

**Postdoc Fellowships for non-EU researchers  
FINAL REPORT**

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<b>Selection</b>	2013
<b>Host institution</b>	Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation
<b>Supervisor</b>	Professor Koenraad Van Balen
<b>Period covered by this report</b>	from 18/05/2015 to 31/10/2015 (as per dates on RLICC-KU Leuven appointment letter)
<b>Title</b>	<b>“For an Economically Impoverished Context - Developing Viable Strategies to Guide and Encourage Community Initiated Actions for Preventive Conservation/ Restoration of Heritage Properties and Historic Areas”</b>

**1. Objectives of the Fellowship** (1/2 page)

**Background:** Pakistan’s traditional built environments and their associated tangible-intangible heritage values suffer from a prevailing state of apathy; largely owing to constraints of professional, technical and financial resources available for initiating long term programs for their protection and upkeep. State sponsored initiatives do not go beyond monument centric approaches for preservation of important archaeological and architectural landmarks as museum pieces. Historic environments in urban contexts and living cities are largely disregarded in development policies and provided little support through regulatory processes. Scientific and research based approaches encouraging sustained heritage preservation initiatives with long term continuity are not a common occurrence, and government institutions themselves completely lack professional expertise in this area. In this perspective the post-doc scholar using the platform of Heritage Cell, Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University (HC-DAPNED), since 2006, has been initiating research oriented undertakings to promote the cause of heritage preservation, and develop awareness among associated communities towards their role and responsibility for safeguarding their cultural and built heritage values. Primarily limiting its activities within province of Sindh; HC-DAPNEDs pioneering efforts so far included comprehensive documentation, mapping and inventory compilation of heritage assets in two cities (Karachi and Shikarpour), developing collaborations with government organizations responsible for heritage protection, and providing technical assistance to heritage property owners. In addition, endeavours are continuously made towards developing education and training programs that form an integral component of curriculum offered in architecture programs at graduate and undergraduate levels.

**Post-doc Research Objective:** The primary objective of this post-doc research was to explore practicable solutions that would help strengthen ongoing activities initiated at HC-DAPNED, in support of professional advancement of heritage conservation practices in Pakistan; moving a step forward from documentation and inventory compilation to practical conservation and preservation initiatives, focusing on community involvement.

The following were identified as key areas of existing deadlock;

- Technical solutions to address issues of decay and damage in historic building materials
- Methods of in-situ strength/ stability analysis of decaying or damaged structures; and appropriate techniques for re-strengthening, retrofitting or consolidation of existing historic structures
- Community involvement through incentives for historic property owners to get involved in preservation process, and empower local government and community groups to better understand and manage their heritage assets
- Enhanced awareness for the need of a proper ‘conservation master plan’ and strategies for management of heritage assets on grounds of sustained economic viability and long term continuity

The above four areas are of fundamental importance to acquire active conservation/ preservation developments and proceed in the direction of practical implementation of heritage protection initiatives. Searching viable solutions in these four identified areas, keeping in view the economically impoverished

situation of researched community and the inadequacies and limitations of existing governing systems was determined as the main objective of this proposed research. In view of existing strengths of host institution the following three directions of research were pursued.

**A. Historic materials research**

Information retrieved from heritage inventory documentation database (Karachi & Shikarpour) provided a list of varying traditional building materials and techniques used in construction of historic structures. Karachi predominately having stone constructions, whereas Shikarpour with mud-brick and brick constructions in combination with woodwork, stucco work, gypsum and lime or mud plaster finishes. The interiors also represented a variety of historic materials including pigmented cement tiles, embossed ceramic tiles, painted frescos, etc. The knowledge of working with most of these historic materials is no longer available, except for perhaps among a handful of artisanal and crafts-persons families. Better familiarity and understanding of these historic materials is a key towards their proper maintenance and appropriate preservation. Work in this direction was initiated to help fill the identified gap of lost knowledge on historic building materials. Among the many unanswered questions are those about their composition, age, durability, and methods of repair and preventive conservation.

