

Report of the 27th Auroville International meeting in Venwoude, Netherlands 1 – 8 May, 2009

Participants:

AVI Netherlands:	Mia Berden, Jettie Zwaans, Linda Grace Mosselman, Loes Keyzers, Wim van Megen, Jan Lohman, Anil Gupta, Adri Bolsenga, Martijn Boomsma
AVI USA:	Wendy and Julian Lines, Fanou and Bryan Walton
AVI UK:	Sonia Dyne, Martin Littlewood
AVI France:	Francine Finck, Devasmita Patnaik, Satyakam Karim
AVI Germany:	Isa Wagner, Friederike Mühlhans, Uschi und Helmut Ernst
AVI Canada:	Christian Feuillette
AVI Spain:	Alfonso Galiana
Auroville:	Vani, Shivaya, Kamala, Niranjani, Dianna, Tekeste, Luigi
India:	Anuradha Choudry

Minutes: Friederike and Vani

A. Aims, contents and tasks of the meeting:

1. To raise the AVI profile in order to help raise the overall Auroville profile internationally,
2. To support International Zone development,
3. To help improve the security situation for Aurovilians in the field of
 - a) Visa
 - b) Land
 - c) Economy and maintenance
4. Voting of new Board and Chairman
5. Future meetings
6. Public day presentations
7. Auroville presentations
8. Reports of AVI Centers
9. Special messages to Auroville

B. Ways and means:

1. To raise the AVI profile...
 - Develop the board into a more effective working body, for example through more frequent skype or phone conferences and the creation of task force / affinity groups,
 - Structural changes in order to enhance efficiency of the AVI board: reoccupy the job of Executive Director and create an „executive group“

- Support and reach out to the liaisons – each board member should „adopt“ one or two liaisons in order to keep regular contact,
- Increase membership – find best ways to invite Auroville visitors to keep in touch with national AVI center/liaison. Address database of Land Service should be made available to all centers/liaisons,
- Intensify contacts and involvement of youth. AVI Germany plans to organize a European/international youth conference. Networking with the Breuninger Foundation and Dena Merriam (Global Peace Initiative of Women) could be helpful,
- Create a new AVI website which allows for more interaction, accessibility, user-friendliness, collaboration and updates. Martijn (AVI Netherlands) presented his proposal to create an active online information community for Auroville International, using the open source web-based content management system Joomla. Martijn’s dedicated work on this proposal was very much appreciated,
- Create an AVI brochure to enhance the “visibility” of AVI, including:
 - Historical background (first formation in 1969, two more attempts, finally creation in The Hague)
 - Individual profiles of all centers and liaisons
 - Personal stories of AVI activists „how I became involved with Auroville“,
- Make the new AVI leaflet available in the Info Center and all major guesthouses (this is already being done and should be followed up),
- Create a database of Auroville pictures and images and make it available for AVI use – Luigi promised to be helpful in this,
- AVI centers/liaisons are encouraged to engage themselves more in Auroville presentations in their countries, also on the occasion of exhibitions, fairs and cultural presentations like Indian classical music events,
- AVI centers/liaisons are encouraged to contact Indian Embassies, national UNESCO offices, government and non-governmental agencies in their countries which might be interested and helpful in the future development of Auroville, especially in IZ development,
- AVI centers/liaisons are requested to contribute to the collection of data on academic studies involving Auroville. They should also make efforts to contact universities in their countries which might be interested in students exchange programs with Auroville,
- AVI France is encouraged to keep regular contacts with UNESCO headquarters in Paris. Enzo Fazzini, who is the UNESCO webmaster, has become member of AVI France so he can make valuable contributions with regard to this contact. Enzo has recently started an interesting study on the theme of “What does it mean to be a universal citizen of Auroville”. Also contacts with the American University of Paris, which has successfully sent a first students group to Auroville, should be followed up,
- AVI UK is encouraged to follow up on contacts with CHEC. A recent proposal for the support of a child protection project made by CHEC to the Commonwealth Foundation was rejected, probably due to reservations towards getting involved with Human Rights issues. But CHEC is keen to work with Auroville projects and could also be instrumental in supporting the establishment of links with African countries.

