

# YASMEEN LARI

## AN ARCHITECT

Fabrizia Berlingieri Emilia Corradi Cassandra Cozza Imma Forino





Politecnico di Milano  
School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering

**Serie Blu | Blue Series**  
**YASMEEN LARI**  
**An Architect**

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# YASMEEN LARI

## **AN ARCHITECT**

*Monograph published on the occasion of the conferment  
of the Honorary Degree in Architecture upon Yasmeen Lari*

Fabrizia Berlingieri   Emilia Corradi   Cassandra Cozza   Imma Forino



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Cover Image: zero-carbon fuel-efficient Pakistan chulahs, Pakistan, 2018  
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## **YASMEEN LARI AN ARCHITECT**

On the occasion of the ceremony to confer the Honorary Degree in Architecture – Laurea Magistrale *ad honorem* in Architettura e Ingegneria Edile-Architettura – upon Pakistani architect Yasmeeen Lari, zero-carbon champion and advocate of the poorest of the poor, a number of events were planned: a workshop on her humanitarian architecture, meeting students participating in the workshop, publication and presentation of a monograph entitled *Yasmeeen Lari: An Architect*. Workshop students made prototypes (digital reproductions and scale maquettes) of her best-known humanitarian projects to explore the study of vernacular – updated and enhanced – bamboo construction techniques. These prototypes were shown at LaborA, a physical and virtual modelling laboratory, on Politecnico di Milano's new Architecture campus.

### **Ceremony to confer the Honorary Degree in Architecture – Laurea Magistrale *ad honorem* in Architettura e Ingegneria Edile-Architettura – upon Yasmeeen Lari.**

*Laudatio*, Imma Forino

*Lectio Magistralis*, Yasmeeen Lari

Motivation for conferment of the Honorary Degree in Architecture, Ilaria Valente

*Diplomatia* – Awarding of the Honorary Degree in Architecture, Donatella Sciuto

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Emilia Corradi, Imma Forino

Head of LaborA: Renato Aiminio

YASMEEN LARI

An Architect













# FOREWORD

Ilaria Valente, Dean – School of Architecture  
Urban Planning Construction Engineering

Yasmeen Lari graduated from Oxford School of Architecture in 1964, the same year that Politecnico di Milano celebrated its centennial. On that occasion, honorary degrees were conferred on Alvar Aalto, Louis I. Kahn, and Kenzo Tange, a tribute to three masters who had been both active and decisive in a watershed moment of vast critical ferment driven by the experience and legacy of Modernist architecture.

Lari's architecture studies in the United Kingdom began at a time close to the Otterlo CIAM. When she made her professional debut in Pakistan, she took with her the awareness, culture, tools, and the linguistic experimentation she had begun in Europe at that time, above all in the sphere of British Brutalism.

Lari was Pakistan's first woman architect and she opened her own firm, which later took the name of Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers. Hers was a generation that followed that of Alison Smithson, Denise Scott Brown, Italians Gae Aulenti and Cini Boeri, and her résumé, her *vita activa*, is clearly unique. Over time, her awareness of the public role and social aspects of architecture developed forcefully and she grasped the challenges nowadays considered central.

Lari's dynamic and prestigious designs resulted in some memorable buildings. From 1980 to 1983, she was President of the Institute of Architects of Pakistan. In 1980, she and her husband, Suhail Zaheer Lari, set up the non-profit Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, and she began dedicating her time to the preservation of her country's architectural heritage and to ground-breaking studies, particularly on traditional building techniques. It was her way of recovering the deep roots of her culture, saving important threatened sites and fabrics from ruin. Her work with Heritage Foundation of Pakistan has led to concrete policies, such as the 1994 Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act. From 2003 to 2005 she was UNESCO Advisor for Pakistan, her commitment leading to the recognition of seven sites in the country. She is listed as one of the sixty women who have made the most significant contributions to attaining UNESCO objectives. In 2000, at the age of 58, she closed her firm and embarked on a new adventure, still an architect but focusing on how to address the issue of dwellings for Pakistan's poorest citizens.

The 2005 Kashmir earthquake was a turning point. Pakistan is subject to natural disasters and a substantial part of its population is economically and socially underprivileged. Lari became involved in designing emergency architecture, but more than this, she was determined that local populations should be taught the skills to rebuild their homes. She thus focused on design of simple homes built with local materials, using mainly bamboo,

THE CONSERVATION PROJECT OF SETHI HAVELI, PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN, 2011–2012  
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PP. 08–09: YASMEEN LARI OUTSIDE THE WOMEN'S CENTRE IN SINDH PROVINCE, PAKISTAN  
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earth and lime, and she added small infrastructures like safe cooking stoves, water pumps, and toilet facilities.

Teaching indigenous peoples to rebuild their homes and incorporate meeting places in their villages as part of a process to restore dignity and recover group identity became the central theme of her work. In this learning approach, women play a fundamental role not only in the physical but also in community rebuilding. Her method aims to “create capacity” and is not dissimilar to the approach described so well by Martha C. Nussbaum. It is an intrinsically sustainable methodology to reconstruct socialization, revitalize local economy, and achieve the deepfelt revival of the art of building place and beauty. Yasmeen Lari experimented these themes in the field and then wrote her *Disaster Preparedness Manual* for building basic but safe homes that would help populations defend themselves from environmental disasters. She also prepared tutorials and lectures, and organized volunteer groups (Karavan Program for Indigenous Technology, Zero Carbon ADMAN). Her Green Shelters program is still active in several of the poorest villages in Pakistan. These inclusive projects were conceived for Pakistan’s most vulnerable citizens and had the further objective of testing sustainable “low-cost, zero-carbon, zero-waste” architecture. Her housing modules even proved useful during the pandemic.

Yasmeen Lari’s work is based on the minute scale, waging a hands-on battle against poverty and guaranteeing dignity, a way of promoting social and ecological justice. She calls it Barefoot Social Architecture, defined as “zero-carbon humanistic architecture”, but it is also “social engineering” that integrates environmental, cultural and technical aspects.

Yasmeen Lari’s patient, proactive research thus led to a reflection on the main values of architecture. Not only has she reached remarkable goals as a woman and as an architect, but she is praiseworthy for her commitment to the teaching of architecture. As Ernesto N. Rogers said in his speech during the April 1964 honorary degree ceremony for architects Alvar Aalto, Louis I. Kahn and Kenzo Tange, the School is “a training-ground where consciousness develops” and where students must be made “aware of architecture’s public duty and of the means to an end”. In these particularly challenging times in which climate, environment and health emergencies, and disparities between the north and the south of the world pose significant and unprecedented problems for architects, it is the task of the School to define the model for these professionals of the future and the task they must perform. “The role of universities is to identify the future and find the way to get there,” Rogers added. And Lari’s work is exemplary in this respect. Indeed, the form of her architectures echoes Rogers’ belief of “embodying the image of the aim to which makers aspire”. Nowadays, those makers are not just men but women too.

An honorary degree awarded to Yasmeen Lari is a signal to young people that there is an alternative approach to designing and executing those projects in a radically changing world. An approach that finds in the past the roots for planning the future, instilling hope of redemption and dignity in the weakest tiers of the populations. Her work has also been successful in establishing a new concept of architectural beauty, pragmatism and solidity, thanks to her patient research into appropriate technologies and forms that wisely view yesterday’s local traditions in the context of tomorrow.

Art, science and ethics of construction are cornerstones of Yasmeen Lari's work, cemented precisely to those principles that underpin teaching and research at Politecnico di Milano's School of Architecture, Urban Planning, Construction Engineering.











# DESIGNING FOR THE PEOPLE

Imma Forino, Politecnico di Milano

Yasmeen Lari was born and raised in Pakistan, but she made her debut as an architect in the United Kingdom, graduating in 1964 from Oxford School of Architecture (now Oxford Brookes University). Her European education took place at a time of immense cultural ferment, with the Modernist protest sharing the stage with the success of a different architectural culture whose roots lay in Brutalism and Regionalism. These were the influences Lari took back to Pakistan with her when she went home to practice her profession, first with MacDonald, Layton & Costain Ltd. in Karachi (1964), then opening her own firm, Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers there a year later.

After her return to Pakistan, Lari had to embark on a new apprenticeship. She had spent the years of her youth far from home and now she found she had to learn – almost starting over – about her own country and the evident contrast between the knowledge acquired in Europe and the reality of Pakistan. It was not just a complex issue of a woman becoming established in a purely male professional world – at that time Lari was the only female architect in Pakistan – but also of dealing with a nation in full political, social and economic evolution. The modern state of Pakistan was still relatively new<sup>1</sup> and was challenged by many contradictions: from the 1960s to the 1980s, military dictatorships alternated with democratic parliamentary governments; civil society was woven with different languages and ethnic groups, and not always in agreement amongst themselves. The country emerged as a nuclear power and showed strong economic growth, although this drew to a close in the latter 1990s.

Lari's earliest architectural works include the Lari House (Karachi 1973–77) and the Kahn House (Karachi 1969). In the former, the indigenous tradition of tempering the torrid climate and channelling air currents brought forth cantilevered verandas and terraces with distinctive brise-soleils, while living spaces meet on an orthogonal grid, alternating solids and voids. The Kahn House, on the other hand, is arranged unobtrusively around the cool internal garden, which clearly separates the living area from bedrooms. Exterior walls, rendered in lime whitewash, pay tribute to desert architecture with windows or doors.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1970s, Pakistan requested it be represented as an emerging nation through political recognition and social engagement. At this time, Lari worked mainly on the construction of large residential buildings in Karachi and Lahore, reinterpreting Brutalist language with her contemporary reading of indigenous traditions. Her understanding of the context in which she worked led her to different solutions.

INTBAU TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTRE, MAKLI, PAKISTAN, 2019

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PP. 14–15: SAYANI DRR PARK, KOT DIJI, PAKISTAN, 2014–2015

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For Karachi, the capital of Sindh province and Pakistan's industrial and financial hub, she designed the Naval Officers' Housing (1970), a complex of two hundred and seventy-six residential units. By dividing the dwellings into three large blocks arranged as courts, with numerous setbacks at various levels, Lari scaled down the housing units and limited their impact. By the same token, she developed a design far removed from the commercial megastructures so typical of an overcrowded city.

For Lahore, capital of the Punjab region and rich in monuments, including some of the largest mosques in Asia, Lari interacted with a context layered with history. She was commissioned to design the Angoori Bagh Housing complex here (1973–77) for six thousand low-cost homes, but only seven hundred and eighty-seven units were completed. Listening to the population of the area and employing local labour, Lari designed open communal spaces deftly alternating with individual residential units of various typologies, placed on an orthogonal grid. The units were conceived with a diagonal slant to offset strong summer sun, arranged vertically and connected by external staircases on rampant semiarches, with small courtyards on the ground floor, and verandas and terraces on the upper floors, all open to the sky. The entire exterior was uniform, using only brick cladding, while the residents were told they could personalize door and window frames with the colour they wanted, conjuring up the feel of a lively kasbah. Great attention was turned to generating intense interpersonal relationships in the district, so open spaces and pedestrian streets were added, serving as playgrounds for children, sites for vendors, or meeting spaces. The Angoori Bagh housing complex really was architecture on a human scale, in which the architect reinterpreted in a contemporary key the traditional *mohallah* structure: a cluster of houses built around semi-public open spaces.

During the 1980s, Lari continued to work on equally demanding commissions, finding solutions for challenging climate conditions and sidestepping post-colonial influences, while seeking a new language for the burgeoning country. The Taj Mahal Hotel and its conference centre, the Compressed Natural Gas Station (both Karachi 1981), the PSO–Pakistan State Oil House offices (Karachi 1985–91), and the Finance and Trade Centre (Karachi, 1982–88)<sup>3</sup> are large buildings that Lari designed with a diverse rigour of expression, in an attempt to resist the temptation of "Instant Islamic"; a term Lari coined to identify the arches and domes often applied to Western-style buildings to give them a more "Islamic" look.<sup>4</sup> The almost monolithic nature of the hotel and the PSO offices contrasts with the more slender structural profile of the Compressed Natural Gas Station, while Karachi's Finance and Trade Centre is built around gardens, fountains and shady paths to minimize the use of air conditioning and ensure a cool microclimate generated by the breezes directed along the building.

Other commissions came from the armed forces sector, like the Behawalpur Army Barracks (1981–83) for sixty soldiers, in which Lari experimented with local construction practices – vaults and domes – and traditional materials (unfired earth bricks, lime, clay plaster, thatch). At this time, Lari also worked on many commissions on an urban scale, including the redevelopment of the Lines Area in Karachi (1981) for sixteen thousand five hundred families. She paid particular attention to decompressing the

density of buildings in the district, attributable to abuse and lack of water and sewage pipes, and mains electricity. Houses were planned with fewer floors, given gardens or patios, and engaging in decision-making the citizens who had to move to neighbouring areas. Lari planned to use vehicle roads for new commercial districts to subsidize the new dwellings being constructed in the area.<sup>5</sup>

Lari's commitment to her profession developed in parallel with her activism for recognition of the architect's role in the civic community. From 1980 to 1983, she was president of the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP) and led the movement to create legislative measures to acknowledge the place of architects and planners in her country. In 1983, she founded the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners of which she was the first director.

