inspired me. Of course, I also had the support, patience and understanding of my family. For that I am most grateful."

From July 2017, Gunther De Graeve will take on the role of Chief Executive Officer of the Academy.

Dilani has great confidence in the Academy's future under De Graeve's leadership. "I am looking forward to seeing the new generation of leadership foster the mission and vision of the Academy. Gunther De Graeve has taken an active role in the development of the Academy for many years. As a board member and key person of Asia-Pacific, Gunther co-chaired a very successful world congress in 2013 in Brisbane. This demonstrated wide support from industry, universities and the government of Australia. The Academy's future is in good hands."

De Graeve is a recognized leader in design and health. He has a successful track record as Managing Director of Destravis Group, the specialist consulting firm he founded to bring expert advice to the health, higher education and research industries.

"I'm honoured to lead the Academy forward alongside many of the committed and passionate colleagues. We are building on the legacy that Alan Dilani nurtured his entire career to foster innovation in society and excellence in design to transform the future of the healthcare environment," says Gunther De Graeve.

De Graeve will outline the vision and priorities for the next phase of the Academy as the keynote speaker at the 12th World Congress on Design and Health in Vienna.

"There is an urgent need to develop a global science that will allow professionals to accurately measure the impact of built environment and technologies on health and well-being. This will allow us to truly design a healthy environment with global recognition through a defined healthy infrastructure index."

The Academy is now ready to embrace the next exciting phase. The ideals and expertise that our colleagues and our partners bring to the future discussion will be vital to continuing the Academy's success.



Professor Alan Dilani, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer International
Academy for Design & Health



Gunther De Graeve

Founder International Academy
for Design & Health

14. Austria: 12th Design & Health World Congress: Vienna, July 2017

The 12th Design & Health World Congress & Exhibition was held July 12–16, 2017, in Vienna, in partnership with the Austrian government and with the collaboration of world-renowned academic institutions and healthcare industries. The focus of the congress would be on European healthcare design and revitalizing health using the salutogenic approach. Vienna, with its music, art, and architecture, and its multicultural metropolis, has been listed by the Mercer Quality of Living Survey as one of the top cities in the world for quality of living.

This was the twentieth anniversary of the IADH Health & Design World Congress and the picturesque and historic European city provided a unique platform for this noteworthy event. Twenty years before, in 1997, the IADH's first-ever congress had taken place in Trondheim, Norway. Much territory has been covered and even more accomplished in the intervening two decades—and this congress would showcase achievements lauding the salutogenic healthcare architectural approach and the impact in the field of IADH's global healthcare design.

Over the years, through the evidence of efficacy of salutogenic principles demonstrated by projects presented at IADH congresses, the congress had become a powerful collective, a scientific platform for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to both demonstrate and implement salutogenic design.

The IADH Congress framework had become a hallmark gathering that provided a new opportunity to engage with the world's foremost interdisciplinary network of architects, designers, health planners, engineers, public-health researchers, physicians, health administrators, psychologists, economists, and other key decision makers. The pre-congress symposium program was focused on leadership, governance, and government healthy policy planning and elderly care in the light of global trends.

How fitting that the main principles of the Austrian healthcare system are solidarity, affordability, and universality. Austria's healthcare system has been ranked ninth by WHO, based on a social insurance model that guarantees all inhabitants equitable access to high-quality health services regardless of age, sex, national origin, social status, or income.



Professor Ike Obiora, GlobEthics with Nurse Lalla Thord and Nadia Balgobin, networking in Mentone - France

The themes of the IADH Congress in Vienna were:

- European healthcare design: a critical review
- The salutogenic hospital: the role of hospitals in disease prevention and health promotion
- Innovation in health infrastructure to revitalize health and tackle twenty-first-century challenges
- Case studies of successful healthcare design from Europe and worldwide
- Built environments to enhance culture and health
- Salutogenic design for healthy communities and urban planning
- Developing international benchmarks in design and health
- Innovation in healthy workplaces in all economic and professional sectors
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and active aging through better environments

The scientific program opened with a welcome message from the Austrian health minister, Pamela Rendi-Wagner, followed by words from WHO representative for Europe, Claudia Stein of Denmark.



American architect Mardelle M. Shepley, Cornell University

In his introductory words, Alan shared that this was his last keynote speech at the congress. He wanted to give Gunther De Graeve the opportunity to further develop the academy and to relinquish his own place at the forefront. Alan spoke about the salutogenic principle that had been developed over the past two decades, as a powerful scientific framework for implementation of healthy built environment.

Colleagues' Perspectives: Ike Obiora, Executive Director, NGO GlobEthics, Geneva

“The level of personalities participating in this congress in Vienna is stellar. Everything about this IADH congress is worth noting: the high-profile engagement, the venue, the success and smooth flow of all the activities, the fact that everything is within reach, the quality of the presentations, the papers and speakers themselves. There is also the sustainable nature of the discussions. Besides that, it’s a reality that sustainable, real goals don’t happen at the United Nations headquarters. That’s happening with a group around Alan and his team at the International Academy of Design and Health. Around them, sustainable development is already ongoing. It is being practiced. So they are truly ‘walking the talk.’”

Mardelle M. Shepley, American Architect

“This was my first time in Vienna. Vienna has this quality of being both European and Eastern European and contains a great history. So the places in which we find ourselves at this congress have been the sites where people of old had big ideas and have changed the world in some way. So in this city by the Danube, all of that sort of filters in.”

“I imagine sometimes, when I go to Alan’s conferences: How does he make selections about where they will take place? I don’t know how he does it, but he’s got to be wandering around wondering, ‘What about this space for the congress—is it conducive to what I am trying to share?’ But Alan does this every time. I think the fact that he’s an architect probably contributes to his list of criteria for what is going to be most effective.

“The people I have met here . . . one person, the last time I saw her was in South Africa. So those people are floating out in this global world trying to find the relationship to this particular environment and design. Alan’s organization reaches out to those people. They feel comfortable in this setting because they realize no one here is in the minority or the majority. We’re all on equal footing...”

“You know, he’s retiring. Last night at dinner when Alan made a statement saying, ‘This is my last speech,’ someone said, ‘I don’t think that is Alan’s last speech.’ They’re probably right.”

Words of Farewell

The Congress gala dinner was held at the Wiener Rathaus, Vienna’s exquisite neo-Gothic city hall. As guests entered, they were visibly in awe of the two grand staircases that led to the magnificent and illuminated Festsaal, the ceremonial hall, in which in days past over a thousand couples could waltz. Crystal chandeliers hanging from a barrel-vaulted ceiling with raised cross-ribbing took your breath away.

This was the perfect setting for Alan’s goodbye to the academy. In an emotional speech, Alan talked for the first time about his roots and his life experience as a Kurdish immigrant.

Present between these words lay the accomplishments of a determined visionary. The audience, filled with colleagues, officials, family and friends, for a moment envisioned the life journey Alan had taken. The physical distances and cultural divides he has covered are nothing compared with the creative miles he’s traversed. His outstanding ability to reach across professional silos, to literally bring together people from every corner of the world and unite them in a common purpose that continues seeking to improve life for millions, held the Vienna audience at attention when listening to his simple, humble words.

“It was my last speech to the IADH and I wanted to speak from my heart, without a script,” Alan said, sharing what this moment meant for him. “When I stood at the podium, suddenly I envisioned my whole life from the past to the present: where I had come from, where I’d started, where I had traveled, the goals I had reached at that moment, what I believed and how I reached my vision. I felt

it was important to summarize my life journey and share it with the assembled delegates for the first and final time.

“My hope has always been for all the people of the world to be equal. If they are able to receive equal opportunities, they will be able to contribute to the betterment of society in every aspect. In my particular case, the situation was challenging. I started my life alone and had moved to what was for me a very difficult, segregated society in Sweden. Yet I never gave up my mission nor my vision to serve our planet in a very constructive and salutogenic way.

“I developed a scientific philosophy that is now global and available for everyone. It helps to understand the most crucial issues of our planet that we have called Health by Design. There is nothing more important than health and the quality of our environment where people live, work, and play. If I look back, I do not regret what my life journey has been. Moving forward, I now want to reflect on what I have achieved and focus on serving and further offering the benefit of my knowledge and life experiences to Africa, as well as my own country and the people of Kurdistan.”

Many have expressed doubt that Alan Dilani’s work is over. The world is a vast setting and much more remains to be done. No doubt he is percolating right now, overlooking the Mediterranean at Mentone in the south of France, about just how to go about this—as friends, colleagues and well-wishers await the next remarkable chapter.



Delivering his last speech at the Health & Design Congress in Vienna



Alan receive award from the Mayer of Vienna



Alan receive the first Fellowship of Academy for Design and Health



Alan with his family



In his new home in the south of France

Part 7

Return to the Roots

1. Middle East Return: Spreading Wings in Turkey, 2003–2007

The series of events by which Alan received an invitation from the health minister of Turkey to develop a research laboratory, with an interdisciplinary team to include a Kurdish scientist, seemed both fortuitous and strangely fated. He would give a series of lectures and ultimately bring Professor Gösta Gahrton from the Medical Nobel Prize Committee to see the outcome of his project, to be based at the university hospital in Antalya.

In 2002 Alan met Professor Sirac Dilber, a researcher on gene and cell therapy from Karolinska Institute. Dilber had heard of Alan's exploratory work with hospital design, and asked if Alan and his team could help design an innovative gene therapy laboratory in Turkey. This proposal offered Alan an opportunity to combine his two most ardent passions—healthcare design, and engagement in a much-needed project in a region near his country of origin.

Subsequently, Dilber introduced Alan to Dr. Rajab Adga, Turkey's health minister. One thing led to another, and Dr. Adga invited Alan to give several lectures for the ministry staff in Ankara. Dr. Adga's wife was Kurdish, and he knew Alan was a Kurd. When Alan arrived, Dr. Rajab showed him around the city. "Dr. Rajab was very knowledgeable and at the same time low-key," Alan shared. "I had a good connection with him. He took me to visit the old bazaar, including a visit to a traditional restaurant with the best kebab in town."

Alan visited several hospitals in Ankara. He was surprised by the poor design and monochromatic drabness of the buildings there. The main hospital was painted only one color. "That is not healthy," Alan commented; "it means they don't have knowledge about how to shape a salutogenic hospital. Dr. Adga understood immediately what I meant."

Dr. Adga asked Alan for advice on how to move public health forward in Ankara. "First, people must stop smoking in this country," Alan said. "*Stop Smoking* signs are crucial. There is a saying in Italian: *Si fuma come un turco*, which means 'You smoke like a Turk'—and that habit is not good for society." Following their visit, the Health Ministry promulgated regulations to stop smoking in the nation's public spaces. "It was a good time in Turkey," Alan said. "People were celebrating the peace process between the Kurds and the Turkish government. The economy was growing and there was hope that the country would solve its internal problems."

Another key attraction of the invitation to a project in Turkey was the great opportunity it offered for infrastructure investment. "We went together to the emergency room area and there were thousands of people," Alan recalled. "So many car accidents take place in Turkey. In a single year, the hospitals had to deal with a thousand cases in the emergency area from automobile crashes."