2. To support International Zone development

- National pavilion groups are requested to engage themselves in the searching of their national soul and cultural genius with the aim to make the results available in a brochure,
- Cultural activities of national pavilion groups in Auroville (like „the French pavilion presents“) should be supported by AVI centers/liaisons
- EU centers/liaisons have voted for a common approach – AVI Germany has offered to organise a European meeting in Berlin in October 2009,
- The inauguration of the Inuksuk has inspired us to think about first manifestations of national/continental pavilions by sculptures or other pieces of art,
- Also sophisticated tent structures (inspired by German architect Frei Otto) could be a first manifestation of pavilions,
- AVI USA is supported in its wish to remain with its pavilion in the place of the US students dormitory,
- Regarding the "geometrical shapes" approach for an IZ masterplan some board members questioned the imposition of these forms and would rather look for a more organic and harmonious approach growing outward from within. Others agreed to integrate the "geometrical shapes" approach for their pavilion. But all wanted to move forward and unblock the IZ development process in a spirit of collaboration with all the people involved, in order to manifest the City that the Mother has dreamt of.

3. To help improve the security/ visa situation for Auroville residents...

- The AVI Board and General Assembly will once again bring the Boris/Chris visa issue to the attention of the IAC, requesting urgent action on their behalf. Boris came to the meeting to speak about his own and Chris' personal situation. They still cannot return to their home and family in Auroville, in spite of having won the court appeal. It was felt how deeply shaken he still is.
- We unanimously expressed our deep concern about the visa situation for Aurovilians. AVI centers/liaisons are often the first ones to be contacted by people who want to settle in Auroville, and we experience how important this question is. Auroville wants and has to grow, but the constant threat of having one's visa withdrawn is a critical issue preventing this growth. It also prevents newcomers from trustfully bringing their financial resources to Auroville, a fact that is adding unnecessarily to Auroville's difficult economic situation. Mother has invited for participation in a lifelong experience „of the joy of having no possession“ so everything should be done in order to free the energy of total dedication and trust.
- Reports about the recent workshop in Auroville on sustainable planning and regional development met with special interest of all participants. We were reminded of our “closing reflections” of our Montreal meeting in 2007 in

which we suggested a stronger emphasis on co-evolution and co-development with the villages in the Auroville bioregion.

- We very much welcomed Luigi's participation in the meeting and his presentations on new developments regarding housing, land and economic situation. Especially the opening up to economic participation of prospective newcomers, friends of Auroville and other well-wishers, for example through the creation of joint ventures or of coordinated land purchase in sensitive areas around Auroville, was met with great appreciation. In precarious times of economic crisis and dwindling trust in banks and insurances people start looking for ethical values and actual sustainability for their investments, so Auroville could even profit from the present situation.
- We will bring the critical Auroville land situation again to the attention of the IAC, with the request to do everything in their power to support Auroville in its striving to secure Auroville land in the city center and in the greenbelt. The Indian government (f. i. protecting Auroville as a model region) and UNESCO (protecting Auroville as a "world heritage of the future") could play a crucial role. We will support Auroville by all means in this quest.

Luigi's presentations, however, gave some hope for the land issue. According to him 170 acres of land at the present sum of € 6,5 Mio have still to be acquired in the city area. In the greenbelt 1 500 acres at the sum of € 70 Mio are still to be purchased. To raise funds for the total sum of € 76,5 Mio seems totally unrealistic. On the other hand Auroville possesses land outside the city and greenbelt area at today's worth of more than € 77 Mio. We encourage Auroville to proceed with negotiations for the exchange of land in order to secure the city center and the greenbelt and hope for the cooperation of the Auroville community in this matter of great challenge.