**B. Structural stability analysis and approaches for strengthening/ retrofitting**

The inventory database on aspects of present 'state of conservation' indicated a high percentage of historic structures suffering from continued neglect and disuse. Many buildings are presently in a partially collapsed state or have only their façade remaining intact. A general perception and attitude towards such structures is that they are beyond repair; thus 'declared dangerous' by the building control authority and doomed to eventual demolition. Structural challenges of such nature can only be addressed through proper investigations on structural stability and scientifically derived solutions for structural strengthening and restoration. Expertise in this area is locally not available in Pakistan, as most structural engineers opt for the safest solution – demolish the old and build a new one. Knowledge of practical guidelines for investigative approach to better judge the strength and stability, leading to effective repair and strengthening was sought to possibly open a path for saving historic structures that have been subject to prolonged neglect and structural damage.

**C. PRECOMOS - Preventive Conservation Guidelines with Community Involvement**

Inculcating involvement of resident community to take ownership and responsibility towards better management of their heritage assets is a key to ensure long term sustainable initiatives. The case of Shikarpour Historic Town presented combined challenges of an impoverished community largely oblivious of its historic significance, a recessed economy and a lackluster municipal administrative structure. The only possibility of combating against these factors is to attempt a 'community outreach' approach that focuses on local capacity building, sensitizing the general public towards significance of historic values and developing awareness regarding the potential of these assets as possible drivers to boost local economy. Establishing the much needed connect between heritage management and economic regeneration is perhaps a direction for encouraging community interest in preventive conservation approaches. The first initiative in this direction was organized as a daylong 'WMF Watch Day' event on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2014 which successfully instigated a community response expressing a willingness to participate towards protection of their city's heritage. Over 20 city residents from different walks of life registered as 'Heritage Watch Volunteers'. This third identified direction of this research was intended to move forward in continuation, focusing further on 'heritage property owners' as the main target group.

**2. Methodology in a nutshell (1/2/ page)**

The research methodology primarily incorporated a deductive approach, short listing from available heritage inventory database specific cases most suited to address the identified research directions. The community participatory approach was tested only in Shikarpour where a target group of fifty three property owners was approached with a feedback questionnaire and a request for their consent to participate in the research process and allow access into their properties for detailed photographic documentation and collection of

required samples of historic materials. The field work undertaken during August focused the shortlisted fifty three case studies, of which detailed investigations were undertaken only on properties whose owners gave consent to allow access inside the property and co-operated for being interviewed. Besides these, a larger segment of the community was involved through informal outreach sessions during field work.

To address issues of structural problems and historic materials, heritage inventory database from Karachi and Shikarpur was taken into consideration, as it allowed covering a larger spectrum of historic materials and categories of structures. Primary data collected through field work was tabulated and analysed. The analytical research; particularly on materials and structures was more dependent on technical support available from identified experts/ professionals at host institution.

The feedback from different stakeholders and contributing participants is incorporated in the final report on research outcomes and planned to be disseminated through publications (presently in progress).

### 3. Results (6-8 pages)

Given the short duration of research and its nature of ongoing continuity with previous and future works it may not be possible to clearly list down its exact outcomes. However, it can be said for certain that a number of achievements during post-research months (December 2015-February 2016) are a direct consequence of the ground work accomplished during RLICC-BELSPO fellowship research.

