

# Rehabilitating Historic City Centers: A Critique of an Important “Modernist” Assumption Underlying the 1950’s Master Plan and the 1980’s Lahore Urban Development and Transportation Study in Pakistan

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This paper examines some significant changes in the post-World War II urban planning policies, in relation to the issue of rehabilitating the walled city of Lahore, in Pakistan. The Lahore Development Authority (LDA), with aid from international donor agencies, initiated the “redevelopment,” “upgrading,” and “conservation” policies during the critical phases in the city’s urban development. The common theme behind these different approaches was to provide a regularized framework of urban growth for a rapidly expanding metropolis. This paper reveals that the idea of controlled urban growth is inspired by an important “modernist” assumption that planning policies can predict the future shape and quality of human settlements. It concludes that strategies to rehabilitate urban centers should respond to the unique circumstances and historical significance of a city’s pattern of growth.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WALLED CITY OF LAHORE

The walled city of Lahore is located in the north-western quarter of Pakistan’s second largest city, Lahore, the provincial capital of Punjab. The city originated along the ancient route from Kabul to Delhi, via Khyber pass, on the western bank of the River Ravi. The area of the Walled City encompasses nearly one square mile with a

population of about 200,000 and it is the most densely populated quarter of Lahore. This area was enclosed by a moat and double defensive walls, until the British annexation in 1849. During the British colonial rule, the walls were destroyed making way for a circular garden that still exists in parts. The Walled City is an integral and vital component of the metropolitan complex providing shelter and employment for nearly fifteen percent of the metropolitan population providing a major contribution to the urban economy. The street system within the residential areas of the walled city reflects, in most part, spontaneous and incremental growth.

The strategic location of the city has provided impetus to the city’s continued growth and importance as a regional trade, military and administrative center. During different periods in its formation, Lahore developed into an important market for grain and a center for manufacture of traditional crafts; it still remains the national center for culture and the arts and a regional center for commerce and manufacturing. The history of Lahore is one of alternating periods of



Fig. 1.

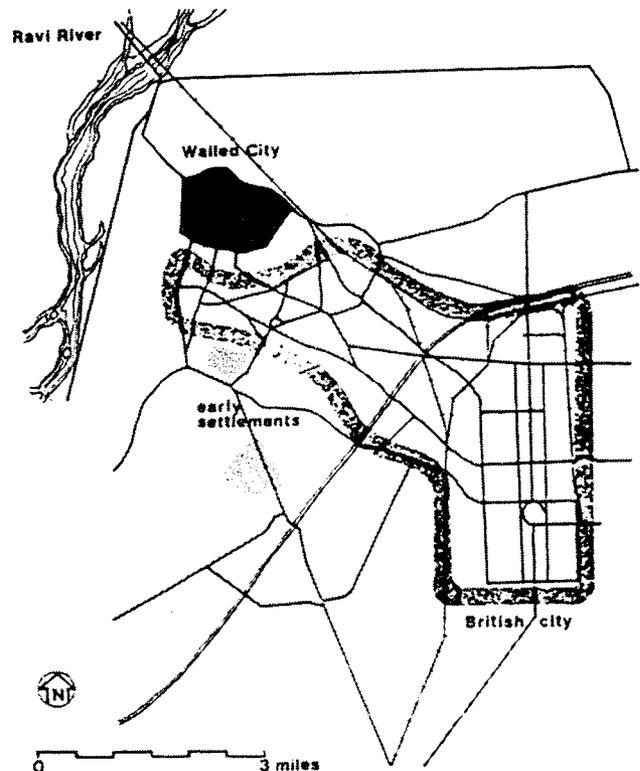


Fig. 2.