4. Voting of the new AVI Board

11 nominations have been presented to the General Assembly for 11 seats to be filled, so the voting was an easy process. The GA unanimously voted for the following members of the new AVI Board:

Sonia Dyne	AVI UK
Francine Finck	AVI France
Devasmita Patnaik	AVI France
Linda Grace Mosselman	AVI Netherlands
Isa Wagner	AVI Germany
Friederike Mühlhans	AVI Germany
Julian Lines	AVI USA
Bryan Walton	AVI USA
Martin Littlewood	AVI UK
Christian Feuillette	AVI Canada
Alfonso Galiana	AVI Spain

Further Board members are:

Vani Poirier	Auroville representative
Mia Berden	(AVI Netherlands), honorary board member
Mauna van der Vlugt	(Auroville), honorary board member
Jettie Zwaans	(AVI Netherlands), co-opted board member
Robert Aarsse	(AVI France), co-opted board member

The Board has unanimously appointed Julian Lines as Chairman of the Board for another year, until his two terms allowed by the AVI statutes are over. Sonia Dyne and Christian Feuillette have been re-appointed as Vice-Chairpersons.

The new Board has appointed Martin Littlewood as its Executive Director.

Friederike Mühlhans will remain AVI Secretary.
Francine Finck will remain AVI Treasurer.

The Board has agreed to appoint an Executive Group for the quick carrying out of specific tasks. This group will work in full transparency and continuous reporting back to the full Board. It consists of:

Julian Lines, Chairman
Sonia Dyne, Vice-chairman
Christian Feuillette, Vice-chairman
Martin Littlewood, Executive Director
Friederike Mühlhans, Secretary

We expressed our high esteem and gratitude to Mia for her untiring efforts to support Auroville and develop and strengthen our AVI association.

5. Next Auroville International meetings

Meeting in 2010

Our next meeting will take place again in Auroville during the first week of February 2010. We are planning to organize meetings and exchange with Auroville groups (like Working Committee, International Zone group, Women's Group) and have sufficient time for our board meetings.

We have expressed our wish since long to include Indian presence in our AVI association and help make Auroville better known in India as well as make India's rich cultural heritage better known in Auroville and AVI. It was a great pleasure to have Kamala present at our meeting, she brought a special flavour to all our gatherings and spoke about issues of special importance for Tamil Aurovilians. So we agreed to hold part of our AVI meeting in 2010 in one of India's federal states. Devasmita and Satyakam offered to organize in February 2010 an AVI meeting with Auroville presentations and cultural experience in Orissa, where Devasmita's family has its

origin. The Integral Yoga is very well known in Orissa with many study circles, there is for example an Integral Yoga magazine in Orya language and 500 schools based on the principles of Sri Aurobindo Ashram schooling.

The board has accepted in principle Devsmita's invitation to go to Orissa. We will be in communication with Devasmita regarding the cost, logistics and feasibility of going to Orissa and confirm later.

Suggested topics for presentations to the Orissa public are:

- 1.) Environment – from barren land to afforestation
- 2.) Co-evolution of urban and rural (“rurban”) development, social development without caste difference, eco-friendly and sustainable living,
- 3.) Education
- 4.) Economy and “management by consciousness”.

AVI and Auroville participants of the meeting will be invited to concentrate on the 12 qualities of the petal chambers and answer the question which quality attracts them most, how far Auroville has already manifested them in matter and what it is preparing for their future manifestations.

Meeting in 2011

It is also our wish to strengthen ties and cooperation with African countries. Due to organizational problems a meeting in Ethiopia in 2008 as wished by Tekeste has not been able to manifest. Tekeste reminded us that Mother has seen a great mission for Ethiopia, especially in the support of African unity and the transformation of Christianity. He also reminded us of the great tribute Sri Aurobindo paid to the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie in his poem “Lion of Africa”.