In 1980, Lari, her husband – historian Suhail Zaheer Lari – and a group of young scholars set up Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, a non-profit organization whose purpose was to document and safeguard the country's most ancient architecture. Numerous monuments, minor artefacts and urban fabrics were detected and catalogued, compiling a priceless corpus of Pakistan's architectural culture, whose restoration and protection the Foundation promotes. It is not merely a question of restoring a historical memory to the country, but of encouraging its study and conservation by involving schools and local artisans, and also training new figures in small businesses – especially women – to restore antique wooden and pictorial decorative elements. The protection project is also based on the constant communication of actions undertaken, and new schemes to be promoted through the numerous books and articles that Lari continues to publish, as well as her participation in international congresses, when she emphasizes the complex link between place, architecture and population in rebuilding and supporting Pakistan's cultural identity. Other examples of efforts to promote Pakistani culture included the Karachi Festival, a multidisciplinary event encouraging residents to take back their city, and Karavan Pakistan, a community of youth and intellectuals engaged in solidarity actions such as cleaning the country's monuments and archaeological sites. These are extremely inclusive projects based on sharing actions and conceived to stimulate reflection on Pakistan's architectural heritage, how to safeguard it and how to promote its identity. The commendable work of Heritage Foundation of Pakistan led to the introduction of the 1994 Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act, legislation protecting six hundred historic sites, and the opening of the Sindh Culture Department, with the number of buildings protected growing to about one thousand six hundred. Last but not least, Lari made her own personal commitment from 2003 to 2005, serving as UNESCO Advisor for Pakistan, which led to the recognition of seven UNESCO sites across the country.

Lari's tenacious yet mindful contribution to safeguarding historical architecture persuaded the Pakistani government to award her two of the country's top civil honours: the Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 2006 and the Hilal-i-Imtiaz in 2014, but as early as 2002 the UN had already acknowledged Heritage Foundation of Pakistan's efforts and results to promote cultural and historical conservation with its Recognition Award. In all this, Lari was also designated as one of the sixty women worldwide who contributed most to UNESCO's goals.

Rediscovery of vernacular heritage marked another turning point in Lari's life. After she closed her architecture firm in 2000, she dedicated her time to the improvement of living conditions for the most disadvantaged populations, especially following the earthquakes and floods that repeatedly hit Pakistan. Once again, it was a question of relating to a difficult geographical, social and economic context: the biggest problem was teaching local populations to rebuild their homes, given the scarcity of resources available to them.

Lari proposed a sustainable development model that she defined as "barefoot social architecture", which involves the use of traditional construction techniques, recycled rubble, local materials, and the elementary building methods that are easiest to replicate. She even arranged for a particular variety of bamboo to be planted because studies show it is the most resistant to earthquakes. A key component of this small-scale economy is the handover from builders to inhabitants via the Karavan Program for Indigenous Technology (KAPIT) volunteer group. In this way, the inhabitants acquire home-building skills and can then train others. Zero-carbon emission shelters are flanked by cultural centres and meeting rooms, toilets, water pumps, and food ovens. The final aim of the project is to provide the most destitute or endangered populations with basic subsistence and thus restore their dignity, giving them pride in the work they do for themselves and for others. In local communities women play a leading role, not only as recipients of the Women's Centres dedicated to them, but by taking part in the redevelopment of degraded areas. A prime example of this is the *chulah*, the clay stove of which no two are the same, built and decorated in bright colours by the villagers. They are a fundamental component of emancipation as women become aware of their role in society when they use these stable, safe structures, instead of precarious and unhygienic mobile stoves, in the elementary yet complex gestures of cooking. These women also train others to build the *chulah* for themselves and teach them essential hygiene rules, such as washing their hands or handling food, helping to spread a new culture of "care and attention" to protect themselves and their families.

Observing Yasmeen Lari's multifaceted career overall, she appears detached from any claim on a language or overuse of technology, gradually rediscovering the true, basic origins of construction, restoring a sense of dignity to the populations devastated by natural disasters, teaching Pakistani women the skills for making their own world with their own hands. By the constant interconnecting of architecture and social justice in her work, and a careful eye on the eco-sustainability of her designs, Lari has always shown a deep empathy for people and places. The picture that emerges is one of an architect committed to the development of her country's architectural culture but also of a person who decided to walk away from numerous professional gratifications in the name of higher ideals, such as helping her people during major emergencies, improving their housing conditions, teaching self-awareness to younger generations, and developing the typical caregiver role of women to drive processes of social requalification.

With her work, Yasmeen Lari has given new meaning to the social commitment that a woman, a mother, an architect, a researcher can make with her own life, without ignoring dialogue with others and awareness of

surrounding conditions, but learning at every chance and thus embarking on a constant renewal of herself. Driven by the humanitarian and compassionate spirit that hallmarks every human existence, Yasmeen Lari became a strong, liberated woman, a true role model for us all. A genuine person who is an inspiration to young generations of architects as they build life.

## NOTES

1. The Muslim State of Pakistan (a word meaning "land of the pure") was founded in August 1947 as a Dominion of the British Commonwealth, uniting mainly Muslim provinces and districts that were formerly part of India. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan was the next step, in 1956.
2. Hasan-Uddin Khan, "Profile: Yasmeen Lari," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* (2) (1981): 48.
3. With Eva Vecsei.
4. Khan, "Profile": 45.
5. Yasmeen Lari, "The Lines Area, Resettlement Project, Karachi," in *Designing in Islamic Cultures 2: Urban Housing*, edited by Margaret Bentley Sevckenko (Cambridge, MA: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1982), 59–60.



# ARCHITECTURE AS CULTURAL TRANSLATION: 1963-1983

Fabrizia Berlingieri, Politecnico di Milano

## *Geographies, translations, rethinking*

Yasmeen Lari studied in two geographically distant places – Pakistan and the United Kingdom – whose history and culture had crossed paths in a complex way. When Lari arrived in the United Kingdom in 1956,<sup>1</sup> the former British Dominion of Pakistan had only recently become independent and its architectural culture was thus still strongly anchored to a European tradition, which was precisely at the root of profound disputes.<sup>2</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the decade 1950–60 was characterized by a heated debate around the Modern Movement. At the time, Philip Dowson<sup>3</sup> was commissioned to design expansions for Saint John's and Somerville (the second of Oxford University women's halls)<sup>4</sup> to accommodate the growing number of students arriving from the rest of the country and from overseas. The new buildings explored the expressive potential of reinforced concrete and steel prefabrication technology, and were part of a broader post-war plan for services to be provided to the United Kingdom's main university campuses.

The Oxford School of Architecture was four miles away from Saint John's and Somerville; less than a mile from James Stirling's Florey Building,<sup>5</sup> and Peter and Alison Smithson's St Hilda's College.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, some kinship with the Brutalist current can be presumed not just because Lari was actually in Oxford at the time these projects were being put in place, but mainly because her early designs upon her return to Pakistan echo with expressive and linguistic references to that movement. Indeed, Lari was exploring cultural compliance with the idea of ethical architecture as a bearer of change, as the thoughts and actions that underpin architecture.<sup>7</sup>

The architectural status quo was rattled by a new generation who considered the discipline a symbol of social and economic revolution, and who put an end to the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) with the 1959 Otterlo meeting, in a year that some historians agree to be the end of Modernity, or at least the endorsement of a substantial semantic rethinking.<sup>8</sup>

Lari returned to Pakistan in 1964, when new technological and expressive media research in architecture and on housing models was at its peak. She settled in Karachi and founded her own firm, Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers. Although she maintained contacts with the United Kingdom,<sup>9</sup> Lari soon plunged actively into another heated debate, this time not only about the relationship of architecture with Islam but also with a contextual Modern, poised between two interpretations: on the one hand, the approach of some local architects who moulded



Modernism to sit with Islamic culture,<sup>10</sup> and on the other, the presence of international architects forging a new image for the nation–state.<sup>11</sup>

The negotiation between Islam and Modern Architecture was shifted to the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the review *Mimar*,<sup>12</sup> which featured Lari several times. In 1980, Hassan Fathy received the AKA for Lifetime Achievement and Lari set up Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, seeking to redefine the cultural dimension of modern Pakistan's historical heritage. At that same time, attitudes that had developed around *Mimar's* cultural action on the pluralism of Modern converged again with the various voices of Europe. Specifically, the point of contact was Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism, namely the need for "architecture of resistance" that could construe various geographical contexts and a site's intrinsic material conditions by restoring continuity.<sup>13</sup>

Lari's professional growth in those years was noteworthy, especially if read as a "movement of translation" and rethinking of Modernism in the light of the cultural bridges described above that could establish a series of research ideas then found in later stages of the architecture she has produced to date and which is deeply committed to social issues. We see this period as falling in the first two decades of her career, until 1982–88, when she designed the Finance and Trade Centre and ended her term as President of the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP).

#### *Construction language, dwelling models*

Until the mid–1980s, the architecture produced by Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers (which closed in 2000 when Lari retired) was shaped by research into state-of-the-art structures and materials, but also introduced local construction techniques and studied housing models. Over two decades, Lari was offered numerous architecture commissions, from private family houses to prestigious public contracts and she was gradually able to develop a specific approach that was not a linguistic or formal vocabulary as such. Instead, she defined a set of tools for understanding the construction and tectonics of building and of models that would re-establish the sense and space of dwelling in Pakistan, despite the social upheaval in progress.<sup>14</sup> The wisdom Lari finetuned in parallel – language of building and models of dwelling – is explored here. This twofold theme began to emerge from her very first private commissions.<sup>15</sup> The house she built in 1969 for Naser-Ud Deen Khan was located in a residential area of Karachi reserved for the Pakistan Defence Officers' Cooperative Housing Society. The design explored in depth how to mediate interior and exterior, so the plan included a system of indoor and outdoor spaces, like semi-enclosed courtyard and entrance canopy. The interiors feature large windows that open directly onto gardens and take into account height differences. The single-storey building is whitewashed, with a discreet exterior, surrounded by tall walls supporting the facilities and the entrance.

Known as the Khan House,<sup>16</sup> the building covers about two hundred and eighty square metres, and has two blocks, one with living spaces and facilities, the other with bedrooms, and in the centre the entrance and roofed outdoor area. There is a strong perception of exterior flowing seamlessly into interior. The use of rendered reinforced concrete is a vernacular expression and construction features are seen in the design of the windows punctuating façades.



Exploration of construction languages emerged with even more impetus in the Lari House (1973–77), with its reinforced concrete frame and brick walls, with brise-soleils and exposed concrete verandas with deep overhangs, while inside a coffered roof showcases a composition supported by a geometric grid. The various simple materials combine in a design attentive to detail, for instance in the cruciform angle-bar pillars. The layout comprises two pairs of quadrants. The larger pair contain the split-level living room–study and the children’s area; the compact volumes of the facilities and bedrooms are set on the diagonal opposite. Finally, the connecting space becomes a point of interest with the staircase and living room in open view of the intersection of these diagonals. The Lari House, the architect’s own home, differs from the Khan design in its development of complex interiors, whose identifying trait is the understated, unembellished structure and the interpenetration of different rooms, projected towards the garden.

The same themes can be found in the designs developed for the collective accommodation of the Naval Officers’ Housing (Karachi, 1970) and Angoori Bagh Housing<sup>17</sup> (Lahore, 1973–77). The former is a government-funded residential complex of multistorey buildings with six to eight apartments each for a total of two hundred and seventy-six units. The design develops a strong hierarchy in the concatenation of open spaces: the large central courtyard overlooked by the various blocks; the semi-private entrance courts; and the terraces. Lari resumed her work on language for the reinforced concrete construction, focusing on the relationship between building and landscape, and projecting the individual dwellings towards the outdoor spaces. Indeed, the rendered reinforced concrete multistorey blocks look like large artificial terraces.

The Angoori Bagh Housing project was a landmark moment that gave Lari a chance to address the need of the poorest classes of Karachi’s population for a collective type of dwellings. The complex of seven hundred and eighty-seven units was part of an ambitious regeneration plan for a central urban area, intended to replace derelict districts. Lari actively engaged the inhabitants in defining needs and communal and living spaces. The project originally envisaged six thousand new dwellings but was never completed due to lack of funds. A small, basically pedestrian-scale street grid defined rectangular lots of different sizes, providing a very dense residential fabric that incorporated the informal characteristics of spontaneous dwellings.<sup>18</sup> The terraced blocks are of different heights and mirrored along a central backbone of greenery that provides small private courtyards. The different units are connected to the street by a system of shared open staircases that serve the tiny dwellings. On the first floor these are connected by another system of footbridges over the district’s narrow streets, and to the ground floor by further public staircases. In the original design, the residential units were arranged around shared courts and spaces served by small ground-floor shops.