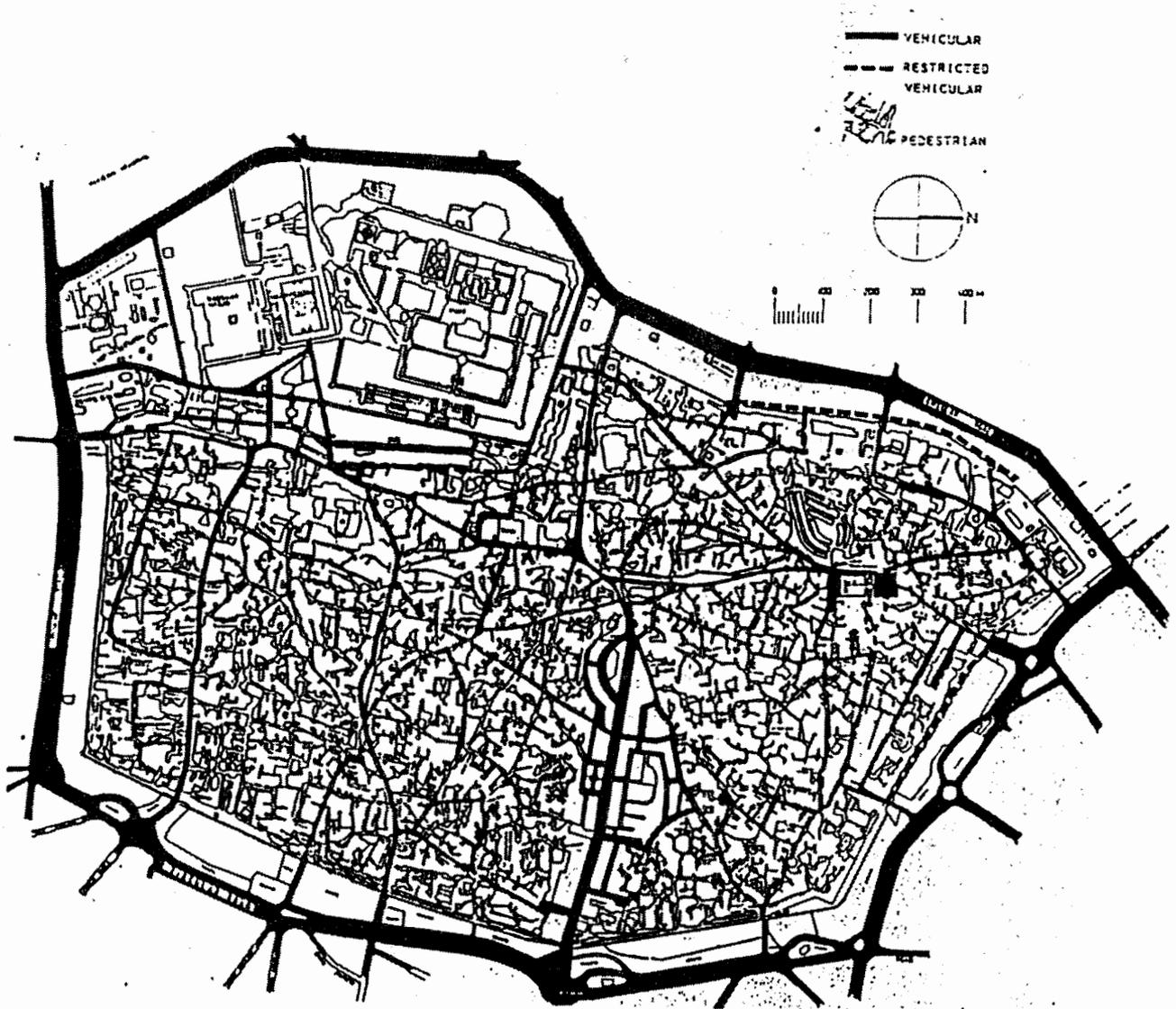


Fig. 3.