- A research **paper was presented at the ICCROM-CHA Annual Conservation Forum 2015** on the theme of 'applicability and adaptability of traditional knowledge systems in conservation and management of heritage in Asia' held in Bangkok, Thailand from 14-16 December 2015; this paper titled "***Diminishing Wealth of Traditional Knowledge Systems and Practices – A Growing Challenge for Sustenance of Historic Environments and Cultural Landscapes in Pakistan***" will be published in a book being planned by ICCROM.
- Some proposals and ideas developed during BELSPO-RLICC research also materialized through the platform of Heritage Cell – Department of Architecture and Planning, N.E.D. University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, in collaboration with World Monuments Fund (WMF) and Endowment Fund Trust for the Preservation of Heritage in Sindh (EFT) in the form of a **ten days 'Heritage Property Owners Interactive Workshop' at Shikarpur from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016**, supervised by RLICC Alumni Ms. Tania Ali Soomro resulting in detailed documentation of four historic residences. This was followed by launching of the '**Heritage Plaques Program**' under which plaques were installed on thirty enlisted historic properties and a **public awareness event** on 4-5 February 2016 where the resident community and representatives from institutions that collectively shoulder the responsibility and moral obligation of protecting the heritage assets of Sindh participated with renewed enthusiasm. More details on **Shikarpur Project 2016** are available on the following link:  
[http://www.neduet.edu.pk/arch\\_planning/Heritage/webpages/SHCC-WMF-WatchDay-2016.html](http://www.neduet.edu.pk/arch_planning/Heritage/webpages/SHCC-WMF-WatchDay-2016.html)
- An **exhibit** titled "**Reminiscences of Vanishing Grandeur: Shikarpur's Lost Gems**" was developed using data collected during BELSPO-RLICC research. This exhibit of fifteen panels was displayed at the venue of public event organized as part of the Heritage Watch Day in Shikarpur on 4-5 February 2016. This research is also **developed as a bilingual (Urdu/English) catalogue manuscript** for which sponsorship is being sought for publication.
- Further **research papers** and publications for which primary concepts were developed during BELSPO-RLICC fellowship duration are still underway, and planned to be completed in coming months.
- Among the three identified directions of research, substantial work progressed only in the third category of preventive conservation and community participation. The first two areas remained under-explored primarily

due to short time span and also due to non-availability of ongoing activities at the time with which an association could easily be established. Some preparatory work was however accomplished in terms of collective samples of historic materials for lab testing, collection of pictorial database on use and variety of existing historic materials, database on historic structures requiring urgent attention and also an abstract for research paper. Possibility to **develop information/ guidance catalogues** and **other publications** is still being explored and might materialize sometime in the future if sufficient resources are available to continue with this work.

- A paper abstract submitted and accepted for SAHC2016 conference titled '**Stone Façades – A Fast Disappearing Face of Karachi's**'. This however, could not be completed due to insufficient field data and feedback from identified experts that could be collected within the short duration of this research. Work initiated for this paper will be further pursued in the near future with the objective of submitting it for publication in a research journal (possible as a joint paper with RLICC researchers).
- In addition, served as a **jury member** to assess the Master's Thesis submitted by Ms. Tania Ali Soomro titled as "Revival of Forgotten Heritage: Conservation of Empress Market and Revitalization of its Historic and Social Context"; and contributed as a **paper reviewer** for the SAHC2016 conference being organized by RLICC scheduled to be held in September this year.

Experiencing Leuven as a resident had been an inspiring opportunity. Not just Leuven, but all other Belgian cities explored during weekend excursions including Brugge, Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent were equally stimulating; each one offering a flavour of its own. Successfully managed as historic towns that have kept their essence and spirit intact; yet at the same time developed to fulfil needs of present times. These open air living museums of learning are not only a treat for any history and architecture enthusiast but also a delight for nature lovers – providing immense opportunities to absorb nature's intricacies without even making much effort for reaching out to it.

#### **4. Perspectives for future collaboration between units (1 page)**

RLICC and HC-DAPNED have strong areas of common interest – including;

- **academics** - with the objective of training professionals in the field of heritage conservation
- **research** – with the objective of developing better conservation practice based on scientific methods
- **outreach** – with the objective of developing collaborative and community inclusive strategies for heritage conservation

RLICC is a well established institution, celebrating its forty years in 2016; having a full fledged Master's degree program in heritage conservation, well established laboratories for materials and structures research, a rich collection of library resources and access to online databases.