With Gösta Gahrton and his wife at the construction site in Antalya



Design of the oncology hospital in Antalya

Antalya Oncological Hospital and Research Laboratory

Dr. Adga listened attentively to Alan’s ideas, and decided to work with him. “Six months later, we signed an agreement with Sirac Dilber to design a fifty-two thousand–square meter oncology hospital and research laboratory in Antalya. It was a large project of twenty million euros. Antalya had a university hospital and our project was to be a part of it.”

For two years, Alan worked on this project. He brought the chairman of the Nobel Prize Committee for Medicine, Gösta Gahrton, to Turkey. Together Alan, Dilber, and Gahrton discussed the need for Turkish physicians and universities to implement gene therapy. Alan constantly thought in broader terms; he wanted to bring increased knowledge to Turkey, and not just architectural design elements. At the top of the building, facing the sea, Alan included a cafeteria with a gym and a sauna, so the staff could relax and rejuvenate. Every room in the design would have windows. Alan was also invited as an advisor to Izmir to review and redesign another medical research laboratory.

Alan’s design of the building impressed Gahrton, who asked him to design for the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. Alan responded with his experience of the obstacles he had encountered as a foreigner in Sweden, in his view due to insider interests and corruption within the system there.

In both Sweden and Turkey, Alan had several staff members for these projects, as well as consulting expert advisors for fire safety, and other aspects of design and construction. There were two full-time architects: a Turkish architect based at the Stockholm office, and Anna Silitti, from Rome, one of Alan’s best students, as project manager. Lisa Catanzaro, a psychologist and public-health professional from Florida, and several other researchers also worked at the research Center for Design and Health. “They were very nice and competent researchers, with a range of backgrounds and disciplines, and they agreed to be part of the series of projects,” said Alan. “Anna took a huge amount of responsibility for this project and worked very hard to deliver the best result. Some of my former colleagues from Brink Architects also worked with us.”

Anna Silitti recalled her experience of working with Alan on the hospital plan for Turkey. Her account paints a picture of the project—what it entailed, and what she learned and experienced working under his leadership. “I met Alan in September 2005 in Sweden after I had contacted him. I needed practical experience in the hospital design field for my master’s degree and wanted to have this experience somewhere other than Italy. Through the web, I found out about Design and Health. I wrote Alan, presented myself, and asked if there were any opportunities to work with them.

“He answered very nicely, welcoming me to join Design and Health. At that time, they had a small office in Karolinska Institute’s Novum Science Park. I felt really welcomed and stayed there until spring 2006. From the beginning, I said I would like to do a six-month experience somewhere. Alan responded, ‘Yes, we have a great project. You can come jump in.’

“I spent over six months working on the Turkish project. IADH and Alan were consulting for an international Turkish project with Karolinska professor Sirac Dilber. I did drawings, planning ideas with Sirac. He gave me the necessary medical input and I brought his needs into the design.



Entrance to the oncology facility at the University Hospital in Antalya



Architect Anna Silitti at the Research Center for Design and Health

Working with that team was fantastic and flexible! It was a great environment.

“Working with Alan was like working with the boss you most hope for. He was helpful and took care of you as a person. I never had any problems traveling back and forth from Italy to do my personal things or study for my master’s degree in between. Alan supported my flexibility on the job.

“He practices what he believes, so we had a very healthful office. I was sitting close to an aquarium. In Sweden, the government promotes consumption of vitamins and fruits, so in every Swedish office, there are a lot of apples. One day I remember Alan carrying a red fruit. He said, ‘I brought this fruit for you to try. Otherwise, you will only eat the apple sitting in front of your screen while you’re working. With this, please come sit with us at the table.’ I found this really touching. I was coming from such a hard, stressful work environment in Italy.

“As a mentor, Alan taught me a lot and suggested articles for me to read. A lot of it was significant research work that Design and Health was promoting. I had never experienced this kind of care in any organization. This sharing of information really helped me.



Study tour in Finland with the team of Turkish medical staff and planner

“Technically, I also learned a lot from Sirac because we were really close to his labs. It was nice to work in a hospital, with our office there, because you got to see what you had to draw. I had never planned this type of building before, so I saw the cell-biology labs for the first time. There are usually lots of hygiene procedures to enter these areas. Technically, I learned a lot from the Karolinska staff; it was a profound experience. In this very technical project, I worked with the technical aspects of how the rooms were set up to function. Everything I learned from this specific building,” Anna concluded “later helped my career.”

As well as supporting and mentoring those who worked for him to augment his goal of spreading knowledge, Alan organized a large study trip for a team of Turkish physicians to Finland. He wanted them to learn about the architectural project process. He also planned a seminar aboard a cruise from Helsinki to Stockholm for twenty people, so they could see and learn how the European healthcare system worked. True to Alan’s salutogenic principles, they also enjoyed themselves with dancing and dinner in the evenings.

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2. Serving Kurdistan, 2004-2016

Alan became increasingly optimistic that he could work with Kurdistan itself. His projects in Turkey, in Antalya, Izmir, and other cities, gave him a longed-for opportunity to visit the region, offering his expertise. He was able to glean a picture of the current condition of Kurdistan because every time he traveled to Turkey, he combined a trip to Iraqi Kurdistan. These trips to Kurdistan were made safer when one had support of the Turkish government.

During his first official trip to Kurdistan in 2004, Alan met with Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, now president of Iraq. He went on to meet with the leadership of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the KRG, including Masoud Barzani. This was impressive, given that Alan was an unknown figure for the Kurds in power there.

“You are Kurdish,” political leaders told him, “yet where have you been these last twenty years?” One minister, Shafiq Qazzaz, told him straightforwardly, “I’ve been in Europe, and never heard of you.”

“I, too,” Alan responded, “have been working, doing research, educating myself. And now it’s timely and important for me to once again connect with the Kurds and bring this knowledge I have learned.”

New Hospital in Sulaimaniya

“In Sulaimaniya,” Alan reported, “I was asked to help with a hospital construction project. I contacted a company in Turkey called UNIGYN, which means ‘New Days.’ Originally, they were Kurdish. The father of the company CEO spoke Kurdish fluently, but the sons and other family members did not. I’d met the owner in Ankara. He had designed many buildings in Sulaimaniya and Erbil. But in the end, the authorities in Sulaimaniya awarded the contract to a Korean company.”

Alan was baffled. This Korean company had nothing to do with Sulaimaniya and had no expertise or staff resources skilled in hospital designs. “They had asked me to help and then did not trust my recommendation,” Alan explained. “It’s so often difficult to work with Kurds. I find there is little structure or regulation. The owner of UNIGYN shared with me that the Korean company got the project for fifty million dollars U.S., and they want to sell it for forty million. This meant one thing: the Koreans could sell the project, and have it built by another company.” It turned out there was an American general on the board of the Korean company. “He was influential and lobbied with Talabani that the project would go to the Koreans.”



With the first Kurdish president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani

Not one to mince words, Alan bluntly asked Talabani why he had given the project to a Korean company and not to the Kurds and Turks. “Believe me,” Talabani replied, “this was political. The Koreans will supply us with a steel production factory. They bring the product here and can build whatever they like later on.”

“It was mysterious,” Alan reflected, “because I had noticed scrap metal deposited in one area of the city. There was a mountain of metal left over from the war. Since Turkey did not have a supply of metal, thousands of metal scraps were to be sent there. The Koreans promised they would build a steel production factory. I saw this red, molten metal flaming.

“This was to be a fifty-million-dollar hospital, a very attractive and lucrative business project. It turned out that the Korean man who signed the agreement for the hospital sold it to a Turkish company for twenty percent less than he’d bid for it. This means that the Korean group received ten million dollars simply for signing on to the project. They did not even bring one Korean engineer to the discussions,” Alan added.

“My intention had been to work in Kurdistan somehow and help them. Yet I saw countless errors in the architect drawings. I asked



First KAS meeting in NOVUM Science Park at the Research Center for Design and Health

Dr. Barham Saleh, the KRG prime minister, and he explained that they had paid a lot of money to a Lebanese architect from Beirut. I really wanted to be involved, but it was not possible under these political circumstances. I could not see any way to help them.”

The Solution—KAS: Kurdish Academy of Science, 2004–2005

“It was then that I decided the best way I could support the Kurdistan Region was to establish a Kurdish Academy of Science, KAS. My intention was to bring a pragmatic approach to Kurdistan’s vision for the future, as well as to bring in some professors who could teach at the university. My earnest wish was to look for ways to serve the nation of Kurdistan with my scientific knowledge—because for decades, I had been doing that work globally, including in Turkey.

“I discussed this idea, and after months of research, I drafted a statement. On August 2, 2004, KAS held its first preliminary meeting in Stockholm with the goal of creating a network of

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Kurdish and non-Kurdish scholars and scientists to provide a better quality of life for the people of Kurdistan. My goal," Alan explained, "was to engage other Kurdish scientists in the project. I invited many people and more than a hundred came from different countries. Professor Aladdin Delavar came from London, as did Dr. Khalid Saleh from Gutenberg. We set up a temporary board of directors—they were all Kurds. Khalid Saleh would later become the spokesperson for the KRG, the Kurdistan Regional Government. Dr Aladdin Delavar went on to establish the Middle East Institute in Erbil, with financial support from Talabani."

KAS Announced in Kurdistan

"Through the media, we announced the establishment of KAS in Kurdistan, and received support from Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, who had put aside the land and building for the academy in Erbil. Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Region, had sent out a call to all Kurds to come back and 'work with us.' KAS received around \$10,000 from Erbil and \$10,000 from the Sulaimaniya governments. With this amount, we set up a professional website, and sent a three-person team to launch the Kurdistan project. In 2004 the KAS website invited all Kurds 'to join the Kurdish Academy of Science to support our people with knowledge, skill, and science.'"

Culture Shock: Travels to Kurdistan

Between 2004 and 2010, Alan visited Kurdistan several times. In 2004, he crossed Syria to reach Iraq. He went to the city of Qamishli, whose name means "the House of Reeds," in northeastern Syria. It was then around June and already very warm. Alan traveled with a Swedish Parliament member, Jabar Amin, his journalist wife Shepol Mergasori, and Kurdish engineer Hiwa Tillakoy.

Photo 169 From the left: Kurdish engineer Hiwa Tillakoy, Swedish parliamentarian Jabar Amin, the author, KRG prime minister Barham Saleh, journalist Shapol Mergasori, and Abdulrazag Faieli, of KRG International Relations



In Kirkuk, before an image of Kurdish poet Ahmad Khani

In a limousine, they crossed the hot, arid landscape. They were shocked to see beautiful marble stones engraved with images of Bashar Al-Assad everywhere in the streets of Qamishli. Next to the rich oil refineries, strewn across the barren land, Alan saw poor, primitive Kurdish villages where people lived in abject poverty—a stark reminder of lifestyle disparities. While luxurious buildings and monuments to the president filled the landscape, the wealth of vast oil reserves that belonged to the Kurds did not trickle down; in Syrian Kurdistan, the people lived under miserable conditions.