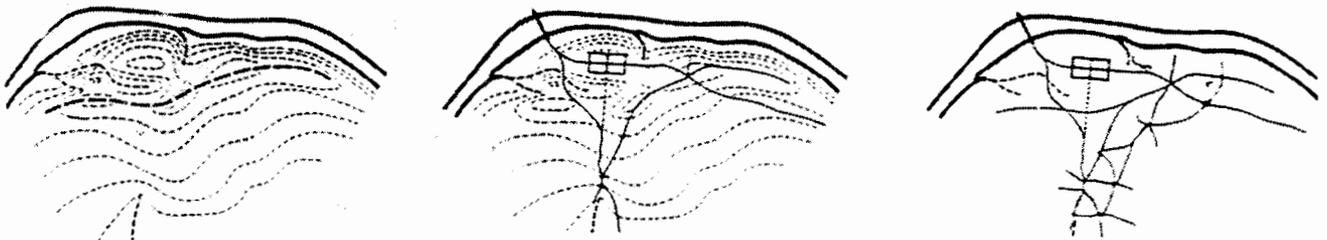


Fig. 4.

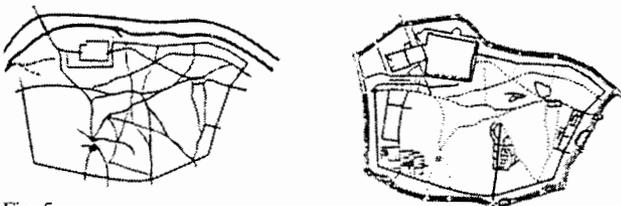


Fig. 5.

magnificence<sup>1</sup> and imperial building, devastation and decay. The Mughal emperors (1525-1747) played a significant role in the development of the city's urban form as they consolidated, fortified and enlarged the city. Under the Mughal rule, the city initially grew around existing street patterns. The first intervention was the construction of the massive fort wall enveloping the entire city. The site of the present Fort was surrounded on three sides. The location of the River Ravi on the west prevented the city's growth in that direction and gave the Fort its strategic location. The Fort wall contained





Fig. 8.

the city.<sup>4</sup> The several attempts to plan commercial redevelopment in the early fifties failed as the bulk of commercial growth continued in its traditional, incremental and organic way.<sup>5</sup>

Although commercial activities, within the walled city, is generally located along the major traffic arteries, industry is fairly evenly distributed over the bazaars and the residential neighborhoods. The possibility of avoiding formal documents with tax implications and the intense communication required in traditional transaction modes formed the basis for the growth of major whole sale activities that exist within the walled city. The multiple and complex links that the walled city has with surrounding metropolitan commerce have resulted in high land values within the old fabric. The continuing commercial vitality of the walled city has had both positive and negative ramifications. The production and exchange of goods encourages people to remain there despite the change in the walled city's social composition. Both manufacture and commerce bring the need for adequate, appropriate spaces to meet contemporary needs. However, this vitality has endangered the existing building stock which effects the long term physical, economic and social development of the walled city. According to the recent statistics provided by the Lahore Municipal Corporation, the population is declining in the Walled City. Population emigration is related to the shift towards non-residential activities, but such changes are not uniform throughout the different quarters of the Walled City.

The growth of the larger city of Lahore, 20 times the population and about 200 times the area of the original Walled City, has involved basic political and social transformations.<sup>6</sup> It is a general understanding that "people who lived within the walls 150 years ago included the affluent and the rulers,"<sup>7</sup> while the majority of current residents are the urban poor, constituting one of the major functional changes that have occurred within the Walled City; that of housing a section of the poor. The British rule is viewed to be an instigator for this trend of bringing the elite out of the old city walls. However, the concept of suburbs was initiated by the Mughals and continued by the British. In lieu of the history of Lahore's urban growth, one could argue that the poor have always lived in the inner city areas that now form the historic core of the metropolises. They have done so primarily to reduce communication distance between work and home. This is not a new phenomena and neither can it be the cause for the decline in environmental quality of the historic areas. Recent socio-economic surveys show that although the Walled City provides housing for nearly eight percent of the city's urban poor, the number of unskilled workers and laborers make up less than one-tenth of the city's labor force. The wide spread growth of the metropolitan city of Lahore and the incapacity of social and administrative institutions to regulate the processes that accompany this transformation has further expedited the dilapidation of buildings in the walled city.