In Lahore, people are adverse to living in flats as they have always lived close to the ground. We explained to them that in order to accommodate all the families it was essential to go higher. When we explained the design, with the help of models and drawings, how each housing unit even at the second floor would have a courtyard, they agreed to the design<sup>19</sup>

The architectural plan conceived an outdoor area flanked by verandas and terraces. A complex housing structure based on strong spatial communication between the city and the dwellings thanks to public, semi-public and private spaces, thus contributing to the development of a dense housing fabric reaching outwards, for sharing, for the community.

The honesty of the construction language is clear in the simplicity of detail, coloured wooden window frames and shutters, in the modest choice of bricks for the vertical structures that mark the urban space, and in the reinforced concrete used for the horizontal structures. The search for “contextual architecture” inspired by the traditional *kasbah* and *mohallah* housing models, and by several of Fathy’s own projects<sup>20</sup> subsequently spilled over into two other designs. One was the Bahawalpur Army Barracks<sup>21</sup> (1981–83), a prototype of mud brick building. The other was the large-scale Lines redevelopment project (1981), a social housing complex that failed to materialize and in 1982 Lari spoke out against the government. By this time, for Lari architecture had become a moral imperative:

I must confess to you, finally, that I am under severe attack by the Development Authority and planners in Karachi for this project. They continue to be convinced that the land is too valuable to build anything but highrise apartments and other prestigious buildings on it. But I feel the poor people who have lived there for twenty-five or thirty years have their rights, too – certainly more of a claim than some developer whose only interest is to make the most profit out of it. To me, it is a moral question<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of that same decade, Lari won important commissions in Karachi for public buildings, including the Taj Mahal (1981), the Compressed Natural Gas Station (1981), and the Finance and Trade Centre (1982–88).

The Compressed Natural Gas Station (1981) was under the aegis of the Pakistan Hydrocarbon Development Institute, seeking to encourage the use of CNG as automotive fuel. The plan was for construction of a service station, a garage and an office. The T-shaped layout unfolded under a single reinforced concrete modular grid roof supported by hexagonal columns topped by parasol spokes. A key aspect of this project was Lari’s research into the expressive potential of reinforced concrete. She later returned to this research in the more complex design of the Finance and Trade Centre (FTC)(1982–88), where the two themes produced significant results.

The FTC was designed as a regular square reinforced concrete grid with four irregular arms connected by a tall canopy reminiscent of the slender ramps in Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh Supreme Court Building (1951–57). Here the indoor–outdoor relationship is again expressed by courtyards and external sidewalks, but also by a canopied ground-floor walkway that seamlessly connect buildings, courtyards and city. The generous space is about six metres high and has a distinctive double roof structure: the first, a system of square-mesh reinforced concrete beams that skirt the structure, the other an overhead canopy system to filter light and foster natural ventilation, set at a right-angle to the beams. In this complex spatial structure, the same level of attention is afforded to the fluted columns in exposed reinforced concrete, and to

the design of the flooring. Lastly, the cross-section shows grounding diversity and complexity with double-height spaces, arcades, courtyards, and green terraces that cover a system of underground parking spaces and warehouses.

The large-scale public complex was inaugurated in 1989, but Lari perceived it as yet another instance of starchitecture, as well as being a further opportunity for the Pakistani state to showcase itself, despite glaring social injustices:

I returned to Pakistan to make “starchitecture” for elite clients, building in cement, glass and steel. My Finance and Trade Centre (1982–88) in Karachi was the largest building in Pakistan for a time, and I could be considered the country’s biggest culprit of high-carbon construction<sup>23</sup>

### *Unlearning, relearning*

Yasmeen Lari closed her firm in 2000, aged fifty-eight. She has often defined the subsequent period as a time when she had to unlearn<sup>24</sup> Western architectural culture and context. She prefers not to talk about the preceding period or the work produced then. On the contrary, she distances herself from and is in conflict with those commissions, admitting she subscribed to an elitist vision of architecture, a sort of forerunner of the starchitect system. Yet re-reading her numerous critical texts on the issues of the modern and the vernacular in Pakistan, or her censure of speculative choices made by the state and by investors, her *j’accuse* pales and she reveals she is a true critical architect and intellectual. As a professional working in a specific geographical context, she is conscious of the limits of architectural action in any reality its possible nay inevitable failings.

From 2000 onwards, Lari makes no critical review of her past professional life, nor does she reveal any more pondered consideration of its possible influence on her current work, which she defines as a rebirth. Yet, many conceptual bonds and themes emerge in actions undertaken with Heritage Foundation, although some are more direct than others. First of all, the ethical attitude to issues of social inequality, seeing architecture as an instrument of redemption, accountability for natural resources and, ultimately, meticulous attention to materials and the sense that architecture is a necessity. These themes have always played a key role in her professional life and this essay aims to provide an initial review of Lari’s crucial cultural translation work, the seamless rethinking and influences carried over from one phase of her career to the next.

## NOTES

1. Lari's family came to the United Kingdom on holiday in the summer of 1956. She stayed on, studying at a London school and subsequently taking a two-year course in Fine Arts before starting her degree course at Oxford School of Architecture (now part of Oxford Brookes University), where she graduated in 1964.
2. Kamil Khan Mumtaz, *Architecture in Pakistan* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1985).
3. Philip Dowson, of Arup Associates, designed the Vaughan and Margery Fry graduate complex in Clarendon Street for Somerville College (1958–66), and the Wolfson Building in Walton Street (1965–67); the Sir Thomas White Building for Saint John's College (1967–75). Source: <https://manchesterhistory.net/architecture/1960/somerville.html>. [Accessed 9 October 2020].
4. Alistair Fair, "'Brutalism Among the Ladies': Modern Architecture at Somerville College, Oxford, 1947–67," *Architectural History* (57) (2014): 357–92.
5. The Florey Building is the Queen's College hall of residence and the last of the "Red Trilogy" (1968–71). In: Leon Krier, *James Stirling: Buildings and Projects 1950–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
6. The Garden Building hall of residence was built from 1967 to 1971, with engineering support from Ove Arup and Partners. Source: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1379819>. [Accessed 9 October 2020].
7. "Brutalism attempts to drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work in a mass production society. [...] its essence is ethical." Alison Smithson, *This is Tomorrow*, Catalogue published for the Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition in London, August 1956.
8. "The Death of CIAM" is a well-known photograph of Peter and Alison Smithson, John Voelcker, Jaap Bakema, Sandy van Ginkel, Aldo van Eyck, and Blanche Lemco exhibited by Team X during the 11th CIAM, in Otterlo. For 1959, see: Kenneth Frampton, "The Vicissitudes of Ideology: CIAM and Team X, Critique and Counter-critique 1928–68," *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1980); Fred Kaplan, *1959: The Year Everything Changed* (Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley & Sons, 2009).
9. In 1969, Lari became a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.
10. Including Medhi Ali Mizra for the first generation (1910–50); Nayyar Ali Dada and Kamil Khan Mumtaz for the second generation (from Independence in 1947), in Mumtaz (1985).
11. Of the foreign architects working in Pakistan in the 1960s, Lari often mentions Edward Durell Stone, who designed the final version of the residential complex in Islamabad, saying he was responsible for a failed interpretation of Islamic architecture ("Instant Islamic"), and including Gio Ponti in a similar failure. Dioxadis Associates were commissioned for the Islamabad urban plan and French architect Michel Ecochard for many public cultural and educational buildings in various Pakistani cities.
12. The magazine *Mimar: Architecture in Development* was founded in 1981 by architect Hasan-Uddin Khan who also played an active part in setting up the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, in 1978. See: Sibel Bozdogan, "The Aga Khan Award for Architecture: A Philosophy of Reconciliation," *Journal of Architectural Education* 45 (3) (1992): 182–8; Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "The Islamic Debate," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* (19) (1985): 41–4.
13. Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983): 16–30.
14. Niloofer Amini, "Modern Architecture as an Agency of Political Competition: The Case of Iran and Pakistan," *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* (6) (2018): 92–107.

15. Helen Thomas, "Introduction to Yasmeen Lari," <http://www.tablettoproductions.com/outsideeurope/>. [Accessed 25 February 2020].
16. Hasan-Uddin Khan, "Architect-Designed Houses: From Traditional to Modern, a Changing Paradigm in the Islamic World," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 8 (1) (2019), doi: 10.1386/ijia.8.1.5\_2. [Accessed 27 February 2020].
17. Yasmeen Lari, "The Lines Area, Resettlement Project, Karachi," in *Designing in Islamic Cultures 2: Urban Housing*, edited by Margaret Bentley Sevcenko (Cambridge, MA: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1982), 56–64.
18. "[I] also incorporated in the design the lessons I learned from working in slums among the people living at subsistence level. For example, narrow pedestrian streets are multi-purpose as children's playground, a place for socializing, where people may take their charpoy (string beds), a vendor's selling place or whatever. Above all they must be spaces for human interaction." Yasmeen Lari, "Profile," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* (2) (1981): 45–54.
19. Yasmeen Lari, (1978) "Discussion, Section 3: Toward a Revitalization of Traditional Habitats," in *The Aga Khan Foundation, Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam*, edited by Renata Holod (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture Proceedings of Seminar One in the series Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held at Aiglemont, Gouvieux, France, April 1978), 81–2.
20. In particular, design of the rural village of New Gournia, in Egypt (1945–48), which became a cause célèbre after Hassan Fathy published *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969).
21. The Army Barracks was erected entirely by local trades using local mud bricks and sand cement. For Lari, this was a forerunner of the building techniques she would later use in her self-building schemes. This was another project that met strong opposition from high-brow Pakistani architects of the day.
22. Yasmeen Lari, "The Lines Area, Resettlement Project, Karachi," 64.
23. Helen Thomas, "Yasmeen Lari: Drawn Closer," *Drawing Matters*, 7 April 2020, <https://drawingmatter.org/yasmeen-lari-drawn-closer/>. [Accessed 11 October 2020].
24. "Having been trained as an architect in the West, for me there was a period of unlearning as I tried to relate to the reality of the country, and roamed our amazing historic towns for inspiration." Jaime Gillin, "Q&A with Pakistan's First Female Architect," *Dwell: Dwell Media LLC*, July 2 (2012). <https://www.dwell.com/article/qanda-with-pakistans-first-female-architect-d642fdb6>. [Accessed 25 March 2021].





# THE FUTURE UNDERPINNED BY THE PAST

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As we know, it is culture that creates a bond between diverse communities, providing them with strength and vigour – woven on the loom of tradition, fashioned by the seasonal crops and verdant trees, reticent before the skies and humble before seasons, orchestrated with melody in the hearts of men and women of this country<sup>1</sup>

“A Traditional Future” is an episode dedicated to the work of Yasmeen Lari in Al Jazeera’s *Rebel Architecture* documentary series.<sup>2</sup> The video was directed by Faiza Ahmad Khan and tells of this architect’s dedication to proving that culture will allow the poorest members of society to begin a process of self-emancipation from poverty. The intention was to describe an approach to architectural design that exploited the wisdom of the past as an educational method. The primary goal was to save human lives, educate people, train mindful inhabitants, and lift the population – especially women – out of abject poverty. Moreover, the scope of the project reaches beyond merely just handing down the country’s architectural culture. Inspired by tradition, the project pursues a direction in which architecture stimulates rethinking of contemporary circumstances. Time becomes a device with which “[...] to rethink and redefine our needs – only then can we create something new, different and appropriate to our culture;”<sup>3</sup> so the past becomes the home of the future, defining a position that sees in the past an image that is not immobile “[...] but a ‘sign’ and a ‘cause’ of future things which are, in this way, anticipated, foreseen, foretold, predicted, proclaimed beforehand [...]”<sup>4</sup>

Yasmeen Lari’s work is distinctive in its use of multiple disciplines and in basing social outreach on a recovery of the past but in a perspective that looks to the future. Two main elements show her determination to prove how architecture is a device that can be used in the collective economic and cultural emancipation of an entire country. Lari pursues this social commitment with determination, reaching out to and contributing to a community project that can improve the living conditions of the people of Pakistan, a country that despite economic investments, in four decades has failed to narrow the massive economic and social gap afflicting the majority of the population.