Alan and his travel companions arrived at the Syria-Iraq border and by boat crossed a river into Iraq. “At the insignificant border between Iraq and Syria, officials were more worried about stopping people with AIDS than caring about their countrymen’s welfare,” Alan explained.

From there, they traversed the extremely dangerous area around Mosul toward Kirkuk. Later they continued into Sulaimaniya.

Kirkuk

“We saw Kurdish villages as we crossed into Iraq. My suitcase was conspicuous, a yellow color, so everyone knew immediately

I was from Europe. From the border, we went first to Kirkuk. It was perilous; people said we had been lucky to arrive safely. The road to Kirkuk was under government control and Americans were everywhere; the U.S. invasion had happened in 2003. We stayed only two nights in Kirkuk.”

Presentation of the Project

Alan presented his project in Sulaimaniya with the hope of gaining the KRG’s support. Right away there were political obstacles: “One person would say this project belonged to Barzani; another would say it belonged to Talabani. Plus, they were skeptical about who we were, though I explained I didn’t belong to either party. I told the truth: I was a scientist and wanted only to help my nation.”

Sulaimaniya

Sulaimaniya was dangerous for Iranian Kurds because the Islamic Republic of Iran had a large presence in the city. With this in mind, Alan and his team met with Prime Minister Barham Saleh, who was very interested in KAS and the Health & Design work Alan was doing. “Barham Saleh was a very open-minded person,” Alan shared. “He was educated and held a vision.” At that time, the regional government was working on building a 300-bed Kurdish hospital. They asked if Alan could help, and he agreed.

In Sulaimaniya, Alan offered a two-day seminar at the University of Sulaimaniya. “It was exciting for me. I wanted to share how to create a healthy society in Kurdistan. The first day there were three hundred participants, but by the second day, the hall was filled to capacity. We had six hundred people. The first day I focused on infrastructure, healthy city and lifestyle, and the second day on the psychosocial aspect of design. And I also spoke about the factors needed to create a healthy society.”

Alan spent the remainder of his time meeting and networking with Barzani’s party members, government ministers, and university officials. He was surprised that many ministers had been appointed for political reasons and not for their professional

expertise. They had no vision, and no plans for their departments. “It was not professionally useful,” Alan said, “but I truly enjoyed being back in Kurdistan, and meeting with these people.”

Blocks on the Road and Attempts at Conciliation with Iranian Kurdish Parties

There were two main reasons these and future projects never took root. First, there was the internal conflict between the Kurds themselves, with many of them jockeying for project positions to be put in charge of. Alan was not willing to cede management of the project to someone else, and there were ongoing clashes of personalities and competition.

Nevertheless, Alan used the opportunity to meet with the diversity of Iranian Kurdish parties established there. He visited the splintered Komala parties and the divided PDKI, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, which had been Ghassemlou’s party. His message to them was always the same: the necessity for unity among Kurds. “All my work focused upon how to prioritize national unity among the political parties. I tried with both the Democrat party and Komala, saying it was necessary to present a united front. I offered to facilitate a workshop between the different parties and begin a dialogue to help define their priorities—what they do now and what they could accomplish in five or ten years. Not only were they living in an area under Iranian influence and control; they could not see beyond their camps. But I’m not a politician and had no political interest. There was no forward motion. I came to accept there was nothing I could do to change this, despite my earnest efforts.”

“All my work focused upon how to prioritize national unity among the political parties. I tried with both the Democrat party and Komala.”

3. World Kurdish Congress, 2011-2018

After frustrated attempts to move the Kurdish Academy of Science forward, Alan created another format, a series of World Kurdish Congresses (WKC) modeled after the IADH World Congresses held throughout the world. He did so hoping the Kurdish society and diaspora would eagerly organize themselves behind progressive, nonpolitical events.

The World Kurdish Congress requested topic submissions from Kurdish global professionals, academics, scientists, and researchers. Live presentations, discussions, and poster exhibitions from scores of Kurdish scientists, health practitioners, educators, and political figures had one singular aim: to bring innovation, modernization, and quality-of-life improvement to the Kurdish region. It was a sharing of information from Kurds to uplift their own people, from the youngest to the most elderly, through knowledge of all kinds. It was a “think-tank—Kurdish-style” with one overarching purpose: to better the lives of Kurdish countrymen, women, and children, now and into the future.

Alan’s destiny had taken him away from his country at an early age. He had pursued his educational and career goals in Europe, yet deep ties with his native land remained. Even after he settled in Sweden and launched a burgeoning career in design and health, Alan maintained connections with Kurdish friends and colleagues in the diaspora. As he began traveling more extensively, he often met with Kurds who lived where he held business meetings and seminars. His intention was to bring these experienced professionals to set up scientific international forums for his own people. This had become an ardent and focused vision he held for years.

Encouragement from the Story of a Past Hero

One day, a friend had sent him an email about a book entitled *The Passion and Death of Rahman the Kurd*. It told the life story of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, the leader he had admired throughout his life and had met during his Kurdish childhood. “I read the entire thing within a few days. It caught me. I found that I was involved in all these journeys that Ghassemlou did and I recognized all those places. To be honest, I was so sad at his fate, I cried the day when I finished the book,” he reminisced.

“I thought to myself: This author has written this book. As a person and a Venezuelan journalist, she has done great work because there is no book like this. And I asked myself, what can I do? I was so frustrated with the Kurdish Academy of Science. But this book gave me hope again to do something for my people. I immediately contacted the author, Carol Prunhuber.”

Alan began preparing for a new inspiration—the World Kurdish Congress (WKC). He involved the author of the biography of Ghassemlou that had moved him so profoundly.

Preparation for a World Kurdish Congress: Goals and Vision

It was then that Alan began preparing for a new inspiration—the World Kurdish Congress (WKC). He involved the author of the biography of Ghassemlou that had moved him so profoundly. “We launched the WKC. I went to Kurdistan to meet people and found Kurdish colleagues to work with. Together we wrote the first intention. I realized that it was important to communicate with others the work I had done and inspire the young people. I felt it was my national duty. I also wanted to pay respect to Dr. Ghassemlou’s way, to follow his lead, however humbly, with all that he contributed to the Kurdish people. Because our enemy is very strong, there is not much we can do. But at least we can work on that which we perceive is possible. Even if it is one small step, it doesn’t matter. I thought it would have impact in the long term.

“I think my contribution was also inspired by the Jewish community. People who had suffered the Holocaust and World War Two helped each other. Their people had been sacrificed, yet they were able to establish their own state. Their community has been known to have the highest number of scientists in the world per capita as well as the most Noble Prize winners. Their example inspired me to develop the idea of the World Kurdish Congress.”

Ultimately, two hundred Kurds and non-Kurdish participants from Iraq, Turkey, Syria, North America, Europe, and Asia would attend the 1st World Kurdish Congress in October 2011 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Scientists, businessmen, academicians, and members of the wide-flung community from twenty countries came to discuss the Kurdish nation’s future through the lens of science and culture. Amidst their diversity, they shared a common desire: to create a positive skein to weave a new tapestry for their nation.

The congress sought to mobilize accomplished and innovative Kurdish professionals worldwide in support of Kurdish people, inspiring their involvement in future nation building through their intellectual capacity. Organizing a forum of this size, complexity and intention took Alan’s dedicated and focused attention for months prior to the actual events.

When an idea takes shape in Alan's mind, he puts forth all his effort to make it happen. After the project for a Kurdish Academy of Science failed, he was determined to find another way to serve his people. What better way to do this than devising an interdisciplinary event to bring together the enormous Kurdish intellectual capital in support of the KRG's nation-building process in Iraq? This forum, Alan was convinced, "could help mobilize and inform the world that Kurdistan is a country of almost forty million people with no national rights, and who were deprived of their most fundamental human rights in Turkey, Iran, Syria and in Iraq until the KRG was established."

His hope was that internationally Kurds would be eager to participate in this unique global event, contributing their time and a small participation fee, along with their travel expenses. As was his custom, Alan began networking with Kurdish academics, intellectuals, professionals and officials in the KRG to garner support and at least partial funding for the 1st World Kurdish Congress.

Economist Almas Heshmati, who lived in south Korea, was involved from the outset: "I found it interesting, because when I worked for three years in Kurdistan, I thought it would be a boon to organize academic conferences among universities. I was more interested in a purely academic conference, but Alan wanted to create a whole network of academicians. He felt the participants should not necessarily be researchers, but other accomplished people. Initially this made it more complicated, more work and costlier to organize, since many Kurds hadn't resources to attend. Alan is a very generous person when it comes to sharing ideas. Neither does he shy away from projects due to difficulties or cost. If he thinks something is useful, he goes for it with full support. This is an outstanding quality he possesses. He is endlessly positive with new ideas and works actively to manifest and implement them."

Financial Considerations and the Need for Sponsorship

Alan soon discovered that with the cost that travel entailed, only a limited number of Kurds would be able to attend. Yet he so



Almas Heshmati, professor of economics, International Business School, Jönköping University

believed in this project that if a sponsor did not come through he would finance it himself. “I put twenty thousand dollars of my own money for that congress,” he said. “Then, fortunately, at the last minute the Kurdish leader Nechirvan Barzani, who had supported this event from the beginning, contributing sixty-seven thousand dollars for the initial event. We also received an additional donation of twenty thousand dollars, so it came together financially. That was very good.”

An Outside Perspective

In her welcome speech at the congress in Rotterdam, Carol Prunhuber, author of the biography of the slain Kurdish leader Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, opened with a question: “What is the overarching goal? I sense that each of you hopes Kurds become an integral part of sweeping changes happening in this region—for the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq comprise a sizable percentage of those countries’ populations. By sheer numbers, the Kurds must play an essential role in the democratic wave that is sweeping across the Middle East. Due to the historic fragmentation of Kurdish society and the repressive regimes where they have lived, forward motion has been slow in coming. The fact is that Kurds are key players in today’s democratization



Carol Prunhuber, author of *The Passion and Death of Rahman the Kurd*

process. They will have an increasing impact upon both regional and international politics.

“We will be meeting to further assess our work for the Kurds. What comes out of all this depends upon each one of us—how high we set our expectations and create a new global panorama for every Kurd. So much can be done for your people if separate agendas are put aside and efforts joined to conceive a new way of working together toward this shared goal. This includes joining our ideas and expertise and finding ways our connections can augment the greater cause.”

She spoke about the importance of the lobbying of the international community carried out by a series of Kurdish leaders in the past. “Beginning with Mulla Mustafa Barzani in the United States, this work continues, although its effects have been limited in the U.S.A. to policy changes there regarding the Kurds. The KRG, a few NGOs, and persevering individuals continue their effort to both inform and promote the Kurdish cause in America through the media, notable television channels as in Europe, newspapers, and websites.”

When she met Alan, Carol was moved by his commitment and inspiration—and by the fact that regardless of obstacles, he persevered to make the World Kurdish Congress happen.

“The fact is that Kurds are key players in today’s democratization process. They will have an increasing impact upon both regional and international politics.”

Carol Prunhuber

Impression of the Initial Congress

The excitement this event generated was palpable. Never had such a regathering of Kurds from such diverse professions taken place. Those who had scattered all over the world came together as a unified group. Even the concept of the World Kurdish Congress was uplifting.