## SECOND PHASE IN LAHORE'S URBAN REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (1970'S-1980'S)

Deteriorated, but nonetheless potentially immensely valuable for its social and cultural environment, the walled city has, during the last two decades, attracted the attention of the local authorities as well as international development agencies. It was included on the UNESCO's List of World Heritage. Of the Walled City's nearly 18,000 buildings, 1,400 are considered worthy of protection and 4,000 are identified to be of architectural merit. In 1978, on the request of the government of Pakistan, the World Bank agreed to provide loans for efforts at upgrading the basic facilities as a first step towards improving the overall fabric of the city and its inner core. The entire project, known as the Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Study (LUDTS), was arranged in four parts:

- i. Urban planning activities, leading to the production of a structure plan to provide a framework for action program within Lahore;
- ii. Neighborhood upgrading and urban expansion projects, to provide substantial improvements in living conditions for lower income groups;
- iii. Improvement of traffic conditions in congested parts of the street system of central Lahore; and
- iv. Improvements to living conditions within the Walled City by improving environmental sanitation and providing social support program.

The first part of the LUDTS deals with the development of a Structure Plan. It provides the common context and background within which each of the other three project components have been treated. The Structure Plan was a critical response to the wide scale failure of the master plan prepared in the 1960's in controlling the city's incremental growth. It emphasized the broad structure of the town, in terms of policies, objectives and standards rather than the detailed land use allocations of the earlier Master Plan.<sup>8</sup> An integral part of this structure were the zone-by-zone proposals for the



Fig. 9.

existing built-up area. These included neighborhood upgrading in areas which were deficient in utilities and social services. While looking at Lahore in a long-term perspective, the Structure Plan concentrated on the infrastructure and land development. The proposals for upgrading the walled city formed a part of the overall urban development strategy. Thus, the approach taken by the consultants, in the initial stages of the project, was to regard the walled city as one of the chaotic and troubled quarters of metropolitan Lahore.

The Volume Four of the LUDTS, prepared by the BKM team and titled the Walled City Upgrading Study, attempted to identify means of dealing with the problems of this dense and deteriorated quarter. This Study provided a conceptual framework and a trunk infrastructure network for the entire walled city. It contrasted various strategic interventions within the Walled City, ranging from "the results of a laissez-faire policy to deliberate program of destruction." It also proposed an alternative approach for the walled city component of the LUDTS by suggesting that conservation should be an integral part of neighborhood upgrading, redevelopment and urban renewal proposals.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of establishing schedules and requirements for implementing the Walled City Upgrading Program, the BKM team refers to the typical "module" as defined for the urban development/expansion programs; this module represents 200 hectares of land including manpower, machinery, materials and schedules required for the development of land, infrastructure and housing. This module is also constant for the various parts of the entire metropolitan Lahore, irrespective of variation in density or the socio-economic structure of different areas.

The second part of the Study translated the objectives of development into specific strategies with a detailed action plan for a five year period, from 1981-1986. It included detailed study of two selected pilot projects that could be implemented within a short period.<sup>10</sup> The two areas (Mohalla Kakkazaiyan inside Delhi Gate and Mohalla Mollian inside Lahori Gate) selected to illustrate and test the feasibility of the proposed strategies were the oldest, and the most intact, neighborhoods in the walled city. According to the socio-economic survey, the selected areas for the two pilot projects had received the least number of migrants at the time of Pakistan's independence. The proposed strategy for each area broadly included three kinds of interventions:

- a. Urban Renewal: The proposals under this category included community infrastructure, sanitation and economic base and some components like building renewal and conservation would become part of a continuous process of upgrading beyond the five year period.
- b. Neighborhood Upgrading Area: These interventions dealt specifically with areas which were currently not adequately served by utilities, such as water, gas, sewerage and refuse collection, thus including most of the residential neighborhoods (150 hectares) except areas earmarked for urban renewal and localities "which are adequately served (Shahalmi and the Shahi Mohalla)."
- c. Catchment area: These were the areas defined in terms of the main spines linking each the main gates with the existing bazaars; it was proposed to continue these to serve as the network of commercial streets "on which will be located the principle retail shops, whole sale markets, and other commercial activities serving the local or a wider region."