## *Salvaging the heritage of history and culture as an emancipation strategy*

Lari’s commitment to cultural heritage became evident at the turn of the 1980s. After an initial stage in her career when she worked with different architectural typologies, especially in the early days, she began a process of “removing” what she had learned at university. At this same time, she encountered “Critical Regionalism”<sup>5</sup> and adopted its contemporary ideals,



but she also sought an alternative approach to architecture as culture, expressed by the Modernist Movement in a number of geographical contexts.

Lari's own approach, however, was based on an ethical stance that derived from her Western architecture training, in turn arriving from the Rationalist teachings of the masters of modern architecture. On the other hand, she was deeply inspired by Vitruvian concepts and Marcus Vitruvius Pollio was one of her two gurus. The other was Hassan Fathy. Although she decided to set aside established models, she did exploit them to reinforce her Rationalist view of architecture, analysing and codifying the discipline to make it a form of social, cultural and economic emancipation, close to Fathy's creed of architecture for the poor.<sup>6</sup> It was his critical thinking she embraced when she developed her involution of housing models and structuring elements leading to a new era of socially active design.

The approach took the direction of a commitment to develop a home-based way of supporting "[...] a less industrially developed country, with its highly-developed corporate sector and a growing middle class on the one end, a country with a treasure house of ancient heritage both tangible and intangible, a wealth of vernacular building traditions based on natural materials, and a mass of disadvantaged populace with its own innate wisdom, but waiting for its energy to be tapped."<sup>7</sup> Lari set aside the Western model when she realized it was one of the components of the social gap, a model coveted by the few who could aspire to it and live in a style that damaged the rest of the population. She was, however, also critical of a system that produced pollution and thus damaged natural and environmental resources.

A threefold strategy was devised for narrowing the divide, based on memory, culture and education, aspects rooted in the fundamental premise that loss of that memory must be prevented, that the environment must be protected, and above all that people must not suffer as a result of climate change and natural disaster. In this respect, culture is proposed as the means for creating an identity matrix that will ferry into the future the awareness and determination of a people living on the precipice of natural disaster, threatened by various types of crisis that generate progressive economic and, above all, social impoverishment.

#### *Bottom-up heritage*

This overview is certainly not intended to be a consideration on the methodology or critical path in the field of restoration and its techniques, but does voice specific interest in highlighting and exploring how time bears witness and how its value can be perceived in the transformation of buildings and cities. Combined with a specific educational and training processes, this value reinforces a set of actions that restore "respect" for one's own culture and for the past, developing a mechanism that will be useful in the future. This can be taken as a formal expression of research that seeks to classify, define, choose what must "[...] be set at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature,"<sup>8</sup> the objective being to transpose the past into a contemporary context.

The players in the research conducted are men and women, and bottom-up actions are put in place as a strategy for architecture as the substance upon which to base "social relations."<sup>9</sup> The secondary requirement to make

sure citizens become more knowledgeable and understand not only the historical value but also the identity of the past is met by promoting a great many initiatives inspired by three key words: Heritage, Culture, Tradition.

Yasmeen Lari's amazing work is to be acknowledged for introducing and codifying different types of tangible and intangible heritage, which she achieved through Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, founded with her husband and of which she is CEO.

Heritage Foundation of Pakistan has undertaken extensive investigations for the classification of major and minor historical sites. The typological research into space and dwelling as "essential rationalism" was required to define a protocol for re-establishing a Pakistani architectural approach that drew the construction-site-inhabitants relationship back to the centre of the debate.<sup>10</sup>

The schemes addressed many levels, first of all communication, fundamental for stimulating attention. The Karachi Festival was a multifaceted initiative inspired by Lari's Karachi guidebook and has become above all demonstration of how citizens can rediscover and take back their spaces and their cultures. The event then spread to more cities, launching the Karavan Pakistan program and a number of other festivals promoting cultural heritage and traditions. One subsequent product was the PSO-Karavan Heritage Cleaning Initiative, which developed training schemes for cleaning historical architecture. Apart from safeguarding ancient buildings, the scheme engaged people from all social classes and cultures, with a focus on students from different schools in a teaching action that aimed to develop awareness in the adult citizens of tomorrow. The activities were chosen carefully to make students realize that being part of history is a benefit for everyone concerned, starting with youth, the powerhouse of the future. Identification of archaeological sites, historical monuments and old towns as three types of tangible heritage led to definition of multiscale recovery strategies once it was acknowledged they were a fundamental resource for understanding the cultural diversities that are part of the age-old history of the citizens of Pakistan today.

A major challenge was to highlight the importance of safeguarding historical urban fabric which, unlike monuments and archaeological sites, begins a rapid decline when undermined by the speculation of modern development, with its scant respect for the morphologies and stratifications that adapt settlements to places, sites and geographies over time, aligning them with past experience.

The enactment of the 1994 Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act initiated the important process of classifying Karachi's heritage sites. A vast legacy of six hundred locations were saved from gradually disappearing under the pressure of the spiralling modern, a recurring condition in the history of any country's development, regardless of geographic location. This was the first in a series of preservation actions across Pakistan that would make it possible to hand down a distinctive identity by safeguarding the equivalent of family jewels.

Thanks to Lari's role as UNESCO advisor for Pakistan in 2003-05, she was able to contribute to promotion of seven World Heritage Sites.<sup>11</sup> The result is a testimony to her tireless work in building relationships and applying diplomatic skills in a very complex political, religious and economic scenario. The identification of national and local historical sites whose

value – albeit eroded by disastrous decline and abandonment, or even lost forever – became a vital resource. The sites provided inspiration for drafting the National Register of Historic Places of Pakistan: Heritage Assets of the Siran Valley.<sup>12</sup> The Register was later used to orient understanding of ancient construction techniques and as a model for post-earthquake reconstruction, but above all it served as a starting point for a systematic classification of the country's historical heritage.

The constant documentation work of modern Pakistan's architectural legacy was further supported by publications of considerable importance, like volumes on the *Sepulchre of Mirza Jan Baba Father of Isa Tarkhan the Second*<sup>13</sup> and on *Sethi Haveli*.<sup>14</sup> Through a fascinating photographic reportage, the latter documents how Sethi House was secured and restored, illustrating this interesting path to restoration implemented in Pakistan. The project also produced a large number of work reports and conservation operating manuals<sup>15</sup> linked to other monument restorations, documenting the absolute commitment to the field of preservation and the truly exciting experimentation of techniques adapted to the peculiarities of each context.

The major innovation in this respect was the extension of the concept of heritage to vernacular architecture, in point of fact recognizing the systemic value of settlements especially if located in rural areas and typically with self-built homes. The method preferred for these houses shows there is a model suitable for promoting “the use of sustainable, low-cost, zero carbon footprint structures.”<sup>16</sup> When adequately studied, codified and adapted, these construction techniques have been effective in developing a methodology that encourages the building of safe, healthy homes, and an approach that became a priority in the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan mission, especially in recent years.

#### *Building knowledge as an empirical process*

Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, whose declared mission is to safeguard history and culture in order to promote integration, peace and development, launched a program in 1980 to explore vernacular architecture and recover the country's legacy of major and minor historical architecture. The first step was to develop a study and classification tool that would help create an exhaustive data archive documenting the range of artifacts, construction techniques, and state of conservation, thus enabling a methodology to be created and taught.

An impressive endeavour and undoubtedly one of Heritage Foundation of Pakistan's most important achievements, but in no way a skin-deep exercise: it was required to fulfil the need to identify Pakistan's distinctive, thrifty architecture, taking into account many eras of long, rich history, recognizing in each a fundamental multicultural value. This staunch commitment was not intended to seek the picturesque. It was a prudent criterion offering a way to identify architectural techniques and evolution by studying the past to define the right practices for teaching and for self-building safe, dignified dwellings.

The idea came to fruition within village communities precisely in what Rudofsky had defined “a communal enterprise”<sup>17</sup> long before, making reference to Pietro Belluschi's description of “spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage, acting under a community of experience.”<sup>18</sup> The next step was to implement the right measures to

recover and take back heritage, with a systematic survey and digitalization above all of the lavish decorative devices. This was a requirement not only for developing restoration protocols but also for generating extensive manual-type documentation.

Heritage Foundation of Pakistan's promotion of these actions and of accurate reporting of restoration operations for selected sites<sup>19</sup> constitute a significant contribution to good practices in the field of restoration that uses a range of techniques, and materials like stone, brick and wood. The research traced back customs handed down over the centuries that bear witness to the cultures and influences that built various identities over time, describing all the eras and all the stratifications left in Pakistan by passing history.

Moreover, to begin restoration of historic sites, a skilled workforce had to be trained, especially in the field of decoration, given the remarkable widespread ceramic and wood decorative tradition in Pakistan's monumental buildings. The process of bringing artisans on board was accompanied by a census of the various forms of arts at risk of extinction. Sindh Crafts managed the survey in partnership with the Sindh Government's Department of Culture and the result was that new generations of artisans were trained in different skill sectors like earthenware, wood, weaving, leatherwork. The institution of training also meant that the skills then raised an artisan's self-esteem.<sup>20</sup>

The program laid out a path of redemption and emancipation, especially for women, in a community process that was mindful and respectful of village rules, religious views, and social organization. The women became micro entrepreneurs and in turn trained new professional figures. The method educated villagers and the role of women was also acknowledged by menfolk when they realized that the income generated was of benefit to the entire family and the community overall.

This strategy inspired another objective for Heritage Foundation, which was to extend the beneficial effects of site conservation to neighbouring districts, creating a buffer zone that identified a group of villages to engage in the program. A series of activities able to engage inhabitants in the program served as a catalyst for the revitalization of the villages themselves, and for the economic and cultural growth of those who lived there, the objective being to reduce poverty. Redevelopment of the villages, installing infrastructures to ensure drinking water, toilets and sewage systems, and also training of cultural guides, development of packaging and marketing for craft products led to regeneration and development strategies.

#### *Persistence for safeguarding the population and resisting loss of heritage*

In turn, the lengthy, critical study of both major and minor architectural patrimony inspired Heritage Foundation of Pakistan to begin interventions in post-earthquake reconstruction and also to address risk prevention in the event of natural disasters like floods and cyclones.

The devastating 2005 earthquake that hit Northern Pakistan intensified the conditions of degradation and poverty that were already widespread for much of the population. The first action launched by Heritage Foundation of Pakistan and the Karavan Program for Indigenous Technology (KAPIT) started an international partnership<sup>21</sup> that put in place a self-help approach



engaging populations affected by the earthquake in an active rather than a passive aid system. Once again, overall actions were structured on several levels: a physical reconstruction of what had disintegrated with a decisive adaptation of utilities, social reconstruction through forms of education to increase awareness and cohesion, and lastly, promotion of local heritage and resources to generate income from activities related to eco tourism and crafts.

A precise strategy was implemented for each level with the intention of pursuing Disaster Risk Resistance (DRR) and Disaster Risk Mitigation (DRM) actions. In each of these cases, construction techniques that improved safety were used during building of suitable vernacular houses.<sup>22</sup>

Tangible reconstruction came in the form of Karavan Ghar, namely self-built vernacular houses using recovered rubble (the basic material found on site), integrated with wire mesh and special steel or wood systems for reinforcing corners to give the dwellings seismic stability. After this first trial, research was finetuned to enhance earthquake resistance in vernacular architectures.

A mixed building method was developed whereby the geometry established settlement and dwelling rules by module, combined with a layered construction from the base upward, adequately reinforced and made with a series of natural materials like lime and bamboo. This ensured solid grounding and at the same time installed a platform suitable for the prevention of flooding that often occurred after inundations. The vertical load-bearing structures, again in natural materials local to the site (unfired bricks, stone), were integrated with bamboo lattice to give elastic resistance to the structure.

Roofing was created with light materials, bamboo assembled by coupling shafts to guarantee a section with adequate resistance. A system of secondary frames that varied according to roof geometry was then fitted. Pitched or conical roofs were finished in straw, while reinforced earth was used for horizontal types. This research refined the initial model by progressively replacing materials – like steel plates and mesh – whose cost affected the overall construction budget with natural, materials easily sourced even in very disadvantaged contexts. A real zero-mile building system in application and methodology, using circular economy principles on modern architecture and buildings in an effective albeit empirical way. The principle of self-sufficiency (the ability of the populations not to depend only on external aid as a form of support) was key at all times.

These codes are based on the *DRR-Compliant Sustainable Construction BUILD BACK SAFER WITH VERNACULAR METHODOLOGIES Technical Support Program*,<sup>23</sup> a manual which set out the “Lari Principles for DRR Compliance”. Testing techniques for the restoration of monuments were extended to anti-seismic building, returning to a circular concept of reusing both past experience and experimentation. A circularity that implies a zero-carbon construction policy, which plans each phase while indicating the working method for designs drafted to include descriptions of each building detail. Even when vernacular techniques are used, the instructions are standardized and easy to apply, despite the absence of construction site vehicles and machinery, by providing inhabitants with basic training.