Arriving at this four-day event was unique and transforming. “I was standing in the lobby that day as the delegates started arriving,” Carol shared. “They came from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, UK, Norway, Sweden, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, UAE, South Korea, the United States, and Canada—some of them young, others more mature, yet all full of hope for this event.

“These were Kurds who, like Alan, had fled their native land to make a new start. That seed of possibility I saw in Alan’s life which he cultivated and nurtured and that manifested as his life in Sweden, was evident in everyone I saw there. It had taken them all much courage and tenacity to leave their country and begin anew in a different culture and language. But here, many were gathering together with a shared destiny. It was moving to see this impressive group coming together as the fruit of one man’s inspiration. My personal connection with the Kurds has been longstanding. It began in 1982 with the peshmerga and the diaspora in France. But this was the first time I was in the company of so many accomplished Kurdish professionals from scattered enclaves around the world and from the different regions of greater Kurdistan,” she added.

A Cultural Element

Alan had always been drawn to an interdisciplinary approach, and in the World Kurdish Congress he wanted to integrate Kurdish culture and music as part of the program. These facets were given a prominent place, including a talk about their impact within Kurdish society by well-known musician Mazhar Khaleghi. Alan wanted people to experience a concert with eminent Kurdish musicians and singers. The music had people dancing late into Saturday evening.

Wide-Ranging Content

While for years Alan had focused primarily upon contemporary healthcare design, it was clear the focus of this program demanded a wider view. Alan and the delegates embraced the range of real-life challenges facing Kurdistan. The first World Kurdish Congress presented a strong, multidisciplinary focus to establish a robust link between academia, business society, and governance, with an added media presence.

Over four days and eight sessions, with a total of twenty-eight presentations, many topics were addressed: human rights and freedom, the greater Kurdistan region, education and nation building; the diaspora, politics and international relations, healthcare and trauma; economy, business, and



Mazhar Khaleghi, a respected Kurdish singer

science and technology. The congress also sought to bring increased global awareness toward Kurdistan as a highly developing nation and assist them to become an active, successful part of modern society.

“We wish to build a bridge between the Kurdish people and the diaspora through an independent source,” Alan asserted, “and offer the Kurdish leadership scientific-based solutions, guidelines, and a long-term strategy to deal with vital issues.”

The Keynote

The keynote talk was delivered by Leyla Zana, a prominent Kurdish politician and MP in Turkey, who had spent more than a decade in prison, simply for having spoken Kurdish in the Turkish Parliament. Zana was ecstatic that the first World Kurdish Congress, an international, interdisciplinary, and



With Kurdish leader Leyla Zana, Rotterdam

scientific Kurdish conference, was being held in the larger world outside the borders of Kurdistan. Her calm, inspiring, and reassuring presence filled the hall, as did her heartfelt words of commitment.

She spoke of the long-held Kurdish desire to have an independent nation. “Often when I think about the Kurdish situation, I ask myself which is better for a nation: to have their own country but oppress others, or to be without a country and never oppress others,” Zana said. “It is true we have faced many difficulties, but what the Kurds should be proud of is that a hundred years from now, future generations will not have to be ashamed or apologize for oppressing others.”

She also spoke about the basic human rights of the Kurds being ignored in their homelands, where the Kurds’ mother tongue and culture have been banned. Even today in Turkey, she said, children at school must take the following oath: “I am Turkish. I am hard working...” It is shameful for Turkey and all humanity, she added, to impose an official ideology seeking totalistic assimilation of the Kurds with denial of their culture and identity—something uncommon, even in other fascist and military regimes. Thus far, Zana added, the Kurds have continued their peaceful struggle for freedom and human rights against repressive regimes and injustice throughout the wider Kurdistan.⁵⁴

Harry von Bommel, spokesperson on foreign affairs for the Netherlands Socialist Party, said, “We show solidarity with the

struggle for democracy of the Middle East countries and the emancipation of Kurdish societies... I see this important conference as a call for democracy and human rights for Kurds worldwide.”

Congress Focus on Health—Physical, Mental, and Social

As had become his benchmark, Alan brought the salutogenic philosophy to this congress. Among the health-related presentations was his talk on the Salutogenic Approach to Infrastructure.

One of the valuable outcomes of the congress was the publication of a book that included many of the talks presented. Published as Volume 1 of *Perspectives on Kurdistan's Economy and Society in Transition*,⁵⁵ it was made available to the public to document this historic event.

Words from the Delegates

“Many Kurdish people would be proud to witness the First World Kurdish Congress,” said one participant. The underlying theme was how Kurdistan could become a united, stable, and progressive society... It was very apparent that the road to realizing this vision is long and fraught with difficulties, but the congress has proven to be an important step. Without hope, it’s hard to embark on any effective endeavor, so the congress played its part in fanning the flames of hope once again.”

Moving Forward to the 2nd World Kurdish Congress: Erbil, 2012

Following the success of the first congress, Alan began to prepare for the next WKC. He traveled several times to Erbil to meet with KRG President Masoud Barzani, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, and other KRG ministers to bring the congress to Kurdistan itself. The 2nd World Kurdish Congress would be held in Erbil over four days, October 11–14, 2012. The Kurdish media lauded



Perspectives on Kurdistan's Economy and Society in Transition



Some images of the 1st WKC congress



With Dr Najdmadine, governor of Kirkuk Region, at the city hall in Kirkuk



Scientific committee for WKC 2012

the WKC for its groundbreaking vision and scope. It was a highly successful event, fittingly held in the Kurdish capital. To be able to attend a forum like this in Kurdistan was important for the participants. Participation by Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan sent a strong message to neighboring countries that the Kurds are united. The presence of coverage from many TV channels, local Kurdish, Turkey and Arabic, also sent a clear message that the Kurds were focusing on science.

Enthusiastic Response

The World Kurdish Congress 2012 was an unprecedented opportunity for the KRG as well as for those in attendance. From the moment the call for papers was announced, response was immense. There were more than a hundred papers submitted. Over six hundred scholars came together not only from Kurdistan itself but from the diaspora and over twenty countries. This diversity created an environment of informative scientific dialogue and international networking in the Kurdish capital. Much enthusiasm was generated. Connections were made—with the shared goal to set forth future projects to bring professional knowledge forward.

For the majority of diaspora Kurds, an independent Kurdistan still



With Ahmad Turk, politician from Kurdistan

lives as a dream they hold dear, never forgetting the significance of their roots. Those present came with an ardent wish to give back to their homeland—an aspiration difficult to actualize in countries where Kurds are still not given their right to self-determination.

After decades of struggle, the Kurds in Iraq were finally in control of their homeland there, and in the process of nation building. Despite extensive infrastructure development that had been taking place, as well as development in agriculture and other areas of the economy, the Kurdish nation needed further expertise, even more than the diaspora could offer.

KRG Support

The generosity of KRG sponsorship in funding the congress made the event possible and enabled it to expand in countless ways. The delegate base grew; the event drew competent presenters from around the globe who would otherwise have been unable to attend, and who gratefully traveled to Erbil thanks to the KRG. For many delegates, this was their first time back in Kurdistan. For others, it was a welcome return to meet other members of the diaspora. They came together from Australia, Iran, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Israel, Portugal, Greece, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Denmark,



With KEG prime minister
Nechirvan Barzani



With KRG president Masoud Barzani

Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Malaysia, South Korea, India, the United States, and Canada.

One participant from the U.S.A. who had visited Erbil decades ago during Saddam Hussein's rule, was moved to step into Erbil's beautiful, modern airport and be welcomed by Kurdish immigration agents. The airport was bustling with new arrivals, all waiting to get a first glimpse of their country.

That afternoon, people entered the impressive Saad Convention Hall that had been set up by the KRG. Refreshments awaited as they secured their nametags, while others scrambled to set up posters in the improvised gallery in the lobby. Many spoke of how they had come to serve the future with their particular expertise. The logistical aspects were not all in place, but the enthusiasm and joy of the delegates was apparent. Falah Mustafa, head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations, emphasized how pleased the KRG were to witness a reunion of so many diaspora academics and scientists.

A rich selection of sessions highlighted the value of interdisciplinary presentations by Kurdish and non-Kurdish scientists from every corner of the world. A more substantive crowd had gathered than at the 1st World Kurdish Congress. The topics ranged from the concrete to the abstract, from the Kurdish earth to the human psyche. Papers on science blended with economy, sociology with



The 2nd World Kurdish Congress, Erbil, Kurdistan

energy, technology with nutrition and health, agriculture with the importance of education, and a focus on young people as a recipe for progress to make Kurdistan an even more shining example in the Middle East.

A Unique Forum and Words from Delegates

The World Kurdish Congress created the forum for Kurds to network, learn from each other, and share scholarship—the gift of being an educated Kurd in Kurdistan. Overall, the Kurdish cause rose to the forefront. “This is an historic event and the organizers should be commended for making real this important initiative,” shared one of the participants.

“I am impressed by the progress that the KRG has made over the last few years,” said Zaigham Mahmood, University of Derby. The warmth of the KRG’s hosting hospitality was appreciated by a Danish participant who said, “Their kindness and generosity were second to none and, frankly speaking, beyond my expectation.”

Opening of the 2nd World Kurdish Congress

A clear blue sky welcomed the delegates as they arrived at the gates of the Saad Convention Hall. Since President Barzani



Respecting his Kurdish roots, wearing his hometown traditional attire to the World Kurdish Congress inauguration

and the KRG leadership were scheduled to attend, security was impressive; three to four circles of security guards surrounded the building and the Congress hall. In the long line to enter the building, everyone and everything was being scrutinized with courtesy. No cameras or cellphones were allowed on the premises and every bag was run through an x-ray machine.

Once inside the building, the buzz was palpable. The hall was packed with six hundred attendees. Among them were Barzani's cabinet, members of embassies, and other government representatives.

The morning began with the Kurdish National anthem, *Ey Reqib*, which means "O Enemy." As the entire hall solemnly rose to chant, the hall was filled with expectation and energy. This congress had reunited hundreds of members of the diaspora in what was now the haven for Kurds around the world. Hope for a future and a united nation resonated as the anthem burst forth from this proud assembly.

Spanish Journalist Manuel Martorell Reports on the Congress⁵⁶

The celebration of the World Kurdish Scientific Congress 2012 in Erbil, October 11–14, has placed this area of Iraq on the map in this Middle East crossroads where approximately five million people live. More than five hundred researchers, professional specialists, and university professors, mostly from the Kurdish diaspora, responded to the call of the Regional Government. They came to share ideas and etch out the path that this emerging region must take as it begins to move forward with state-of-the-art policies for development.

Whoever had the occasion of traveling through Iraqi Kurdistan immediately following the Gulf War in 1991 would have a hard time believing the impressive changes that have taken place in that region over the past twenty years. Cities that were literally destroyed (Penjween, Jormal, Qala Diza) have not only risen again; they have been reborn. Now one crosses a landscape that has become very urbanized in places where desolation once dominated. The expansion of provincial cities such as Erbil, Duhok and Sulaimaniya gives us a glimpse of the miracle that has taken place in a region that almost disappeared just two decades ago.