The upgrading of pilot areas was divided in two main phases. The first phase consisted mainly of the development of "open" and "vacant" premises, with a priority on those spaces which were close to mosques and temples and therefore might be suitable for development of community centers and schools. The second phase related to "dilapidated" or "culturally valuable" structures which could be renewed, redeveloped or conserved. However, the Study illustrated only the first phase of the upgrading framework in the pilot areas. In addition to providing financial and institutional proposals for the implementation of proposed strategies, the study suggested the

preparation of a Conservation Plan which would "identify elements of the Walled City that have been in the past environmental assets or of historical significance, and would specify actions required for the restoration, conservation or preservation of each element identified"<sup>11</sup>. The Walled City component of the LUDTS dealt primarily with utilities and infrastructure upgrading of the Walled City and distinguishes these efforts from those directed towards the "conservation" of existing buildings.

In 1986, the preparation of this Conservation Plan was made the condition of the first World Bank credit for the Walled City. This Plan was developed by another local seem-government organization<sup>12</sup> on behalf of LDA. The key figure in the preparation of the Conservation Plan was PEPAC's Principal Architect, Masood Khan. The BKM team had to accept the premise of the Structure Plan (of which it was a part) and had worked out the Walled City Upgrading Study accordingly. In contrast, the PEPAC team questioned the lack of spatial differentiation and structural analysis of economic activities in the Inner City Central Area leading to lack of clarity about the future of these activities in relation to the proposed "area of opportunity" in the new extensions.

The PEPAC team worked for nearly two years on surveys and studies, prepared an inventory of buildings of architectural, cultural and historical value and documented selected elements in the form of monographs and measured drawings. They made recommendations which include the classification of 1,400 buildings worthy of protection, specific policy measures, further studies and planning activities, and identification of possible projects.<sup>13</sup> They proposed a wider "active" strategy with a single goal: "to preserve the Walled City's manifold assets by re-establishing its interior balance as a living community in a distinct urban district of national significance with high historic and environmental qualities."

While the BKM team suggested a policy framework whereby "no action should be taken which is likely to result in major changes in the population size, overall density and income patterns," the PEPAC team made a clear distinction between activities compatible with the area's historic and environmental qualities and those that are not. This was done to achieve the objective set forth by the Conservation Plan. To achieve the "interior balance," commercial development would be controlled and, in order to re-establish a living community" a better-functioning social network, improved living conditions, and the attraction of middle and higher income residents would be necessary.

The Conservation Plan recommended a policy framework consisting of three inter-related action levels, and at each level made a number of specific recommendations for concrete interventions. The aim of the First Policy Level was "to reduce and re-channel outside pressures on the Walled City in order to ease interior reorganization and protect weaker functions from being over-powered by more aggressive forces." This action involved planning and coordination at the city government level and referred mainly to demographic, commercial and traffic pressures which might threaten or disturb the regeneration of a stable residential community in the Walled City. The Second Policy Level aimed "to conserve and enhance the urban fabric as a whole by a combined conservation and renewal effort with due consideration to social and economic driving forces" and, thus, addressed physical improvement within the Walled City. It relied on a series of selective but widespread initial injections of public funds and financial assistance, combined with steering and coordinating the private initiatives thereby generated. The Third Policy Level aimed to "highlight specially important historic areas and buildings in the Walled City by a concentrated conservation effort." This action would allow a more intensive conservation effort in places of special significance or in areas with a high density of historic buildings, thus suggesting the notion of a "conservation districts" within the walled city.

These policies were translated to specific guidelines for community development, employment and incomes, physical fabric, hous-

ing, commerce and production, traffic and transportation, social facilities, and infrastructure and utilities. Thus, the Conservation Plan, which was a product of recommendations made in the conceptual framework of the Walled City Upgrading Study, itself regulated in a conceptual framework of interventions, planning and institutional activities. The policy framework and guidelines were developed to comprise eight categories of recommendation.<sup>14</sup> The conservation of individual listed buildings and elements thus became a part of the overall framework.