One of the most important aspects is the involvement of the population in the educational and training dimension of risk prevention, so the *Disaster*

*Preparedness Manua*<sup>24</sup> was intentionally written in English and Urdu to make it easy for the entire population to understand. The manual illustrates good practices to be undertaken “before, during and after” the disaster, where “before” (prevention) is central in the planning and organization of villages, through proper preparation that starts from site location, defining safe escape routes, and using suitable construction techniques. In parallel, meetings for the population are scheduled to plan actions to be taken for addressing the different types of risk, and the main actions to be implemented are described very simply. There is also attention to the fragile population, which is particularly vulnerable during the emergency phase. Last, but not least, there is the management of the post-emergency phase, especially with regard to aid, food and water for the displaced.

#### *Preparing for the future by going back to the past*

The humanitarian dimension is at the core of all Lari’s actions, from planning to restoration, but also technology, and every aspect of architecture as a discipline works across the board. An approach that casts men and women as central players in a process mindful of transforming places and of the relationship that these transformations establish with their context, with the environment, and with available and accessible resources.

Lari’s architecture is open and inclusive, it speaks of taking back, upheld by her utter respect for place and only at first glance merely protective of ancient cultural connotations. In reality, a strong cutting-edge implication is embedded precisely in those connotations, expressing the community value of architecture as an identity that prepares for the future while respecting people and nature; uniting Western and Eastern cultures across the board while saving resources to guarantee a fair future for all, starting with women as an active force to empower all people.

The scope of the resulting experience is universal: an ethical architecture that asks simple questions, offering multiple answers through “Zero Carbon Humanistic Architecture,”<sup>25</sup> “fostering pride, dignity and well-being.”

Conversely, the interrelation with Lari’s seemingly “involutionary” form of architecture suggests a comparative projection pursued in a perspective oriented to an “evolutionary”<sup>26</sup> key, typical of living entities. By means of successive adaptations to the innumerable changes occurring over millennia, these living entities enabled survival of flora and fauna. Architecture is engaged in a similar dynamic, and in emergency, fragile, and unstable sites it must find the way to adapt constantly.

In this dynamic, it is therefore important to establish a new role for architecture, one that can reconcile tradition and innovation,<sup>27</sup> and re-establish a sustainable operational link between form and technique, between space and actions, in a symbiotic combination of art and science<sup>28</sup> typical of biological evolution as a form of survival of all species.

And in this respect, Lari’s thinking and actions are again effectively modern in the direction identified by Fathy, namely that through in-depth study of the past, its modernity<sup>29</sup> can be demonstrated, moving in a direction able to read and interpret the role of architecture in the contemporary world,<sup>30</sup> establishing it as a central value for sustainable progress at the service of the future of women and men.

## NOTES

1. Yasmeen Lari, "Culture – A Basis for National Identity and Image Building" (Keynote speech at the opening session of UNESCO – Government of Pakistan Seminar on Culture, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism, Islamabad, PK, 9–11 December 2003). <http://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/Page/1464/keynote-speech-seminar-on-culture-culture-a-basis-for-national-identity-and-image-building-by-yasmeen>. [Accessed 26 February 2020].
2. Katie Watkins, "Rebel Architecture: Al Jazeera's New Series to Feature Activist Architects," *ArchDaily*, 13 August 2014. <https://www.archdaily.com/537088/rebel-architecture-al-jazeera-s-new-series-to-feature-activist-architects/>. ISSN 0719-8884. [Accessed 26 February 2020].
3. Hasan-Uddin Khan, "Profile: Yasmeen Lari," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* (2) (1981): 45.
4. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 11.
5. See: Kenneth Frampton "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983):16–30.
6. Yasmeen Lari, "Barefoot Social Architecture for Healing the Planet" (Lecture, Columbia University, Faculty of Architecture, Columbia GSAPP Dean's Lecture Series, Online Event, 28 September 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdoaNrKg1Cl>. [Accessed 3 March 2020].
7. Yasmeen Lari, "Karachi Chapter" (Speech delivered at IAPEX 2008, organized by Institute of Architects Pakistan, Karachi, PK, 1–3 March 2008). <http://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/Page/1477/reminiscences-of-a-pakistani-architect-presented-at-iapeX-2008-1-3-march-2008-organized-by-institute>. [Accessed 3 March 2020].
8. Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper&Rowe, 1971), 161.
9. Vittorio Gregotti, "L'ossessione della storia," *Casabella* (478) (1982): 40.
10. See for example: Suhail Zaheer Lari, *Makli under the Sammas* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2017), a precious testimony of the Necropolis of Makli, Thatta.
11. The list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Pakistan is: Moenjodaro Archaeological Site, Sindh (1980); Sahr-i-Bahlol, NWFP (1980); Takht-e-Bahai, Gandhara Archaeological Site, NWFP (1980); Taxila Archaeological Site, Punjab & NWFP (1980); Thatta Monuments or Makli Necropolis, Sindh (1981); Lahore Fort and Shalamar Gardens, Mughal Monuments, Punjab (1981); Rohtas Fort, Pre-Mughal Monument, Punjab (1997). Source: [https://www.unesco.org/siti\\_unesco\\_in\\_pakistan.htm](https://www.unesco.org/siti_unesco_in_pakistan.htm). [Accessed 26 February 2020]. In some of these sites the restoration, recovery and promotion initiated by HFP was very incisive and important.
12. Yasmeen Lari, National Register of Historic Places of Pakistan, Heritage Assets of the Siran Valley (2008).
13. Yasmeen Lari, *Sepulchre of Mirza Jan Baba: Father of Isa Tarkhan the Second* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2017).
14. Yasmeen Lari, *Sethi Haveli: From Wrecked Vestige to Splendour. A Gem in the Heart of Historic Peshawar* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2015).
15. See for instance, Yasmeen Lari's 2008 Heritage Foundation Preservation Guides, Heritage Foundation: *Preservation Guide 1: Protecting Historical Assets; Preservation Guide 2: Undertaking Historic Conservation; Preservation Guide 3: For Owners of Historic Properties; Preservation Guide 4: Work at Historic Sites; Preservation Guide 5: Cataloguing Heritage Sites; Preservation Guide 6: Hospitality Guide for Heritage Sites; Preservation Guide 7: Guidance for Cleaning Historic Stone Masonry*.
16. Yasmeen Lari, *Towards a Sustainable Future: Build Back Safer with Vernacular Methodologies. Green Manual* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2015), 5.3.
17. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1964), 3.

18. Rudofsky, 4.

19. For Heritage Foundation of Pakistan's intense promotion of the restoration of historical monuments and archaeological sites, see its website for extensive documentation describing in meticulous detail both the methodology adopted and the implementation process, as well as the related institutional, cultural and economic partnerships with local and foreign universities, and the involvement of UNESCO.

20. In this respect, the work dedicated to educational programs was mainly for women and was crucial in acknowledging they are the leaders of a redemption from poverty, the hope for decreasing inequalities at the root of social conflict that often brings extremism and for rebuilding Pakistan's international image.

21. This fascinating synergy led to the construction of shelters in seventy-five villages, then expanded to become a network of partners who subsequently started the 2006 Heritage Foundation-NSN-Nokia Program: *Recrafting Destiny*, a rehabilitation scheme for populations in mainly mountainous areas located in highly seismic areas.

22. The *Disaster Preparedness Manual* was published in 2013 and contained a series of indications for the population on how to react, as well as illustrating how to behave and best practices to put in place before, during and after a disaster. The publication was developed in tandem with the University of Glasgow and supported by the Scottish Government. Written in English and Urdu and complete with DVD, this manual illustrates very simply the main actions to be taken to increase safety for citizens, using a communication model easy to grasp even for those with little education. The Manual was the result of a joint venture that lasted from 2010 to 2013: the Disaster Rehabilitation for Women, Siran Valley, Pakistan Program, funded by the Scottish Government Fund and South Asia Development Program, and implemented by the University of Glasgow and Heritage Foundation Pakistan.

23. Yasmeen Lari, *DRR-Compliant Sustainable Construction Build Back Safer with Vernacular Methodologies: Technical Support Programme* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2012), 1.10.

24. Yasmeen Lari, *Disaster Preparedness Manual* (Karachi, PK: Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, 2013), 3.

25. Yasmeen Lari, "Barefoot Social Architecture for Healing the Planet" (Lecture, Columbia University, Faculty of Architecture, Columbia GSAPP Dean's Lecture Series, Online Event, 28 September 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdoaNrKg1CI>. [Accessed 26 February 2020].

26. Donna Haraway, "Symbiogenesis, Symptoiesis and Art Science Activisms for Staying with the Trouble", in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, edited by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bibandt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2016), M31.

27. Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*, in Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 20–21.

28. Haraway, "Symbiogenesis, Symptoiesis and Art Science Activisms for Staying with the Trouble."

29. Fathy Hassan, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973).

30. For in-depth analysis of the critical aspects of the relationship between tradition and technology, and how it can be handed down, as well as the evolution of the relationship with modification of form, it is interesting to compare Lari's empiricist approach to architecture with the positions expressed by Kenneth Frampton in *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture* edited by John Cava (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), as a convergence of thought on architectural design as a method rooted in time and place.





# WANTED: ARCHITECTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Cassandra Cozza, Politecnico di Milano

Humanitarian involvement began to be central to Yasmeen Lari's work after the Kashmir earthquake. She started to dedicate her time to the most needy and to promote "social and ecological justice." An unequivocal choice, consolidated with her massive commitment in the field, which envisaged inclusive projects and actions with two main aims, firstly to improve the living conditions of Pakistan's poorest and most vulnerable populations, and secondly to create "low-cost, zero-carbon, zero-waste" sustainable architecture.

Even after the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 health emergency, Lari continued to push ahead with her research, circulating it to raise awareness among young architects around the world,<sup>1</sup> also providing online lectures and tutorials. In addition to her considerations on environmental sustainability and humanitarian architecture, she proposed "eco urbanism" to create new, fairer, greener urbanism, as well as applying strategies to address the current global pandemic.

## *Towards new challenges*

To reflect on my journey: I took a big challenge of humanitarianism when I was in my mid-sixties. Having retired from architectural practice, I had hardly any workers, I had no experience of the humanitarian field, and I had no funds, no other resources to embark in such adventure, in a mountainous territory 5,000 miles from my home in the city by the sea. [...] once I arrived on the scene, helping poor from known and unknown sources [...] I was never alone [...] for me the present phase of my life is the most exciting and the most rewarding<sup>2</sup>

Since her professional debut, in 1963, Lari has never lacked the mettle to throw herself into the fray and she soon became a "prima donna"<sup>3</sup> of architecture: not only in the sense of a renowned, recognized leading figure, characterized by her own architectural identity, but also as Pakistan's first woman architect. Even more so when she set up Heritage Foundation of Pakistan in 1980 and expanded her work to the field of conservation and restoration. In 2005, having retired from professional practice after designing major buildings for the country's elite, which she estimates as being one percent of the population, she went back into the fray. Following the serious Kashmir earthquake emergency, which left eighty-two thousand victims and four hundred thousand displaced families, she realized it was time for her to dedicate her life to the most needy.

Her humanitarian work began without funds or workers, but she immediately received the support of many volunteers, not just from

Pakistan, but from all over the world. She began by setting off on a three-month adventure, taking on a reconstruction project in the north of the country that lasted more than three years. And she never stopped: Pakistan is the seventh most vulnerable nation in the world and is constantly being hit by natural disasters,<sup>4</sup> mostly floods and earthquakes.

Pakistan's "Prima Donna" architect decided to abandon her role as a starchitect and reinvent herself in the profession of humanitarian architect in her homeland. She did it by taking risks, putting herself on the line, studying a great deal. She observed destroyed villages to see which vernacular techniques and typologies would prove to be the most resistant. She experimented in the field and developed new skills by enhancing vernacular construction techniques. She decided to work with a different kind of client and her mission was more than clear: she had to help the poorest – those so destitute they live below the poverty line and do not even own a pair of shoes – emancipate themselves. She did this by involving them in the construction of resilient ecosystems with low environmental impact, inspired by local values.

#### *An architect in the field*

Lari began meeting the poor, the destitute, the beggars, the disadvantaged local communities, namely her new "barefoot clients," when she travelled to historical sites and worked on reconstruction projects. She always treats these new clients with respect, offers her humanitarian work pro bono, and says that working for others and not for one's own ego is "amazingly rewarding."<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, her work transcends the straightforward creation of architecture and aspires to a "social and ecological justice" accomplished through "a rights-based, holistic model, with the poor helping other poor, the work aims to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal number one: no poverty,"<sup>6</sup> in which the poor become the key players in their own growth by supporting other poor.