The new neighborhoods that you see everywhere, shopping malls, international airports, cement factories, electrical grids, the expanding oil industry, universities, roads and highways are a few indicators of the progress which has only just begun. These changes are turning Iraqi Kurdistan into the economic locomotive of not only Iraq, but the whole Middle East.

Obviously, in the Congress one witnessed variety and depth in the analysis of the chosen subjects. As Regional President Masoud Barzani said, "This gathering was an occasion for the Kurdish diaspora to begin to lend their voices and be a part of the construction of a new country."

Many talks spoke of the great challenges with which the KRG, the new political and economic entity, is confronted as it emerges in the heart of the Middle East: the social impact of large metropolitan areas that are expanding, the lack of basic services and assistance, the consequences of an ongoing migration from the rural areas to the city, the need for development policies in rural areas, the need for self-sufficient agriculture, the necessity to launch a productive industrial sector, the exploitation of natural resources other than oil and gas,



Participants chant the national anthem at the congress inauguration

such as water and tourism, the pervasive presence of political parties, and so on.

The list of propositions for the development of this autonomous region is immense. Yet first and foremost, the World Kurdish Congress 2012 was a shining example that the government in Erbil still has impressive human capital at hand who are very qualified—and its greatest resource to utilize in the challenges of nation building. Many of these people had to leave their homeland to escape repression, ethnic cleansing campaigns, or genocide, as happened in Iraq during the 1980s. In the process they gained high academic and professional standing in universities throughout Europe, Canada, the United States, and Australia.

For this reason, it would be more than lamentable if the possibilities posed by this most worthy contribution land in a wasteland and no follow-up is taken toward the development policies of the Erbil government. Some delegates proposed the creation of a Committee of Experts who could work with the Regional Government in putting the most important proposals into action.

An Iranian [Kurdish] delegate emphasized the historic transcendence that the consolidation of this region has for the forty million Kurds that live separated by the borders of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. This young man explained that most of the ten million Kurds in Iran consider that Iraqi Kurdistan today is a reference point toward which Iranian Kurdistan could point for the future.

The same could be said for the Kurdish regions in Turkey (twenty million) and Syria (two million). The truth is that the Kurds, the largest nation in the world without a state, have never had such a potent opportunity to build their country as they do in the current moment. The only parallel nation-building example was the ephemeral Republic of Mahabad with support from the Soviet Union after World War II in northeastern Iran. That development lasted only a year, between October 1946 to October 1947, before it was crushed by Shah Reza's army with complicit Anglo-American support.

In these twelve months, the Republic headed by Qazi Mohammad—who was publicly hanged with his main advisers as a general punishment—also had the support of intellectuals, politicians, and Kurdish militaries from Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Some, like the four Iraqi officials memorialized in a monument in Sulaimaniya, were executed when they returned to their country, frustrated by the Mahabad experience. Others, like Mustafa Barzani's peshmerga from Iraq, were able to escape to the Soviet Union, where they found refuge. Sixty-five years after that failed republic, Barzani's son Masoud is once again seeking international support so the Kurdish people do not miss this new and historic opportunity to reach a dream for their nation. Such a dream has never been within such close reach as it is in this very moment.

President Barzani Speaks

President Masoud Barzani opened the session: “We hope with your knowledge, expertise, and partnership with the appropriate authorities, you can apply your experience to eliminate shortcomings in Kurdistan.” This congress would be “historic,” Barzani said, with its primary goal for “all the Kurdish political factions to reach a shared voice and strategy for the Kurdish people.” He offered this charge to the delegates: “The work you will engage in during the next three days will feed this emerging dream of Kurdish unification everywhere.”

Falah Mustafa, foreign relations minister, echoed Barzani's opening speech: “As our President said, we should not be focused only upon constructing buildings, but also on building human values, democracy, justice, and social welfare.”

Session with Ministers and Universities

Several KRG government ministers attended the World Kurdish Congress to discuss current issues in their respective fields and present strategies regarding the challenges ahead. This session with the ministers and university directors was well received.

Positive Outcomes

Communication opened up between delegates and government departments and universities within Kurdistan. Many members of the Kurdish Studies Network, a global research network for scholars in the field of Kurdish studies, met for the first time during the World Kurdish Congress. The



Masoud Barzani's opening speech at the congress, Erbil

congress provided a platform for them to meet and interface with other Kurdish scholars to bring forth new ideas and projects.

“The World Kurdish Congress in Erbil was the first time some of us got to meet face to face,” Welat Zeydanlıoğlu, founder and coordinator of the KSN, told *Rudaw*.⁵⁷ It was at the conference, he added, that the decision to establish a journal for Kurdish studies was made. “At that moment, no journal of Kurdish studies existed that met international academic requirements and standards, while other fields had several journals,” Zeydanlıoğlu said.

The congress also made available the book produced for the World Kurdish Congress 2011 by NOVA Science Publishers, edited by Almas Heshmati, Alan Dilani, and Serwan Baban. The book included contributions by twenty scholars, Kurdish and non-Kurdish alike, who dealt with important Kurdish issues. The editors also completed a volume on the second congress, with twenty-six of the lectures, which was published in 2013.⁵⁸

For Australian psychiatrist Afsaneh Jolan, “Each presentation was intriguing and informative in its own unique way.” In a message



Falah Mustafa, KRG Department of Foreign Relations

to Alan she wrote, “For me the most inspiring part of the event was your speech and personality, combined with the courage and motivation to organize this event. I hope to follow in your footsteps to serve our nation. Like many others at the conference who were inspired, I am currently thinking of returning to Kurdistan to complete my Ph.D. The reason I’m sharing this with you is because there is no way in a million years I would have previously considered going back to the Middle East to do any work. But thanks to you, Alan, now we have seen a different side of Kurdistan and the many reasons we should consider helping rebuild a nation that has struggled for many decades. For the great experience you provided to many of us, and the opportunity to meet numerous highly-achieving Kurds . . . Wow! Thank you for inspiring and taking us out of our comfort zones to a world of limitless opportunity.”

Diako Ebrahimi from Australia commented, “I met many people, learned countless things from the conference attendees and from simply being in Kurdistan. I congratulate you all for succeeding in bringing together scholars from Kurdistan and the diaspora.”

This congress also reunited long-lost friends, separated by violence and repression in their home countries. Two friends who had been imprisoned after Khomeini’s Islamic Revolution were ecstatic to have met again.

3rd World Kurdish Congress: Stockholm, 2013

The 3rd World Kurdish Congress would be held in Stockholm, at the former Royal Musical

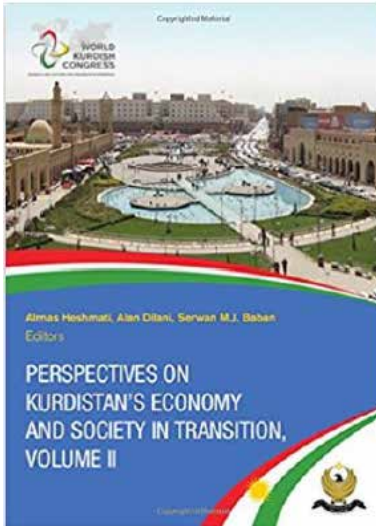
Academy House, today known as Musikaliska. This magnificent building sits on the quayside in Nybroviken, in the center of the city. Continued KRG support for the World Kurdish Congress manifested in Stockholm. All this, despite the many internal obstacles within Kurdish society itself—most notably the burden of long-standing party politics and powermongering that keeps millions of Kurds divided.

This event in the Musikaliska saw attendance by ministers from the Kurdistan Regional Government—Falah Mustafa from Foreign Relations and Serwan Baban, minister of Agriculture and Water Resources—and officials, representatives, and parliamentarians from Sweden, Canada, Israel, and the Jewish and Armenian communities.

One notable element was the bringing together of three different communities: the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek communities in Canada who have been successful in creating formal links with their homelands and global diaspora. Such links successfully promote identity, culture, and prosperity for millions of people. Concretely, their global efforts have aimed to serve their people in times of need and crisis, and to support, invite, and inspire the younger diaspora generation to join their struggles. Outreach to youth has included bringing young people to their homelands for tangible long-term, firsthand experiences.



KRG ministers actively participated in the congress



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The Kurdish Diaspora

Other diaspora groups have successfully organized networks with top-level officials within their host countries to strengthen cooperation. Aims have included supporting diaspora rights. “Advocating for equal Kurdish rights needs to become a priority to help the Kurdish cause move forward,” Alan has said. “For the Kurds to become a powerful force that influences the global community, long-term strategies need to be put in place.

“The long-term strategy I’m referring to includes financial investment and preparation for selected Kurds to do this advocacy work. An established force of capable, trained Kurds that can advocate for their people in universities, governments, and legislative centers throughout Europe and the U.S.A. will go a long way to forwarding long-term Kurdish interests. We need to put in place advocates who take action.”

Kurdish Minister Acknowledges the Role the of Diaspora

KRG Foreign Relations minister Falah Mustafa acknowledged the important role of the Kurdish diaspora in supporting the work of Kurdish institutions and of the KRG and in creating business, educational, and cultural links. The KRG, he stated, was committed to having strong ties with the Kurdish diaspora, and the prime minister supported the congress’s aim of involving the community abroad with the development of Kurdistan. “We hope that we will be able, through these types of congresses, to gather the talents and skills scattered across the world because of our tragic history, and put them together to benefit our nation,” he added.

Other Presentation Topics

Fredrik Malm, member of the Swedish Parliament and chair of the Kurdish Swedish Parliamentary Group, noted the way Kurdistan is now viewed in Sweden and Scandinavia: “In the northern part of Europe,” he said, “Kurdistan is becoming more and more important for us, geopolitically and economically.”



3rd World Kurdish Congress, Stockholm

World Kurdish Congress Achievements: Looking Back and Looking Forward

The conference concluded with a discussion on the structure and future direction of the World Kurdish Congress. KRG Foreign Relations minister Falah Mustafa congratulated the congress on its achievements in the three years since its inception. He encouraged the WKC to take the next step by setting out clear and net ambitious goals to restructure its organization with a message of unity. He suggested utilizing social media to attract more members of the Kurdish community abroad. Another idea was to contribute papers to advise the KRG on topical issues such as federalism, disputed territories, and reform of key institutions. “Let’s believe in the glass being half full,” Falah Mustafa concluded. “We have a common purpose, and that is to both contribute to and serve Kurdistan.”

Looking back at the three World Kurdish Congress events, Almas Heshmati reflected: “The WKC’s achievement was to gather Kurds with similar interests. under the same roof, to listen to each other and exchange ideas. It was a unique opportunity for everyone to become acquainted with one another. It was very positive. Then we took a further step to publish the research in edited volumes, showing the value of such work for the Kurdish nation. The findings are now being published and disseminated

This ray of hope is a good example to start journals covering Kurdish culture, industry, and politics.

internationally to Kurdish educational institutions and libraries. There are literally thousands of Kurdish students abroad, studying at different universities. Very few Kurdish sources are available for their research. The WKC volumes are now those sources for our students. There are a lot of books in German, French, Italian, or by American tourists or British who traveled to the Middle East and wrote about Kurdish tribes. But this is one of the few collected volumes that has actually been published and widely distributed. This ray of hope is a good example to start journals covering Kurdish culture, industry, and politics.”