The fundamental difference between the approach of the BKM report and that of the Conservation Plan is that the former regarded the walled city as one of the troubled quarters of the metropolitan city and the later regarded the walled city as a unique "city within city" in the immediate vicinity of the metropolitan center of Lahore. The Conservation Plan identifies the complex and multiple links that the walled city has with Lahore's central Business District. It states that these links present the most crucial issues confronting the walled city. Therefore, the strategies proposed dealt with means of controlling this complex relationship.

### **A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE MASTER PLAN, THE STRUCTURE PLAN, AND THE CONSERVATION PLAN**

The failures of 1960s Master Plan had identified that in a single, but complex, metropolis there can be a need for several "local autonomies" based on distinctions in the various parts of the city. This gave rise to the notion of a Structure Plan, which was yet another tool for the governing authorities to control the metropolis as a homogenous entity. The underlying attempt in the formation of these two Plans is the establishment of a framework or a paradigm that would regulate and legitimize actions at the city, local and regional level. The fundamental premise for strategies identified in the LUDTS report, on which the Walled City Upgrading Study and the Conservation Plan are based, tends to propagate the metropolitan region as a planning unit. The initial results of the 1980s upgrading program in the walled city are among the first ever undertaken by the World Bank<sup>15</sup> with local authorities and private consultants for inner city redevelopment. The World Bank's concern with the historic core of a metropolis can be explained in terms of a tool for a radical planning change in dealing with a feeling of loss of identity as changes in the urban environment became unpredictable.

The invention of a new unit for planning in the form of a metropolis was meant to protect the role of local self government "in matters that were really local." The ramifications of this approach can be seen in various approaches taken in the last two decades towards the revitalization of Lahore's Walled City. Despite identifying the unique quality of life (physical, social, economic and spiritual) that persists within the old city, the Walled City Upgrading Study tend to view the Walled City as only a part of the larger urban system of Lahore.

Although the Conservation Plan regards the walled city as a "city within a city" and identifies a lack of spatial differentiation in the Structure Plan of 1980, its proposals aim to integrate the old area with the city's modern developments. The expansion of the concept of the monument, from a single building to include the whole walled city, intended to prolong the life of the existing housing stock.<sup>16</sup> It is not motivated by a true appreciation of the architectural and historical significance of the walled city.

### **CONCLUSION**

When the Master Plan, that dealt with the physical organization of the city, could not control the city's rapid growth, living conditions deteriorated. The result was the initiation of yet another framework that dealt with the structural organization of institutions. The failure of the Structure Plan lay in its inability to differentiate spatial, structural and economic activities in various parts of the city. This

framework was supposed to, first, see the metropolitan area of Lahore as a coherent and homogenous entity and, second, identify means of funneling resources to the city and local authorities for creating "better living conditions" for the inhabitants. It is perhaps possible to see the Conservation Plan as an extension of, and a response to, the two earlier approaches of dealing with a city and its urban growth. It talks about the issues of central business district of Lahore and its relationship with the conservation of the walled city. It brings to light the problem of defining city level frameworks that tend to neglect individual parts that are distinct. It focuses on the integration of the city's older and modern development by creating an "interior balance" within the walled city. Finally, and most importantly, the Conservation Plan proposes the integration of the city's older and modern development.

This paper concludes that one of the most important issues in dealing with a city like Lahore is that of an interface; an intermediary zones where the activities of two distinct zones meet and complement, rather than confront, each other. Such a zone would help in identifying the extent of conservation and upgrading activities within the old fabric and restrict the erosion of the qualities of the old environment by the city's newer developments and vice versa. So as to ensure a duality within the metropolis in terms of the quality of life, demography and architectural characteristic.