One of these projects was the 10,000 Green Shelter Program, put in place in a number of villages whose residents are "the poorest of the poor," like the 2018 Makli<sup>7</sup> beggar communities scheme. Thanks to an inclusive process of co-production and co-creativity, many community shelters and micro-infrastructures were completed, decorated and personalized, working side by side with the local populations.<sup>8</sup> The close involvement of the population in the project promoted sense of ownership and reinforced sense of belonging, so the inhabitants care about their homes and look after them. This is an excellent example of the ultimate goal of Lari's humanitarian architecture: to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the first, to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere."<sup>9</sup> For this reason, Lari bases her humanitarian architecture model on the following multidisciplinary principles: "Maximizing the potential of 'barefoot ecosystem' in Pakistan; zero-carbon humanistic architecture, fostering pride, dignity and wellbeing; delivery of unmet needs by barefoot incubator for social good and environmental sustainability; adoption of non-engineered structures for shrinking the ecological footprint."<sup>10</sup>

This architectural model aims to promote independence and bolster mutual support among local communities by triggering "self-help chains."

For example, as seen in the *Rebel Architecture* documentary series dedicated to Lari the architect by Al-Jazeera,<sup>11</sup> in 2005 Heritage Foundation of Pakistan provided the first inhabitant-builder in the Sindh village of Jatoi with the bricks he needed to rebuild his home, teaching him the right construction techniques. The second inhabitant-builder, on the other hand, had to buy the materials for his house but was able to count on the support of the family of the first self-builder, who helped him both in the actual work and by sharing the techniques learned during construction of the first house.

This model later led to the creation of Barefoot Social Architecture and critically rethinks the Western humanitarian aid system that Lari considers an outdated international approach, which fails to foster pride and economic independence in the populations it aims to help. She is convinced that disadvantaged populations must be encouraged to rely on their own resources – rather than on external or state assistance – and this will lead to more widespread and lasting results at lower cost.

Lari also promoted unity among the various ethnic groups thanks to her participative actions to safeguard historical and cultural heritage, strengthening pride and recognition of shared roots: “The open-to-all, large-scale Karavan Pakistan children’s assemblies have been extremely effective in conveying the message of rule of law, cultural and human rights, and heritage on a basis of identity.”<sup>12</sup> The approach integrates construction of safe dwellings with the establishment of basic services for the entire community and teaches tolerance and acceptance of diversity.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, helping populations rely on their own strength rather than wait passively for external aid, generates self-sufficiency through active participation, changing mindsets and promoting lasting change.

#### *Barefoot Social Architecture (BASA)*

Barefoot Social Architecture is akin to social engineering for bringing about social changes incorporating environmental, cultural, and technical dimensions resulting in transformation of mindset from a cycle of dependency to a culture of pride and self-reliance. On the one hand, BASA seeks to democratize architecture that provides people with wellbeing and self-esteem. On the other, it has partiality for zero carbon footprint using ubiquitous earth, lime and bamboo. As you know those are the only materials that I use in my work today<sup>14</sup>

Lari conceived Barefoot Social Architecture to meet the primary needs of Pakistan’s rural population, which makes up sixty-one percent of the total. Most of this population lives below the poverty line, has a low level of literacy, little access to drinking water and sanitation, and a high mother and infant mortality rate.<sup>15</sup>

Barefoot Social Architecture is a holistic ecosystem of multidisciplinary actions implemented thanks to the support of Heritage Foundation of Pakistan and the architects of the Zero Carbon ADMAN,<sup>16</sup> a network of volunteers founded and coordinated by Yasmeen Lari and Murad Jamil. Barefoot Social Architecture makes use of appropriate technologies to enable vulnerable communities to withstand predictable disasters – natural and human-induced – and plan disaster preparedness, prevention and



management through sustainable zero- or low-carbon methodologies. This humanitarian and social venture promotes construction of shelters and a set of micro-infrastructures for improving safety, housing conditions, hygiene, social interaction, economic development, and food production in local communities.

Particular attention is paid to the needs, involvement and training of women. Architecture becomes an opportunity for income, bringing emancipation and economic independence. An opportunity to improve the condition of women through the creation of equipment that tangibly simplifies daily and domestic life – such as the eco-toilet<sup>17</sup> and the *chulah* smokeless stove – and through construction of women's centres to encourage aggregation. But it is also the opportunity for meeting and teaching. Lari gave women an important role in the development of the one-room shelters, and tasked them with production of low-cost craft items such as natural soap, *kashi* glazed pottery and terracotta artefacts, and bowls for washstands, founding microenterprises to grow their economic independence, the real driver of enduring emancipation. Some of these women were even able to earn during lockdown.

Barefoot Social Architecture is the evolution of a training and implementation model that Heritage Foundation of Pakistan has been testing since 2000, working with communities and young people on heritage protection schemes through the Karavan Pakistan social outreach arm. The model was perfected during various recovery and reconstruction programs, such as the 2005–2008 Heritage for Rehabilitation and Development Program, 2011 Green Karavan Ghar, and DDR–Compliant Shelters and Other Structures, also 2011. The project outcomes, the techniques used and preparation of the materials are described in detail and illustrated in the Heritage Foundation's 2012 *DRR–Compliant Sustainable Construction Manual*<sup>18</sup> and 2015 *The Green Manual*.<sup>19</sup>

Heritage Foundation of Pakistan also makes use of different social media to reach out to all potential self-builders, researchers and stakeholders. The training of self-builders and volunteers takes place through knowledge-sharing supported by training courses, construction tutorials and illustrated manuals that describe all the construction steps with images to make them easily understandable even to the illiterate. The projects are open source and their implementation takes place through a network of professionals and universities, and volunteer architects, students and other figures in the humanitarian field, committed to efficient use of funds and resources, and keeping execution costs to a minimum.

Lari defines Barefoot Social Architecture as an “ecosystem” or as “social engineering”, because it is put in place through construction work, training, and production of goods, generating a micro-economy that contributes to independence and economic development. Some of these results, which Lari defines as “not architecture but collaborative work,”<sup>20</sup> belong to the entire community, while others are private. All the shelter typologies are designed and tested to be resilient and safe in the event of natural disasters and calamities. They are reinforced to withstand high-magnitude earthquakes, elevated and waterproofed to withstand floods and flash flooding,<sup>21</sup> have raised spaces or reachable roofs to keep possessions safe from water, and so on. Moreover, they have been painstakingly studied and designed to be easy to build, eco sustainable and low cost;

they are made by applying enhanced vernacular techniques and sustainable materials available locally. These architectures include residential units (one-room eco shelters of different types); community services (for instance shelters, women's centres, health centres, dispensaries, schools); micro-infrastructures (*chulah* smokeless stoves, water pumps, eco-toilets). The scheme also envisages food and produce: plantations and community forests, green roofs, raised gardens, livestock enclosures, rainwater collection systems, and other "barefoot" products such as natural soap, natural fuel (compost from food and toilet waste), *kashi* glazed pottery and terracotta artefacts, bamboo furniture.<sup>22</sup>

### *Architecture without architects*<sup>23</sup>

Humanitarian architecture with both vernacular and classical architecture, old wisdom, has always been important to me to bring an echo of the past into my work, maybe not a reproduction of the old but that the new should embody the spirit of past experiences, thoughts and processes<sup>24</sup>

Each time she accepted a new challenge, Lari reflected on the role of architecture and architects, suggesting new approaches and pursuing new goals. Today she jokes about it, saying she has become a "Sustainable Construction Advocate," atoning for the impact of what she produced in her previous professional life. As a humanitarian architect, she emphasizes the need for good designers and complains about the scant presence of academics engaged in the subject, as well as the poor remuneration for this kind of professional specialization: "we need more architects who work in the humanitarian field and paid jobs should be created,"<sup>25</sup> perhaps making better use of available funds. This is not a paradox: architects are needed to develop appropriate technologies and use them successfully, improving vernacular techniques. Indeed, projects require coordination, management of their complexity from conception to construction in remote areas, and safe, eco-sustainable, low-cost, easily buildable works to fit into local contexts must be designed. Lari also believes that architects can pave the way towards a just society by fostering social and environmental wellbeing, relinquishing expression of their personal aesthetic vision in order to allow inhabitants to express their creativity.

Lari is a keen observer: she sensed the potential of traditional materials and techniques while working on the restoration and conservation of Pakistani heritage, and studied the strengths and weaknesses of vernacular architecture during reconstruction campaigns. For example, after the Sindh floods, she discovered the resistance of the *chaura* roof and identified the main weaknesses in the masonry.<sup>26</sup> In the Makli necropolis she noticed the resistance of fourteenth-century sand and limestone mortar, which is waterproof and strengthens over time, resisting erosion.<sup>27</sup> Thanks to meticulous, continuous work, she has won respect in the field, challenging mistrust and prejudice, but above all by being a great professional, showing commitment and respect for her nation and all its inhabitants.

Her design research is experimental and is based on the use of just a few cheap, easily sourced materials: lime, earth, unfired clay, bamboo, thatch. The construction method adopted has been perfected over time and can be summarized simply as "low cost, zero carbon, zero waste."

### *Bamboo architecture: Prototypes and technical evolution*

In 2009, Heritage Foundation of Pakistan started using bamboo instead of wood, considering it a more sustainable and easily available material. All the various types of one-room shelter dwellings, built in large numbers and illustrated in detail through texts and project plates in the 2012 *DRR-Compliant Sustainable Construction Manual*,<sup>28</sup> have been adapted to achieve reduction of flood and seismic risks precisely thanks to use of bamboo and lime, which improves resistance to water. Bamboo is used to strengthen all structural components such as beams, joists, trusses, roofing structures, door and window lintels, internal frames on perimeter walls but also for openings.

The manual presents eight typologies of one-room shelter dwellings, which differ in the masonry technique used and in roof shape. All are about twenty square metres and are raised on a base or on stilts. The walls can be built with raw adobe mud bricks or with *Loh Khat* walls: bamboo lattice filled with straw then plastered. Roofs can be flat with a very gentle slope, known as *caravan*; single-pitched; double-pitched; or conical and very sturdy, and the only variant that has a circular plan, called *karavan chaura*. In 2015, after noting that the DRR one-room dwelling withstood new disasters occurring after their construction, Lari developed an even faster, cheaper and more versatile modular construction and composition technique that made use of bamboo. She has designed various prototypes of buildings that are made from prefabricated bamboo modules approximately one point five metres wide and two point five metres high, which can be dismantled and reused. These versatile constructions have been used both for emergency housing and in other situations. For example, Lari Octa Green Rooms (LOG), created using eight modules to cover about twenty square metres, have an octagonal plan and a conical roof; ten modules are sufficient to make community centres, with a more elongated and rectangular plan; twelve modules make an INTBAU centre of approximately thirty square metres, with a domed roof. By assembling multiple modules, larger structures with many different spatial configurations can be achieved.

The Zero Carbon Cultural Centre (ZC3), near Makli, is the base camp of Heritage Foundation of Pakistan, where workshops and training events take place. Building began in 2015 and it houses many of the prototype architectures described so far, like one-room shelters, igloos, *chulah* smokeless stoves, and water pumps. In November 2019 it hosted the INTBAU Pakistan International Conference and Workshops,<sup>29</sup> attended by many delegates from all over the world who stayed at the Zero Carbon Residential Campus. The reception structures are a beehive shape with an open foyer and are composed of six modules of LOG rooms, each with its own bathroom. The INTBAU Centre, on the other hand, comprises three elements of twelve modules each, with domed roofs, and arranged in a V-shape connected by a portico.

The large cultural centre pavilion, however, is an exceptional structure of great impact, extending for about one hundred square metres, for a height of about five. The bamboo structure features decorative elements, also in bamboo, pushed to the limit of its technical potential. Lari has conducted trials with bamboo structures in the field of restoration, using them both for cross-brace reinforcement and reconstruction of roofs, as in the case of the canopy of the Jan Baba Tomb and the Kot Diji granary dome, with a diameter in excess of eight point five metres.

Another example of the adaptability of prefabricated bamboo modules in architecture is the project for emergency structures designed to cope with the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, including the prefab bamboo quarantine unit with bath and the twelve-bed isolation ward. Both can be erected quickly at low cost: about one hundred and fifty euros for the single isolation module and less than one thousand five hundred euros for the twelve-bed ward. Other elements are added to the bamboo building, like doors, windows and furniture. Another example of BASA design is the washstand with mirror in a *kashi* frame, terracotta basin, water container, and a tap controlled by a pedal. The item is made from elements made by local artisans with sustainable products, at a low cost of four thousand Pakistani rupees (just over twenty euros). Together with natural soap, it is a useful prevention device during the pandemic but also allows generation of distributed income, thereby counteracting poverty.