Changing of the Guard

After three years at the helm of the World Kurdish Congress, creating and manifesting the WKC, Alan Dilani announced he was stepping down from that role. It was time for someone else to take his place so the congress could continue into the future. Following the 3rd WKC in Stockholm in 2013, however, there were no attempts to organize another WKC, so Alan decided to move this event forward himself once more, with other Kurdish professionals.

“The fourth WKC will be held in October 1918 in Washington, D.C., the center of world political decisions, to bring members of the Kurdish diaspora for the first time to the United States and discuss the future of the Kurdish nation with Americans and others who are interested on our destiny,” Alan announced.

Attempts to Encourage Healthy Lifestyle in Kurdistan

Alan still holds high hope for his country. He continues to find ways to reach the people of Kurdistan with information and knowledge that he has spent his life studying and researching. “I hope to bring all the salutogenic rules and guidelines to Kurdistan. To institute better health for the people of Kurdistan, we need strong primary care that educates people to follow healthy life-style behavior. In addition, we must actively promote health promotion and prevention of disease. There is still hope for our great nation.”

Part 8

Player on a Global Stage

1. Accomplishments and Future Vision: Aspects of Alan Dilani's Work

Alan Dilani's work has been the application of interdisciplinary knowledge, research activity, and an inclusive network to help solve major societal problems—especially to get healthcare infrastructure moving in a more life-giving direction. Salutogenics is a preventive approach that encourages cultures globally to follow basic principles that foster well-being and bring deeper understandings about the necessity for change of societal habit patterns. What follows on the heels of this revolutionary approach is improved health, both physical and mental, for entire nations.

The new generation of young, talented people are working worldwide, and there are many researchers among them. Those young people will take over the vision and work of Design & Health. Definitely. I have great hope in them.—A.D.

Human beings who hold a vision are rare indeed. Many conceive of new beginnings, innovative ideas, novel concepts. Yet the mettle of such innovators is most tested when they begin to move their ideas into reality, to manifest hypothetical and challenging concepts into the real world where they may clash with norms that have existed for eons.

Alan's ability to embrace innovation and then carry thousands of people along with him, from all over the world, has been extraordinary. He has managed to reach across countries, cultures, and socioeconomic boundaries, and interest key players in his concepts.

When you consider he was born in a country where daily life remains much simpler than it does in many nations in the twenty-first century, he stands out even more. His ability, bonded with skills he developed over the years, is even more noteworthy. It takes courage to challenge the norms in any field. In Alan's case, he was pushing against an arena that prides itself on standardization with new ideas that were anything but standard. Driven by his own determination, he moved first to pursue an international education and excel in his research, then systematically to put hypothetical building blocks together into a new architectural paradigm; to continue undaunted despite setbacks and momentary disappointments, and finally to magnify a new approach in a silo like healthcare. Worldwide, Alan has made an undeniable impact. His concept of salutogenic design—the concept that the way buildings are built will impact the indescribable miracle we call “healing”—brings kudos from a wide array of colleagues young and old, fledgling and experienced.

Perhaps most outstanding has been Alan's capacity to bond together not merely building materials, but people. His networking skills and prowess have been noted by colleagues from one continent to the next. Over the past two and a half decades, he has visited more than eighty countries and brought together people from over one hundred nations in international forums and seminars with a driving vision to accomplish these goals:

- disseminating the salutogenic approach to design
- creating an interdisciplinary network
- developing an interdisciplinary knowledge approach
- focusing on and applying research activities that address society's problems
- engaging governments, industry, and academia in paradigm-changing concepts
- mentoring young people by facilitating and jump-starting their architecture/design careers
- encouraging universities and academia to implement new interdisciplinary education
- inspiring new students and young people to engage with and further develop his work

2. Alan's Legacy—the View from Colleagues

Many people who have attended Alan's congress events and symposiums or been involved in projects with him over the years are watching his "retirement" with a combination of appreciation, wonder—and in some cases, disbelief. They are not certain, colleagues have said, that a man of his accomplishment, drive, and humanitarianism can really settle into a quiet, peaceful life in one place. Whatever may follow next, those whose lives he has touched have expressed their appreciation for Alan, his generosity, and the work he has devoted himself to over the years. Many are grateful personally for the help he has given to them.



Gunther De Graeve, Australian architect

"Alan now is as someone who is sowing the fields. You've seen this farmer on your own—like in the old paintings, with a bag of seed, casting it to the earth. I said to him, 'You've affected many of us. You've pollinated many of us.' That's what I'd call it. It's like the last twenty years has been a time of seeding the lands on his own, in good weather and bad. Of course, we usually only seed in good weather, but I'm sure there's been a lot of bad weather. But Alan has pollinated many of us and I think he's contributed enormously to the results that are out there.

"This includes the way design has evolved in relation to health and how we think of it as health. You probably can't even measure how big his cone of influence has been. But over these twenty years, it must be amazing. There are very few people in health design that don't know about the influence of this whole other way of thinking about healthcare. This is an enormous achievement that shouldn't be underestimated."

"Alan recalled that in 2009 in Singapore, there was someone who presented and did research on design and health and the impact it had" continues De Graeve. "At that time, there were a few hundred articles written on this subject. That was it. Then you fast forward and another person did the same thing, in Toronto. By then there were more than ten thousand articles. So, these numbers have obviously been driven by his work."



Monsignor Professor Dr. Obiora Ike,
executive director of GlobEthics in
Geneva

“Over those years, most of the developed world has seen an enormous rebuild of their infrastructure. I know in Australia, we probably replaced fifty percent of our buildings—and Canada would have been in the same boat, and the UK, and the rest of Europe, and so on. The ‘land’ was ripe to be sown as well. There are always those two factors [the need to rebuild aging infrastructure and the willingness at last to entertain fresh perspectives and new ideas]. We find that in Africa we were not getting that traction ten years ago because the ‘land’ was way too ‘dry’ for that—not ready. Whereas now, people from Africa say the land is very ripe now and we need to start sowing it.

“Alan has unbelievable determination. He will face a hurricane and say, ‘I’ll be all right, Gunther! It’s all fine It’s not that bad!’ That is an enormous thing. I don’t know how he does it, really. It’s like he blocks it and cannot even see it or feel it. He steps out the door saying, ‘I can’t even see it and feel it.’ You know? Again, a great skill to have that and to do that. He has been unbelievably persevering.”

“Alan is active, engaged, and honest. He is dynamic, forward-looking, sincere and passionate about everything he does. I find that the topic of design and health is, by extension, a dialogue around human values. Human values that promote well-being and inclusion. Human values that promote harmony in the environment and good health. I would wish that many others will come to share in these good qualities. People who use this kind of language should become ambassadors. They should be empowered to go and share it.

“Alan is leaving footprints and spreading hopeful news in a world that has not much of that at the moment. It is time that people who have reached 60, like me, and are going into retirement, try to mentor the youth. Having done that, they can really retire because the flame they have ignited will continue. What often happens is that people who leave a great gift, don’t pass along the light. Alan is someone who has been able to pass on that flame. I see this in his family. His daughter, his son, and his wife are all here. I see them as being active around him and his project, Design and Health. I think it’s something very, very special when an entire family stands with you and your agenda. It’s not typical and it doesn’t happen often. I’m sure that his daughter and son



Inge Fottland, former director of planning for Trondheim Hospital



Nadia Tobia with Susan Black

will stay connected to what they have learned and experienced from their father. Alan has been able to transmit that language in a loving way, which fathers should be doing. So that makes him a family man, a teacher, a public person, an organizer, an administrator and networker, an architect, a visionary, a practitioner, an ethicist—and a global citizen.”

“I kept following the congresses Alan organized and some of the topics touched on what we were working on. It was so very useful. I attended as many of them as I could and as time permitted.

“From my perspective, Alan has brought a lot of concepts and many people in the profession together. I got to know so many other colleagues from my profession in different countries and this expanded both my knowledge and my work. Alan is very generous in connecting people or themes or responding if we want information. He keeps doing it. He doesn’t stop. I have told Alan, ‘I don’t think you’re going to retire to doing nothing.’ I think he has something else in mind, but I don’t know what it is at the moment.”

“Alan has brought twenty-five years of collaboration and friendship to my life. I honor him and thank Alan for all his hard work. Words just can’t describe how much originality and determination he possesses.

“While Alan was working with his Ph.D. in Sweden, as project director for the hospital campus at Trondheim, he walked in and asked, ‘Is it possible to have a visit to Trondheim to discuss how we can cooperate?’ He had an enthusiasm and brilliance—such a wonderful word—for our programs and activities. That was in 1995.

“Then we—our project team at Trondheim—decided to work with our collective proposals and implement them; we already had a big international network. We both knew the initial Trondheim



Hussain Sinjari, Kurdish friend and Iraq's ambassador to Portugal

concept had many unfinished parts. Therefore, we had lots of unanswered questions. To gather answers, we decided to create an international conference at Trondheim in 1997.

“We set out to present cutting-edge research in Europe, projects to explore and ideas to develop that would provide a fulcrum for networking and opportunities for people to exchange research and development ideas about healthcare planning, building, and management. We would then discuss using those approaches to hospital design, assess the positive psychosocial factors and conditions to create an optimal healing environment. We had high aims for the workshop—and they were met. Thank you, Alan, for being such a dedicated and intelligent leader.”

“Alan is a great Kurd. I am so proud of his Kurdish path. I feel he deserves to be the elected leader of the independent Kurdistan. He brings happiness, the promise of a better life, a better environment—and I think this is true leadership.

“Everywhere in the world, we need leaders and political processes to make people happy, to live better and do better. I am so proud of you, Alan. You are one immigrant who came to Europe and proved that immigrants who have left very difficult conditions have done something great. You are from Iranian Kurdistan and you became successful in Europe, which suggested the equal opportunity for others to do the same. You are now in this beautiful city of Vienna, a place that always welcomes refugees. Alan, I am so proud of you and I love you.”

“Both Alan and I have been very interested in trying to relieve human suffering. I think that’s what this all comes down to. It’s very motivating to run alongside people who agree that this is part of our charge, to take care of the disenfranchised, those who have the least access to healthcare systems. It isn’t always designed through research, but through everyone’s collaboration trying to accomplish these goals, which Alan has always done.”

“Alan Dilani has friendliness and a quality of openness and transparency, even though it’s sometimes hard to understand what he’s saying. But I’m the type of person who will stop him and say, ‘Whoa! I don’t get that. Tell me again.’

“He’s always honest about his appraisals. He’s a human being, so if you don’t turn up somewhere and he wishes you were, he’d be ticked off a little bit. He’s a true person. He’s not manufactured. He’s a true person. He has empathy and lives the salutogenic way of life. He walks the talk. He’s shown me where he plans to semi-retire to; he’s shown me pictures of his home with Satu and his kids. He’s very open.