Defining the extent and nature of an "interface" may be seen as an ambiguous issue in most historic cities where intermediary zones between the old fabric and the new ones are not clearly defined. However, in the case of Lahore's Walled City, such a transitory space does exist as a consequence of various historical events. The edges of the Walled City have been overlooked in both the Walled City Upgrading Study and the Conservation Plan. Perhaps this is because the professionals and/or the decision-makers in the city authority are conditioned to think that the center of the city is its most important place. But, in the case of Lahore, the edges are equally important. Historically, the monumental gates of the Walled City



Fig. 10.

provided controlled access and the streets inside the city were very narrow and tortuous. Thus, the open spaces just outside the gates become transfer points from one mode of transportation to another. Later, during the British colonial rule, the circular garden replaced the city moats and as a consequence redefined the edges in a "monumental" way by providing the Walled city with a "setting." The surgical treatment, in the name of urban renewal of the 1950s, disrupted the "edges" in the most part. This paper concludes that even these areas of interventions can be utilized to direct positive change and to establish an appropriate interface between the walled city and the central business district of metropolitan Lahore. In the attempt to define the entire city as a planning unit, the planners, city officials, and decision-makers have ignored the unique historical circumstances of Lahore. They continually seek ways to integrate the old and historic areas with the new parts of the city, rather than attempting to retain the unique qualities of distinct areas within the city.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Parvez Qureshi, *Dwelling Environments: A Comparative Analysis, Lahore Pakistan*. (Cambridge: MIT, Urban Settlement Design in Developing Countries, May 1979), p. 12.
- <sup>2</sup> Shahnaz Arshad, *Reassessing the Role of Tradition*. (Cambridge: S.M.Arch.S. Thesis, MIT, 1988), p. 30.
- <sup>3</sup> Shahnaz Arshad, *Reassessing the Role of Tradition*. (Cambridge: S.M.Arch.S. Thesis, MIT, 1988): 49.
- <sup>4</sup> Parvez Qureshi, *Dwelling Environments: A Comparative Analysis, Lahore Pakistan*. (Cambridge: MIT, Urban Settlement Design in Developing Countries, May 1979), p. 15.
- <sup>5</sup> Reza Habib Ali, "Urban Conservation in Pakistan: A Case Study of the Walled City of Lahore." *Architectural & Urban Conservation in the Islamic World 1* (Paris: The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1991).
- <sup>6</sup> Ali, Reza Habib. "Urban Conservation in Pakistan: A Case Study of the Walled City of Lahore." *Architectural & Urban Conservation in the Islamic World 1* (Paris: The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1991): 77.
- <sup>7</sup> Masood Khan, *The Conservation Plan for the Walled City of Lahore 1: Plan Proposals* (Lahore: LDA/PEPAC, 1988).
- <sup>8</sup> Muhandis, "Listen to the heartbeat of history." *Star* (Lahore: August, 1982).
- <sup>9</sup> Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "Conservation: Help the City is Dying." *Star* (Lahore: August, 1982).
- <sup>10</sup> Lahore Development Authority/Metropolitan Planning Wing, "Walled City Upgrading Study," *Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Studies 4* (Lahore: 1980).
- <sup>11</sup> Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "Conservation: Help the City is Dying," *Star* (Lahore: August, 1982).
- <sup>12</sup> Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants (PEPAC), Limited, Lahore.
- <sup>13</sup> Reza Habib Ali, "Urban Conservation in Pakistan: A Case Study of the Walled City of Lahore." *Architectural & Urban Conservation in the Islamic World 1* (Paris: The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1991), p. 80.
- <sup>14</sup> (1) Strategic policies and actions to be taken outside the walled city; (2) Planning activities and studies for both the central area and the walled city; (3) Institutional development including the full utilization of existing resources reinforced with an active training program, and the application of the legislative resources that already exist; (4) Urban management and controls to include production of a "Manual for Conservation and Building Renewal" and improved maintenance practice; (5) Traffic improvement and management program; (6) Upgrading and enhancing the physical fabric and the urban environment through upgrading the building stock (rescue, repair, restoration, rehabilitation, renewal) and through upgrading urban services; (7) Redevelopment with concern for the conformity with the scale, height, densities, and building typologies traditionally characteristic of the walled city to be demonstrated through projects undertaken by public authorities on state land and through regulated private sector; (8) Conservation of individual listed special premises or elements.
- <sup>15</sup> Brian Bruce Taylor, "The Walled City of Lahore," *Mimar 24* (Singapore: January 1987): 37.
- <sup>16</sup> A. Ravetz, "Values and the Built Environment," Sardar (ed.), *The Touch of the Midas* (Manchester: 1984), p. 146.