### *Architects for a better future*

(Sustainable approaches are essential). Topic of concern to us, as design professionals: rising disparities, global warming, climate emergencies, recording disasters, climate migrants and conflict impel to refugee camps, along with the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on architecture and urban design. [...] Energy consumption in building construction<sup>30</sup>

To date, Lari has helped improve the lives of more than eight hundred and forty thousand people from populations living in areas prone to natural disasters,<sup>31</sup> as well as working with the most marginalized communities and promoting women's empowerment and the inclusion of disabled people through hands-on actions, bringing both social and economic results.

Today she battles to persuade the Pakistani government and young professionals not to pursue Western urban development models, but to seek a more sustainable green footprint, and she hopes for a new "eco urbanism" to emerge. She imagines the post-pandemic future of cities based on local models of "traditional sustainable urbanism," like that of the historic walled city of Lahore, promoting the use of traditional microclimate control techniques.<sup>32</sup> In numerous recent public conferences for an international audience, she invited all architects to minimize "the creation of autocratic iconic edifices to instead start using local available materials"<sup>33</sup> and to imagine more human cities, where people can work from home, in which it is possible to walk or see the sky for the mental health of those "locked in or out." And addressing the students of a prestigious New York university, she encouraged them to help her in her mission by becoming "zero-carbon champions!"<sup>34</sup>



## NOTES

1. Some examples of her many recent actions, sessions and webinars include a series of six webinar sessions entitled *Zero Carbon Emergency. Isolation & Field Wards Facilities: Covid-19*, organized by (CPD) PCATP-ADMAN-INTBAU for IAP (Institute of Architects Pakistan, Rawalpindi Islamabad Chapter) (23 April – 20 June 2020); Columbia GSAPP Fall 2020 Dean's Lecture and Event Series Session (28 September 2020); a session of Architect Speaks 23 *Barefoot Social Architecture and Zero Carbon Footprint for Social and Ecological Justice for the Marginalized* at the Society of Nepalese Architects (SONA) in collaboration with IAP, INTBAU, ADMAN (4 September 2020); participation in the TEDxLCWU *Countdown* event hosted by Lahore College for Women University (15 October 2020).
2. IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 3 (16 May 2020).
3. Lari often defines herself as the "prima donna" when speaking of her pre-2005 professional career. Her first IAP webinar session (23 April 2020) was called *Prima Donna or Barefoot?*
4. 2005, Pakistan earthquake; 2010, countrywide flood; 2011–12–13, flooding in Sindh; 2013, earthquake in Baluchistan; 2014, flooding in Punjab; 2015, earthquake and flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP); 2019, flash flooding in Sindh. Source: Yasmeen Lari, IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 1 (23 April 2020).
5. Ibid.
6. Source: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-yasmeen-lari/10044316.article>. [Accessed 10 February 2020].
7. *The First Comprehensive Report on Green Shelters*: <https://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/Page/14692/the-first-comprehensive-report-on-green-shelters>. [Accessed 20 July 2021].
8. *Co-production, Co-creativity, Working with People Zero Carbon Methodology/Co-building/Co-creativity Progress Report – 10,000 Green Shelters Program*. <https://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/Object/15068/progress-report-10-000-green-shelters-program-for-report-please-see-link-www-heritagefoundationpak-o>. [Accessed 20 July 2021].
9. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>. [Accessed 13 March 2020].
10. Yasmeen Lari, IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 1 (23 April 2020).
11. Al-Jazeera Rebel Architecture six-part documentary series, *Pakistan: A Traditional Future*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/rebel-architecture/>. [Accessed 13 March 2020].
12. [unesdoc.unesco.org/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach\\_import\\_3cdb2e33-fa2d-4da9-98ad-fce416ec07f2?\\_=147530eng.pdf?to=293&from=1](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_3cdb2e33-fa2d-4da9-98ad-fce416ec07f2?_=147530eng.pdf?to=293&from=1): pp. 133–9. [Accessed 13 March 2020].
13. "I'm a great believer in non-funds. The less funds you have, the better you perform as you make a decent use of whatever you have. [...] huge international funding and Western charity model that destroyed the self-respect of nations and people" IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 3 (16 May 2020).
14. Source: Columbia GSAPP Fall 2020 Dean's Lecture and Event Series Session (28 September 2020). <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/events/1994-yasmeen-lari>. [Accessed 11 October 2020].
15. Source: Yasmeen Lari, IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 1 (23 April 2020).
16. ADMAN is the acronym for Architects Disaster Management Network.
17. Lari argues that every woman should have a bathroom to improve her status and she designed a system of eco-toilets that do not require a sewage system, but which produce compost and combustible materials. Avoiding the use of sewers and pipes is essential for developing a widespread, low-cost supply of toilets. This research topic is one of the

challenges of the future, also addressed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (<https://www.stepsforsanitation.org/rte/>).

18. *Heritage Foundation's Annexure B: DRR-Compliant Sustainable Construction. Build Back Safer With Vernacular Methodologies: Technical Support Program.* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/data.hoggit.com/11450.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=1XBSEJEP0NEJJCA8JNVG2&Expires=1630454400&Signature=cqkEzaok55yXVjXEwQifjkhzwwk%3D>. [Accessed 13 March 2020].

19. *Towards a Sustainable Future. Build Back Safer with Vernacular Methodologies: The Green Manual.* <https://s3.amazonaws.com/data.hoggit.com/12644.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=1XBSEJEP0NEJJCA8JNVG2&Expires=1630454400&Signature=T%2FuOu%2BZAPL5CWliYijUUFVMvPUI%3D>. [Accessed 13 March 2020].

20. Source: Columbia GSAPP Fall 2020 Dean's Lecture and Event Series Session (28 September 2020). <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/events/1994-yasmeen-lari>. [Accessed 11 October 2020].

21. By observing historical monuments, Lari learned to elevate buildings to protect them. It is vital to protect food and water pumps because, paradoxically, during floods there is water everywhere but it is difficult to find drinking water.

22. See: *Towards a Sustainable Future. Build Back Safer with Vernacular Methodologies. The Green Manual.* See footnote 19.

23. The title comes in question form to convey the message of a type of architecture that leaves ample room for vernacular aspects while being actually being carefully designed by an architect. The reference is to the title of the 1964 exhibition *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, curated by Bernard Rudofsky for the New York Museum of Modern Art.

24. IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 3 (16 May 2020).

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Heritage Foundation's DRR-Compliant Sustainable Construction. Build Back Safer with Vernacular Methodologies: Technical Support Program.* See footnote 18.

27. <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/rebel-architecture/2016/4/27/pakistan-a-traditional-future/>. [Accessed 13 March 2020].

28. See footnote 18.

29. The international INTBAU conference *Hearth and Heritage Calling: the Case of Makli and Karachi*, was held from 14 to 17 November 2019 in the ZC3, with two hundred and fifty attendees including foreign and local delegates, and forty students from various universities in Pakistan. Artisans trained by the HFP were also present, and many of them are women. <https://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/BlogPage/68/newsblog/9>. [Accessed 11 October 2020].

30. Source: Yasmeen Lari, IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 1 (23 April 2020).

31. "Lari spoke to a highly enthusiastic audience about social and ecological justice and her work under Barefoot Social Architecture devised by her, which has helped ameliorate the lives of eight hundred and forty thousand persons in disaster-prone marginalized communities." Victoria & Albert Museum, Dundee, UK. 18 February 2020. <http://www.heritagefoundationpak.org/BlogPage/68/newsblog>. [Accessed: 13 March 2020].

32. Columbia GSAPP Fall 2020 Dean's Lecture and Event Series Session (28 September 2020). <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/events/1994-yasmeen-lari>. [Accessed 11 October 2020].

33. Source: IAP webinar series *Zero Carbon Emergency Covid-19*, Session 3 (16 May 2020).

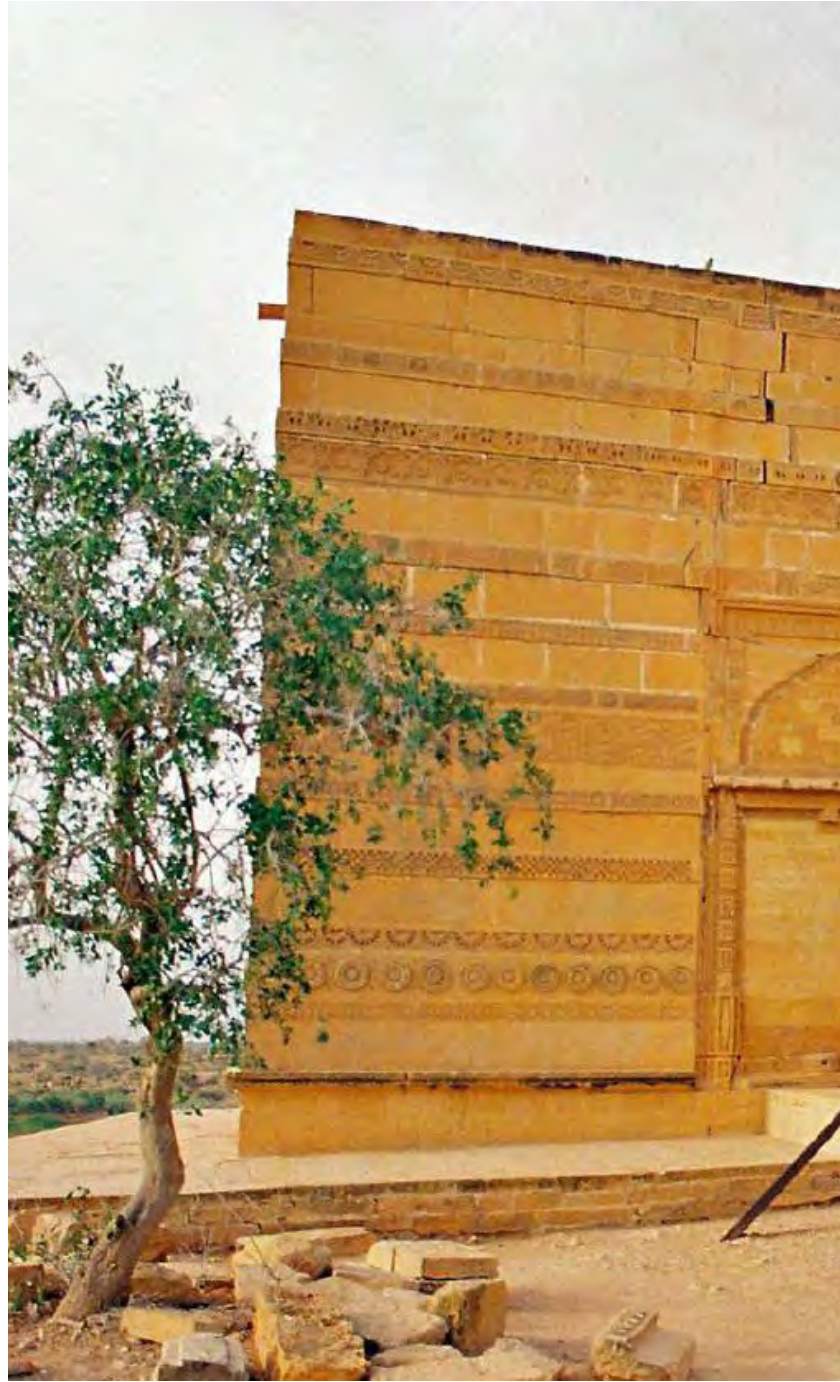
34. *Ibid.*



PHOTOGRAPHS



P. 50: ZERO-CARBON FUELEFFICIENT PAKISTAN CHULAHS, PAKISTAN, 2018  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN  
RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION PROJECT: VIEW OF NORTH FACADE OF TOMB OF JAMI NIZAM AL-DIN AND TOMB OF JAM TAMACHI IN THE FOREGROUND,  
MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN, 2011  
© SUHAIL ZAHEER LARI, COURTESY OF HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN









KHAN HOUSE, KARACHI, PAKISTAN, 1969  
© HASAN-UDDIN KHAN





ANGOORI BAGH HOUSING (ABH), LAHORE, PAKISTAN, 1973-1977  
© LARI ASSOCIATES









LARI HOUSE, GIZRI STREET, KARACHI, PAKISTAN, 1973-1977  
© KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF, COURTESY OF AGA KHAN DOCUMENTATION CENTER, MIT LIBRARIES (AKDC@MIT)





TAJ MAHAL HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, KARACHI, PAKISTAN, 1981  
© KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF; COURTESY OF AGA KHAN DOCUMENTATION CENTER, MIT LIBRARIES (AKDC@MIT)



COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) STATION, KARACHI, PAKISTAN, 1981  
© KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF, COURTESY OF AGA KHAN DOCUMENTATION CENTER, MIT LIBRARIES (AKDC@MIT)