We want to make a fresh move and aim at a meeting in Addis Ababa in 2011. We have sent our guidelines for AVI liaisons to Tenagne and Negiste, the two Ethiopian ladies who have visited Auroville on Tekeste’s invitation in 2008 and whom we met during our gatherings there. We want to make sure that a possible meeting has a stable basis and stable contacts in the country. Friederike will contact Carsten who holds business relations in Ethiopia and showed his interest in supporting a meeting and also Helmut who has established the contact with the architectural department of the Addis Ababa University. The participation of Aurovilians in the meeting will be crucial and we would like to encourage a group to form and support this endeavour. In case a meeting in Ethiopia will not materialize AVI UK has offered to host the meeting in 2011.

Meeting in 2012

Satyakam offered to organize a meeting in Gujarat in 2012 along the lines of the 2010 meeting in Auroville/Orissa.

6. Public day presentations

- Anuradha Choudry: *Savitri reading and guided meditation*
 - L’Avenir d’Auroville: *Video “Welcome Auroville”*
 - Luigi Zanzi: *Auroville’s development: after the soul, the body!*
 - Linda Grace Mosselman (Moderator):
Lessons learned and future perspectives – a live video conference with Aurovilians Deepti, Margarita and Shraddhavan, facilitated by Auroville TV
 - Thierry de Wijn: *Conscious evolution*
 - Erik van Praag: *Conscious living with climate change*
 - Niranjani: *Savitri reading and guided meditation*
 - Dr. Marc Luyckx Ghisi: *The post capitalist society: manipulation or sustainable humanism*
 - Nadaka & Gopika: *Shantakaram, mantra singing*
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- Moderation: Loes Keyzers

7. Auroville presentations

- Presentation of NCBS (New Creation School) by Dianne and Martin
- Presentation of Sadhana Forest by Vani
- Presentation of Auroville Radio by Vani
- Presentation of the Auroville Clinic for Integral Health by Vani and Julian
- Presentation of Realisation by Julian
- Presentation of Unity Pavilion, CIRRHU and UHU by Shivaya
- Presentation of Auroville Film Festival 09, by Vani
- Presentation of Thamarai by Shivaya
- Presentation on the situation of land purchase, city planning,, fundraising and networking by Luigi

8. Reports of AVI Centers

During the General Assembly on Thursday, May 7th those AVI centers represented at the Assembly gave their annual reports. AVI Germany started with a Power Point Presentation, reports by AVI USA, France, UK, Netherlands, Canada and Spain followed. The liaisons from Italy, Sweden, South Africa and Russia/St. Petersburg have sent their reports by mail.

The reports will be forwarded on request (contact Friederike, info@auroville.de).

9. Special messages to Auroville

- Vani presented a request for support of the Auroville Radio team. We were quite astonished to hear that Auroville Radio is not accepted as an Auroville service so far and does not enjoy the benefits of a service. It is such an extremely precious tool linking Auroville to its neighbourhood and to the international community. Many people worldwide listen to its programs and feel connected and updated on Auroville developments. Its value cannot be overestimated! We would like to request Auroville to register AV Radio and AV TV as an Auroville service unit and do everything possible to support its development.
- The efforts of Marco and other Aurovilians to develop guidelines for a new Auroville guest policy are fully supported by AVI. We kindly request the group to think about a special guest status for long term associates of AVI centers/liaisons. There are frequent complaints that they are often treated like first time visitors, while many of them are dedicated and active supporters of Auroville.
- We very much regretted that the Outreach newsletter is no longer published. It was a valuable tool in the communication and cooperation with official contacts. Is there a way to restart its publication?
- We recommend a complete revision of the Auroville website, something also Marc Luyckx mentioned several times as very important. It is our experience that government and other agencies or individuals whom we contact in order to find funding or other support for Auroville first visit and check the website. The first impression is, which is reported back to us and creates a lot of misunderstandings, “but it really looks like a sect”. Auroville’s long standing connection with and support by UNESCO, its involvement with EU projects like “City Networking”, its great accomplishments in all kinds of sustainable activities etc. – all these more “wordly”, officially recognized and appreciated activities should make the intro to the website. We certainly do not suggest to hide our spiritual aims and background but to change the user guidance. In this context Julian mentioned Mother’s instruction to Udar Pinto when he went to the USA in 1972 on the occasion of Sri Aurobindo’s centenary: “Do not speak of me”.
- There was supportive applause to Luigi’s news that Auroville is now taking up the important task of documentation in various fields, like Auroville’s longstanding relation with UNESCO, city networking, EU projects etc. The documentation material he brought will be a very valuable tool for our work. We would like to encourage Auroville to concentrate even more energies on documentation in all fields of research and experience and publish documentation material on the Auroville website. Sonia reported that there was a request to collect specific medical data in Auroville for an interesting academic study but no records were kept in the health services. Also, when potential major funders seek information about previous projects from the Auroville website, there is very little information available and it is difficult to find.
- In a discussion with Auroville youth present at the meeting the impression was quite strong that youth still has no real voice in the community. The creation of a “Youth Council” fizzled out since it’s voice was never really heard. We were also impressed by the dedication these young people showed