“Alan is also an amazing traveler. I have no idea how he does it. And the fact that he keeps



Prof. Mardelle M. Shepley, American architect



Susan Black, Canadian architect



Innocent Okpanum, South African designer and architect

healthy doing it is unbelievable, too. Over the years, he's lugged physically heavy Design and Health Academy Awards around the world for us when we've won them. Alan carried them in his briefcase and brought them to my condo. I thought that was amazing. I thought, 'Who would do that?' I mean, he is traveling all over the world, all the time, and he takes on a task like that."

"I still stand by my opinion: Alan is not going to retire. He is far too young. The Design and Health Academy is Alan's child. From my experience, when professionals retire they are caught up in either a 'once upon a time' scenario—either an active role or a passive/active role. It doesn't really matter how you define it because, as we say, the older those people in academia are, the better they become. Alan has a huge reservoir of experience with over forty years of his career. As such, he needs the world and the world needs Alan.

"The academy is going to grow bigger and bigger because our involvement with global ethics through the UN-related NGO GlobEthics will make it even more visible, just as Alan has done with his previous work in the world. There are very few people who are trained as an architect, a medical doctor, and a professor from a very prestigious institution. So Alan will never retire. Never.

"I've known him for over fifteen years. Alan has moved the academy from a very tiny institution to a global movement. And it is a movement, an academic movement that has matured and reached a stage where all the reservoir of research can and should be transformed from theory into practice, into serious projects.

“There is a difference between the haves and the ‘have-nots’ in the world population. In terms of numbers, almost eighty percent of this world’s population are the have-nots. In the next eight years, they will grow probably to almost eighty-five percent of the world population—and all of them are all living in abject poverty.

“You can see what’s going on in the world now with individuals crossing regional borders, like from countries in Africa crossing to Europe. Africa is collapsing. And all the while it’s collapsing, people are still, nevertheless, making more babies. So the population is increasing very fast. In the next thirty years, the African population will double to almost two point five billion people. This is with the economy contracting, not growing. Your guess is as good as mine what will become of Africa in the future.

“This is the main topic for people like Alan. He has a huge role to play in trying to take a theory that he has now transformed into a global movement, Salutogenics, even further. As we all know, salutogenesis is everything. It is no more limited to just a theory about hospitals. Now it’s moving to the environment and the way we actually live our lives. It will accommodate itself to everything—the ways we dress, the ways we speak, and the ways we do our decorations—and into architecture, design of all sorts, templates in architecture.

“Who are those professionals that are teaching architecture in universities? There’s not knowledge there, the internal knowledge, and as such, the students they produce don’t have the skills required to be able to tackle the twenty-first-century challenge in the built environment. They lack it. I know; I studied in Europe and I still work in Europe. So it’s all quite complicated. Africans are looking toward Europe but actually must look toward Africa. There’s a huge amount of work to do.

“Our problem, both for those who have developed and those who are still developing, remains education. Education, education, education. When I say education, I mean practical education. Our educational system has remained stagnant. It hasn’t moved forward or improved.

“So Salutogenics is now is a global movement. We need Alan and Alan is aware that he has a huge job to do, in Europe and mostly in those parts of the world where he is most needed.”

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Anna Silitti, Italian architect

“What I really appreciate and think is this: Alan’s professional success is due to really being open and saying what he thinks. He is very direct. If you receive a compliment, you know you did something good. It’s always critiquing, but in a constructive way. There is never a double face.

“On the personal and professional level, I think he really did find the right way to use this talent he has with networking, with bringing people together, because it’s natural for him to put together a lot of interesting people. I think many people appreciate this. This is one of his best qualities, and the organization he represents really shows the effect and benefit of this networking. He has a message to communicate and this should be the direction. To me, this is quite clear.”

3. What's Next

Dr. Alan Dilani is a global authority on interdisciplinary research regarding the interaction between design and health. In 1997, he formed the International Academy for Design & Health (IADH) as an international network of health ministries, universities, and public and private industries. Salutogenics has become the brand of Alan Dilani and the IADH. There has been increasing interest from governments and industry to follow suit as they recognize the necessity of generating greater health for their populations everywhere. His humanitarian outlook augments every other quality as a unique contributor, as he continues to pass his life's work on to young people—which he has done for the past forty years. Retirement is nearly impossible for such a creative man.

When asked where he thinks his role with IADH and its work will go in the future, Alan responded, “I have a vision that within the next ten years, IADH will have connections with at least a hundred institutions—partners and independent organizations, academic and architectural firms—based on salutogenic principles. We have five to ten major governments currently applying salutogenic principles as policy in their countries. In addition, we have at least that many architects in the industry who are garnering huge returns by following salutogenesis and leadership. This is the way that I feel salutogenesis will continue to develop within society.

“The Academy of Design and Health is finding its own way. Its development has taken over two decades but now is moving along more swiftly. The social knowledge that has been developed over time, as an outgrowth from what was initially architectural design work, is spreading incrementally also as the world awakens to the utter necessity of better health for all.

“I see a legacy of IADH consisting of an extended network. It will continue working as a more established organization that could develop concurrently in governments, industries, and universities. Amongst universities, there is already a notable increase in the interdisciplinary work already taking place. The IADH will definitely keep growing in the search for more expansive answers to worldwide health.”

About himself, Alan has said: “The last two decades, I have traveled worldwide constantly. I believe first I am a world citizen, then I am a Kurd, then Italian, and finally Swedish. My foundation is definitely Kurdish because that is where I was born, grew up, and developed my values, but I also learned social interaction with people and human values in Italy. My childhood experience was with my family. That experience formed me and gave me a lot.

“I am not Swedish and then Kurdish or Italian, and last a world citizen. Now I have consciously become more of a world citizen. I firmly believe this, now and into the future, and I will be more effective like that.

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“Salutogenesis is becoming more promising in terms of implementation. The new generation of designers and researchers want to know how to implement these ideas. This is because of the thousands of people working worldwide who are already aware of what this philosophy can do. All this has transpired following the last twenty-five years of working extensively worldwide. It is very promising and inspiring.

“So I see my role,” Alan concluded, “as leaving this legacy, this wealth of data and imagination regarding salutogenic principles, for others to continue. I have done what I have done. I envision that my role will now be to be a kind of observer, watching the further unfoldment of IADH in the capable hands of those who have embraced it and believe in it, as I do.”

Innocent Okpanum, South African architect and urban and healthcare designer, considers Design & Health a vitally necessary organization because it looks at novel ways of doing things in innovative ways. “Alan’s impact is needed everywhere—in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. These are desperate times. IADH is needed everywhere. I believe there is no way that Alan can end or even contemplate saying, ‘I am leaving.’ I doubt he will take a back seat. He is still too young. There is no one who has the recognition and the resilience.”

The fact is that Alan has decided to step down as president of the IADH during the congress in Vienna. For Alan, this is the right time—after twenty years of absolute dedication. He has put in place a competent team that will take IADH into the next iteration.

The fact also remains that for a person like Alan, inactivity is well-nigh impossible. How do you turn off a fountainhead of inspiration, concern for humanity and for betterment for the world as a whole? Chances are that Alan Dilani will continue to aid and abet the population of the world in new, unimaginable ways into his “retirement.” One can only imagine how.

4. Appreciation from Friends and Family

The impact Alan Dilani has made upon countless people's careers and lives stretches from one end of the earth to another. As he transitions to his future—whatever that may hold—he himself said in the 12th International Congress of Design & Health in Vienna in July 2017 that his work would now focus on Africa and the Middle East.

Here his colleagues and family recall incidents, moments, events with Alan that impacted them in meaningful ways. Whether he was demonstrating through his actions the generosity he showed to so many in his field, his determined effort to move forward, or his vision of changing the world or opening people's eyes to a vibrant international arena he inhabited for decades and invited them to enter, these stories reveal more about him and his unusual and ever-present ability to connect people to one another, bringing greater fulfillment and meaning in their lives.

Mardelle M. Shepley, Department of Design and Environmental Analysis, Cornell

“Alan recently came to Cornell. I've been at Cornell for over two years and the group I'm part of—Hospitality, Health, and Design—decided to put on this conference. We formed a new institute, called Institute for Healthy Futures, with the goal of taking the things you learn from hospitality—for example, how you provide service—and applying them more to wellness issues in hospitals, which also provide service. One person from our health administration program, another from our hotel school, and I formed this group.

“For example, in a hospitality setting you might see a ‘wellness room’—a supportive, health-promoting room—and notice what would be the impact of having a window with a view of nature. A lot of people in the hotel business are also in the senior-living business: they own and run these facilities. So there is a big overlap between these fields. We said: We think this stuff is related. So let's see what we can do about it. This institute is an experiment.

So we set up this institute and invited people globally to attend a conference. Alan was going to be in the United States. He inadvertently said to me in an email, ‘Well I think I'm going to be in the US at such-and-such a time,’ and I said, ‘Oh, how would you like to present at our conference?’ He agreed and showed up in Ithaca, New York, which is not easy to get to. They describe it as ‘a place that's not near anyplace.’

“Alan wanted to fly in to a little airport nearby—sometimes that's good and other times not so good; well, planes do get there most of the time. But he joined me in this effort and gave a



With colleagues at the Cornell University conference; Mardelle Shapley on the right

presentation. I'm sure he appreciated what we were going through giving our first conference, because he has done so many similar things over the years.

“He was such a good sport about it. He walked around and saw what it was about and said quietly, ‘I’m not sure I’ll make it here again because it’s not near anyplace.’ But the main thing was that he was providing his support to me by attending this out-of-the-way conference.

“Sometimes when I make a suggestion, he doesn’t always say this is a hundred percent what we wanted to do. He’s always honest about it. He will say, ‘You might be missing this point. Consider this.’ Usually he’s right. So things have always flowed between us.

“When you have a cause or crusade and you are working on it together, there really isn’t time for people to disagree about things. The main thing is we have always had to stay focused on the task—and as for some of the other things, just ride them out, because we’re here to support one another. I think Alan agrees with that.”

Architect Susan Black, Toronto

“We had finished an in-patient tower, a little one, and presented it somewhere along the line. I can’t even remember where. But I

gave Alan the images and there were light slots in the wall for orientation and expensive light art. In Canada, we still had to have some two-bed patient rooms in hospitals, which we felt were not the right solution. Still, we made them. Each room had two entries so that the room could be divided into single-patient rooms or opened up to facilitate interaction. The beds angled out, facing out with a view to the outdoors through a wall of large windows.

“Well, Alan touted that image all over the damn world! He just loved it because you could see the green outside. We actually planted a forest outside. I knew it was good, and in Alan’s eyes it was a salutogenic approach. There were all kinds of positive design factors here. It was really heart-warming.

“He told me one day, ‘You know, half the architects in the world have seen this picture by now.’ I thought to myself, ‘Wow, that’s kind of cool.’

“Yes, there are some fun things about Alan. He’s very loyal. He’s always willing to introduce you to someone who might lead you to something new. Sometimes he actually pushes you a little and says, ‘No, you should be doing this.’ It’s kind of neat that he cares enough. How many people in this day and age care at all?

“There are times that you can meet him, and he just goes off, talking about the present conference. You’d think he was a salesman. But when you look deep, there’s a whole *raison d’être* about this. He has an understanding about what he’s trying to do in the world.