HC-DAPNED on the other hand is still a small research unit, however having support of the university to expand its scope, particularly towards developing degree program/s for heritage professionals. In addition, the areas of identified weakness presently existing in heritage conservation practices, particularly in the domain of historic materials and structures, still require significant efforts for progressive development. It is in these identified areas that possibilities of future collaborations exist.

A few steps suggested as a starting stepping stone to build future collaborations between the units can be:

1. Signing a formal MoU between the two units (RLICC & HC-DAPNED) for collaborative initiatives in the above three areas of common interest
2. Collaborate on specific research areas of common interest – such as those fulfilling objectives of PRECOMOS initiatives

3. Establishing a master's/ PhD degree scholarship for students from Pakistan to study at RLICC-KU Leuven
4. Since DAPNED also serves as the ICOMOS Pakistan Secretariat, there is the possibility to use this international forum for possible events, conferences and workshops.

### **5. Valorisation/Diffusion (including Publications, Conferences, Seminars, Missions abroad...**

The post-doc research outcomes were shared with a larger international audience through participation in the ICCROM-CHA Annual Conservation Forum 2015 on the theme of 'applicability and adaptability of traditional knowledge systems in conservation and management of heritage in Asia' held in Bangkok, Thailand from 14-16 December 2015. A paper titled "*Diminishing Wealth of Traditional Knowledge Systems and Practices – A Growing Challenge for Sustenance of Historic Environments and Cultural Landscapes in Pakistan*" was presented at this forum which is now in the process of peer review and eventual publication as a chapter in a book being published by ICCROM.

The research findings were also disseminated at a national level in the form of an exhibit and public seminar organized as an outcome of ground work completed during BELSPO-RLICC research. Possible publications are also in the pipeline at present, as mentioned above in results section. All outcomes of interactive field research undertaken during this post-doc period and later initiatives that took place in its continuity are also being shared through open access web pages developed within the HC-DAPNED portal ([http://www.neduet.edu.pk/arch\\_planning/Heritage/webpages/heritage.html#ad-image-0](http://www.neduet.edu.pk/arch_planning/Heritage/webpages/heritage.html#ad-image-0)).

A contribution on BELSPO-RLICC research experience for the RLICC Newsletter published in its issue #17: Spring 2016; titled 'Inspiring and Stimulating Exposures: BELSPO-RLICC Post-doc Fellowship an Invigorating Opportunity' pgs 13-15 (<http://sprecomah.eu/rlicc/index.php/the-centre/newsletter/133-newsletterspring2016>).

### **6. Skills/Added value transferred to home institution abroad (1/2 page)**

Receiving a post-doc fellowship award from Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) for being hosted as a visiting research scholar at the Raymond Lemaire International Center for Conservation (RLICC) at KU Leuven was a unique opportunity for reflections and learning within an inspiring setting fit to be the dream of any heritage conservation practitioner or advocate.

Undertaken research looked into the context of economically impoverished communities within historic settings with a focus on exploring viable strategies that could help encourage community participatory strategies for preventive conservation of heritage properties, and at the same time evolving possibilities for economic uplift and sustenance of residents and other stakeholders. The BELSPO-RLICC Post-Doc Fellowship 2015 primarily provided an opportunity to delve deeper into an earlier ongoing 'heritage safeguarding campaign' for the case study towns of Karachi and Shikarpour in Sindh, Pakistan, becoming instrumental in pinpointing some loopholes in existing administrative systems and identifying future directions of immediate action and possible long term initiatives. Interaction with professors and researchers at RLICC led way to stimulating discussions, exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences from different regions across the globe where the visiting and resident scholars of the institution have been working on heritage related projects. A number of public lectures from visiting speakers on various occasions also provided immense knowledge and food for thought in new directions. Access to collections at the department library and online databases also became an important resource that supported the research process.

The exposures at RLICC-KU Leuven have an added experiential value for the researcher, which are now being incorporated at different instances after return to home institution. The most value added inputs are being put in lectures and publications. The learning from these exposures is also being useful in developing future programs and directions of growth for HC-DAPNED in the capacity as its head and leading driving force.