towards Auroville development and also by their very mature view that Auroville desperately needs more professionalism, more real leadership and clear executive powers – a view that was voiced more than once during the meeting, not least by IAC member Marc Luyckx.

Luckily more and more young people have again started coming to Auroville from all over the world, for a shorter or longer work and study experience or to join the community. Their active involvement in all fields of Auroville community life should be fostered in order to avoid a split in two “parallel worlds”.

It is also important to create simple accommodation for young singles and young families. Present housing projects seem to target more the age group of 40+ while there is a great lack of simple cheap accommodation.

- We felt content to hear from Luigi that Auroville groups start recognizing AVI as a “valuable asset” of Auroville. Our disappointment was mentioned when last year at the UNESCO celebrations of Auroville’s 40th AVI was not mentioned at all. It was not only seen as disrespect for the intense efforts of so many people actively engaged with AVI but also as a chance missed to present Auroville as “the city the earth needs” which is there not only in South India but embedded in a huge worldwide network.

C. Next steps / task forces:

International Advisory Council

Julian, who is AVI Chairman and IAC member, will bring different topics discussed in our meeting, to the attention of the other IAC members, especially our concern about the visa and the land situation of Auroville and ask for immediate action in the case of Boris and Chris.

AVI website

Friederike will send Martijn’s presentation to all centers/liaisons. Please all visit the test website: www.new.auroville-international.org. Active collaboration of all centers/liaisons is called for! Martijn’s email address is: webmaster@auroville-international.org

AVI brochure

Isa, Friederike and Martin will collect material. All centers/liaisons are requested to hand in their material (as described above) by 15th September 09.

New AVI leaflet

Copies of the new AVI leaflet were distributed at the meeting. Vani will distribute them to the Info Center and guesthouses. Martin, who did the layout, has offered to help again with the layout in case centers/liaisons should wish to translate the leaflet into their languages.

Support of AVI liaisons

Friederike will ask all board members to name one or two liaisons they would like to support more closely. Isa has already volunteered for Mexico, Friederike for Lithuania and Alfonso for Argentina.

International Zone development

Sonia, Isa, Friederike and Christian have expressed their special interest in IZ development. They will follow up on the request for material on “national soul searching”.

Education and students exchange

Devasmita, supported by AVI France member Tania Elder, will follow up on students exchange programs and village youth in Auroville.

Land

Alfonso has expressed his special concern for land protection issue.

City development / fundraising

Linda-Grace and Wim have expressed their special concern for this issue.

Support of “healthy living” projects

Jettie and Vani have expressed their special interest in supporting projects like Sadhana Forest, which are engaged in healthy and sustainable living.

Savitri study circles

Mia, Sonia, Francine and Isa will further promote Mia’s initiative to create Savitri study circles all around the world.

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Pavilion humour: Which sculpture / piece of art could represent your country?

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|--------------|--|
| UK: | Queen Victoria standing in the International Zone, pointing towards Matrimandir, saying: “We are not amused” |
| Netherlands: | A herring with an orange hat |
| US: | The Golden Arches (McDonald’s symbol) |
| Germany: | A group of garden gnomes |
| France: | Obelix |