“I think what’s happened is that there are other conferences that are venues for people to get continuing education points. But Alan’s congresses and events are not like that; they are so different. People still come to the congress from halfway around the world because they expect to get something.”

Sara Dilani on Alan’s Sixtieth Birthday

“There are a lot of emotions and thoughts in me and I do not know how to express them, to put my feelings in words. I was thinking about how to start this speech to you tonight.

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disagree about
things.



With his family at a New Year's celebration

“Ever since I was little, I’ve looked up to you. You were the coolest Dad I knew. I loved hearing about your stories and I remember how I used to boast as a child that you were playing basketball for the Italian national team (although it turned out several years later that who you actually played with was a Category B team in Kurdistan).

“The best moments I knew as a child were when you returned home from your trips abroad. This made me so happy. At those times, when I was young, I would also get so excited with the nice presents you thought to pick up for us during your trips. You were always the person I wanted to show things to, always the one I would run to if I had something on my heart. Also, my biggest fear was to disappoint you, just as it is today.

“I’ve always been told that I am like you, and over the years, I’ve noticed many qualities I inherited from you, which makes me proud. You are intelligent, incredibly generous, outspoken, energetic, and confident. But above all, you have a very big heart. When you burn for something, you’ll bet everything you have and never give up on it. That’s been true despite adversities and prejudice from people. You have not let negative opinions influence you; you’ve shown me that nothing is impossible. You have incredible drive, and this causes many people to wonder: Is what he does even possible?”

“Yet above all, I would like to thank my beloved Mom, who always supported Dad in his choices, always looking after our best interests and taking care of us while our father traveled around the world, making a difference in the lives of many people.

“We never counted how many countries you visited, but later we found out you traveled to about seventy countries, if not more. I must admit, my very greatest wish in life would be to see you back in Mahabad, where you were born. Being able to travel there with you and see where you grew up would be a dream come true for me.

“Nothing else in life makes me happier than seeing you happy. I love you, Dad, and I hope you remember this evening with your loved ones forever. Thank you for everything!”



Alan's actual home

APPENDIX

About Prof. Alan Dilani, Ph.D.

Dr. Dilani is a global authority on interdisciplinary research regarding the interaction between design and health. Alan Dilani is a founder of the International Academy for Design and Health (IADH) and the journal, *World Health Design*. Dr Dilani has been engaged worldwide in several universities in the field of Design and Health developing a “Salutogenic Design Program”, in both medical and design institutions. He holds a Masters of Architecture in Environmental Design from the Polytechnic of Turin, Italy and a Ph.D. in Health Facility Design from the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. He developed a multidisciplinary research program at the Karolinska Institute, Medical University that led to a new design theory called “Saltugenic Design” that not only fosters functional efficiency in healthcare infrastructure, but also improves health processes. Dr Dilani has organized 12 World Congresses on Design and Health, 16 International Symposiums in Europe, North America, Africa and the Asia Pacific regions, Australia and has contributed internationally to the academic development in this field. Dr. Dilani has lectured at the Swedish Engineering Academy of Science (IVA) and the Swedish Council of Science (SVR) as well as to US Academy of Science in Washington. He has served as a keynote speaker at several conferences and lectured worldwide in the major universities in USA, Europe, Australasia, Asia and Africa. He has been a speaker, examiner and supervisor for Ph.D. students in several universities. He has designed all typologies of healthcare facilities and has been served as advisor for several Ministries of Health around the world developing briefing with a vision of Salutogenic approach to healthcare infrastructure. He is the author of 15 books and numerous articles in the field of Design and Health. Dr. Dilani has been awarded in 2010 from the American Institute of Architect, AIA for his promotion of high quality design research and in 2017 he received the Lifetime Fellowship for outstanding leadership and contribution as founder and chair of The International Academy for Design and Health in the city hall of Vienna.

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The realization of this book is the culmination of a lifelong journey. It would not have been possible without the encouragement and collaboration of many people.

First of all, I continue to be eternally grateful for my family, my devoted wife Satu, my daughter Sara, and my son Marco for their encouragement, support, and ongoing patience with my constant travels around the world. Given the nature of my work, I was away from them often, sometimes for weeks; yet I constantly felt their love and care, enabling me to focus on the tasks at hand. Without them, nothing would have been possible.

My older brother, Ahmad, always supported me to strive for a superior education, to travel abroad and continue my studies in Italy. It was in Perugia that I found my new family. They gave me unconditional love, helping to open me to many new life experiences in a different culture.

I thank Sweden for giving me the opportunity to achieve the highest academic degree in my field. My gratitude to my mentors: Sarem Sadegh Vaziri, in the early stage of my career in Switzerland; Hans Wigzell and Leif Edvinsson, in Sweden; and my global mentor, Derek Parker, from the United States. All four men inspired and supported me in my life's work to create the successful institution IADH, International Academy for Design and Health, which has had a great impact in the world.

My heartfelt thanks to hundreds of friends and colleagues who over the years have shared their knowledge and worked side-by-side with me in the IADH Design & Health World Congresses. We have enjoyed one another's company and learned a great deal from each other. Together we have carried the torch of the Design & Health movement.

A number of friends have urged me to write my biography, emphasizing that publishing my story would inspire a younger generation to reach for their dreams and accomplish them. It's true that for me as a young person, envisioning my present life would have seemed impossible from my early days in Kurdistan.

I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my friend and colleague, Carol Prunhuber. From the moment I met her, she inspired me to re-engage with the Kurds and supported me in creating this book. Her keen intellect, enthusiasm,

and understanding throughout this writing process have been extraordinary. I also want to thank Ellen Porter for her insightful editing, Cynthia Briggs for her detailed copyediting, and Gabriela Galindo for her creative design of this publication.

It was while I was traveling worldwide, with over a hundred and twenty flights per year, that this book was born. I had hoped to finish this biography for my sixtieth birthday but this particular child took one additional year to come to life.

To conclude, I am beyond grateful to you all who have supported me to achieve my goals and realize my vision for healthful architecture.

My hope for all of you is that you find this biography interesting and inspiring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan Dilani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alan Dilani

March 2018, Menton, France

NOTES

- Page 7: ¹ His birth name was Hamid Mahmoudi. It would be later in life that he would change his name to Alan Dilani.
- Page 10: ² The organization was originally designated the Kurdish Democratic Party (PDK). It would be later changed to PDKI, Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran.
- Page 11: ³ Qazi's speech was quoted in an article in the PDKI's newspaper, "A celebration of independence and freedom in Kurdistan," Kurdistan No. 14, February 13, 1946 [Çwarşeme 24y Rebendamî 1324y Hetawî].
- Page 59: ⁴ Muhammad Sahimi, "The Ten Days That Changed Iran," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/02/fajr-10-days-that-changed-iran.html>.
- Page 62: ⁵ Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, Mahabad, March 2, 1979, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WytBDIZ1gfQ>, posted March 2, 2016.
- Page 63: ⁶ Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (New York: Thomas Dunn Books, 1999), 217.
- Page 156: ⁷ "Nytt sykehus gammeldags" [New hospital is old-fashioned], *Adresseavisen*, Friday, March 10, 1995.
- Page 160: ⁸ "Here are the best (and worse) hospital buildings in Sweden," *Dagens Medicin*, March 7, 1995.
- Page 161: ⁹ Lisbeth Kindstedt, "Strong criticism directed toward the hospital construction," *Hallandsposten*, November 18, 1994, 4.
- ¹⁰ Lisbeth Kindstedt, "Warned for deficiencies in the C1," *Hallandsposten*, November 19, 1984.
- Page 163: ¹¹ Lisbeth Kindstedt, "Physician executives resign in protest," *Hallandsposten*, November 22, 1994.
- Page 164: ¹² "Insufficient hospital constructions or hospital constructions with flaws?" *Hallandsposten*, November 23, 1994.
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- Page 263: ¹⁶ Alan Dilani and Agnella Morelli, *Health Promotion by Design in Elderly Care* (Stockholm: Design and Health Research Center publication, 2005). Excerpts are taken from sections throughout the book, lightly edited here for context.
- ¹⁷ Socialstyrelsen [Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare], "Älrepolitik för framtiden, 100 steg till trygghet och utveckling med en åldrande befolkning," 2003, 91.
- Page 268: ¹⁸ R. Jungk and N. Müllert, *Future Workshops: How to Create Desirable Futures* (London: Institute for Social Inventions, 1987).
- Page 270: ¹⁹ L. Gustafsson, "What Is Dementia?" *Acta Neurol Scand*, 1996; Suppl. 168: 22–24; B. Kaskie and M. Stornadh, "Visuospatial Deficit in Dementia of the Alzheimer type," *Arch Neuol*, 1995: 52; 422–425; A. Wallin, aA Brun, and L. Gustafson., "Swedish Consensus on Dementia Diseases," *Acta Neurol Scand*. 1994; Suppl. 157:90.
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- ²¹ H. Wijk (ed.), *Goda miljöer och aktiviteter för äldre*. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2004).
- Page 272: ²² I. and K. Ericsson, *Känna sig som hemma—goda vårdmiljöer för demenssjuka* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1991).
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Part 5. Chapter 1 **Principles of Salutogenic Design**. References to Alan Dilani, “The Beneficial Health Outcomes of Salutogenic Design”, *World Health Design*, June 2015, 18–35.

The article as it appears here has been lightly edited to conform with usage adopted throughout the book as a whole; the references appear below in their original form.

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Building for Health: Life Journey of a Kurdish Architect, was finished in September 2018.

For its composition the Caslon Pro and Avenir typeface families were used, under the design of Gabriela Galindo and TripleG: Arte y Diseño team.



In the twenty years I've known Alan, I've witnessed his research expanding from case studies in Sweden to a global exploration of the life-giving impact of spatial design on health. Well recognized and globally honored, his findings today attract ever more interest and practical application. This is a groundbreaking book. May its inspiration spark partnership in the tangible creation of a world dedicated to well-being and our collective future.

Leif Edvinsson, Professor of Intellectual Capital, Lund University

The salutogenic work of Alan Dilani is a dialogue about human values, values that promote harmony in the environment and health and well-being for people the world over. It's a vision that he invites us all to share. In his groundbreaking role, disseminating a paradigm-shifting consciousness, I would name Alan an ambassador of ethics and well-being—and an ambassador of hope to our world.

Msgr. Prof. Obiora Ike, Executive Director of Global Ethics Center, Geneva

About Professor Alan Dilani



Alan Dilani developed and implemented the theory of Salutogenic Design, adapted successfully in design projects worldwide to show the positive impact of the built environment upon human health and well-being. Dr. Dilani has lectured widely, inspiring the development of programs in salutogenic design in academic, medical, and design settings alike. His engagement is educating a new generation of interdisciplinary and international researchers and practitioners with a sensitive and practical eye toward the shape of the future and a healthy planet.

Dilani, who founded the International Academy for Design & Health (IADH) and the journal *World Health Design*, is an advisor to ministries of health around the world. At the Karolinska Institute, his research center continues to refine his pioneering design theory and global vision. In 2010 Dr. Dilani was awarded notable honor by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for promoting a high standard of quality design research.