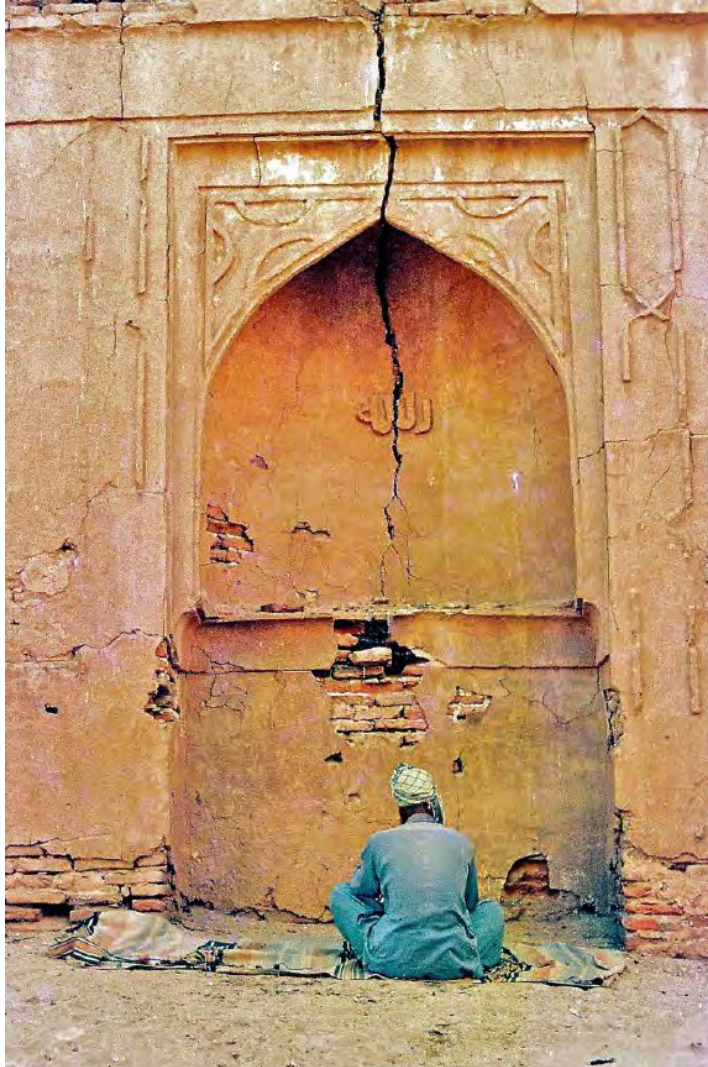


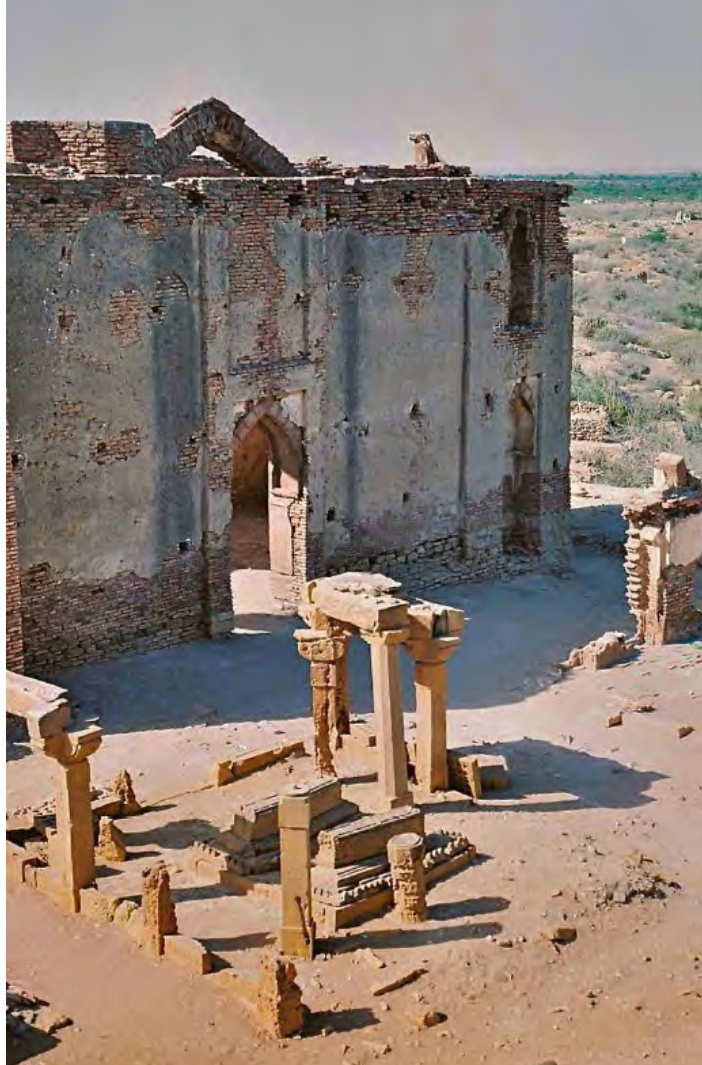


RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION PROJECT, SEPULCHRE OF MIRZA JAN BABA, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN, 2014-2016  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



JAMIA MOSQUE, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN  
© SUHAIL ZAHEER LARI, COURTESY OF HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN





TOMB OF THE DISCIPLES, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN  
© SUHAIL ZAHEER LARI, COURTESY OF HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



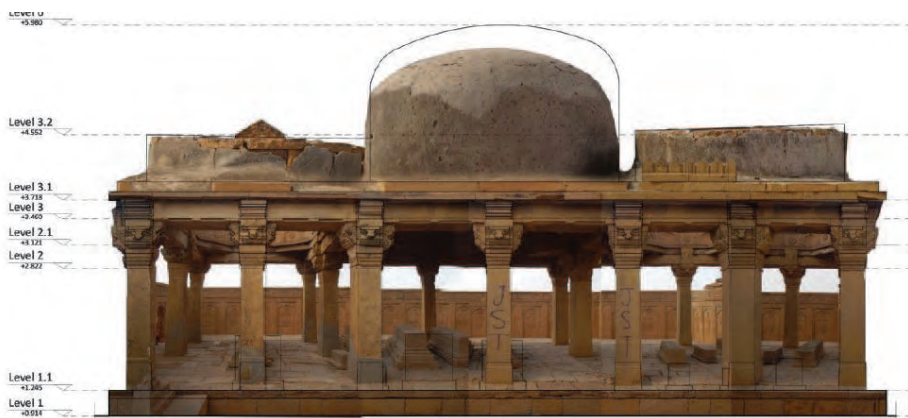
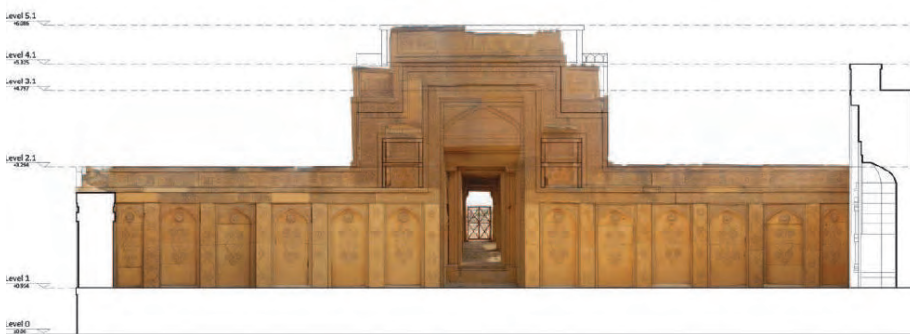
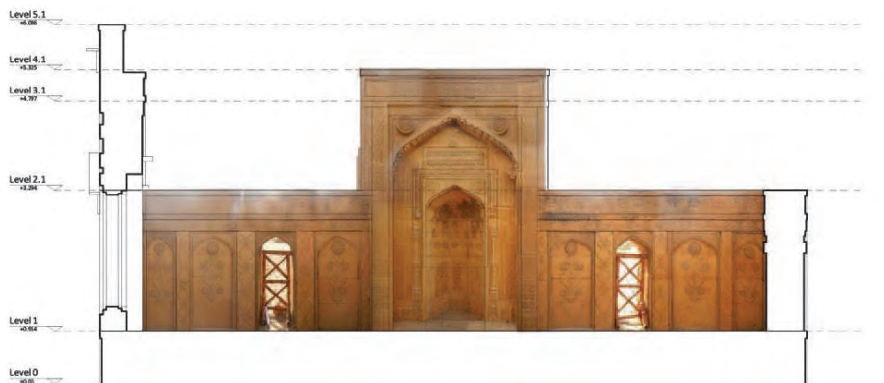
FROM ABOVE: TOMB OF NAZER UD DEEN, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN. TOMB OF JAM TAMACHI, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN. TOMB OF RAJBAL, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN  
© SUHAIL ZAHEER LARI, COURTESY OF HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



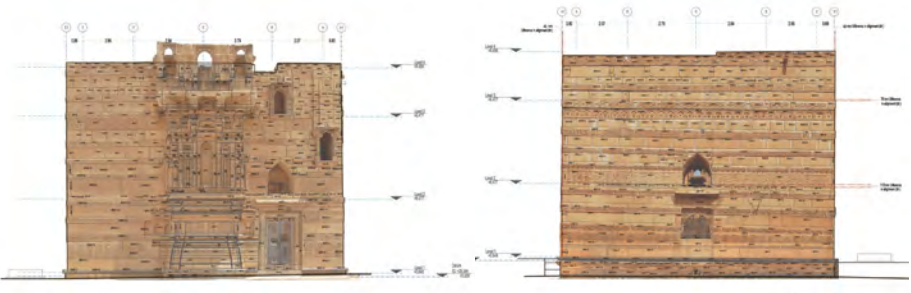
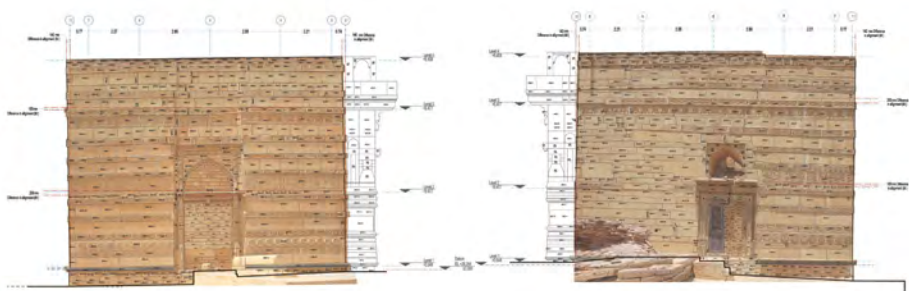
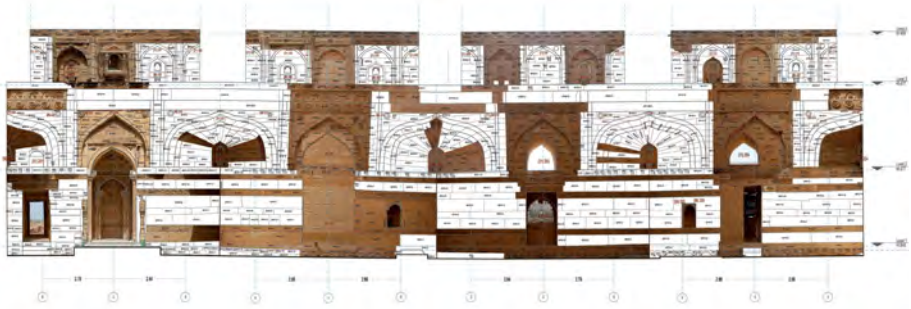
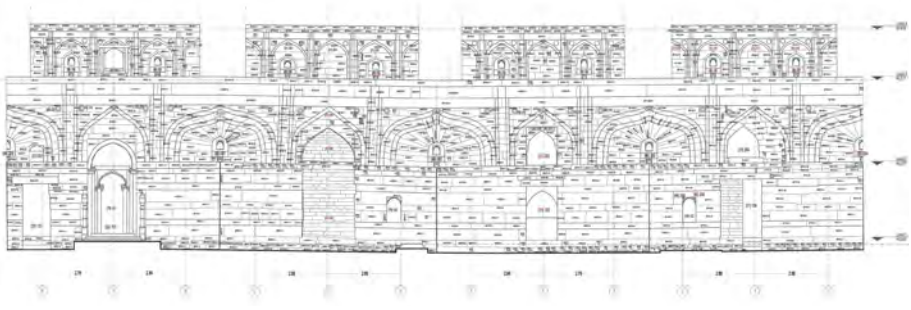


TOMB OF DARYA KHAN RAHU, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN  
© SUHAIL ZAHEER LARI, COURTESY OF HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN









RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION PROJECT, JAM NIZAM AL-DEEN TOMB, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN, 2011  
 © HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION PROJECT, SEPULCHRE  
OF MIRZA JAN BABA, MAKLI NECROPOLIS, PAKISTAN, 2014-2016  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN

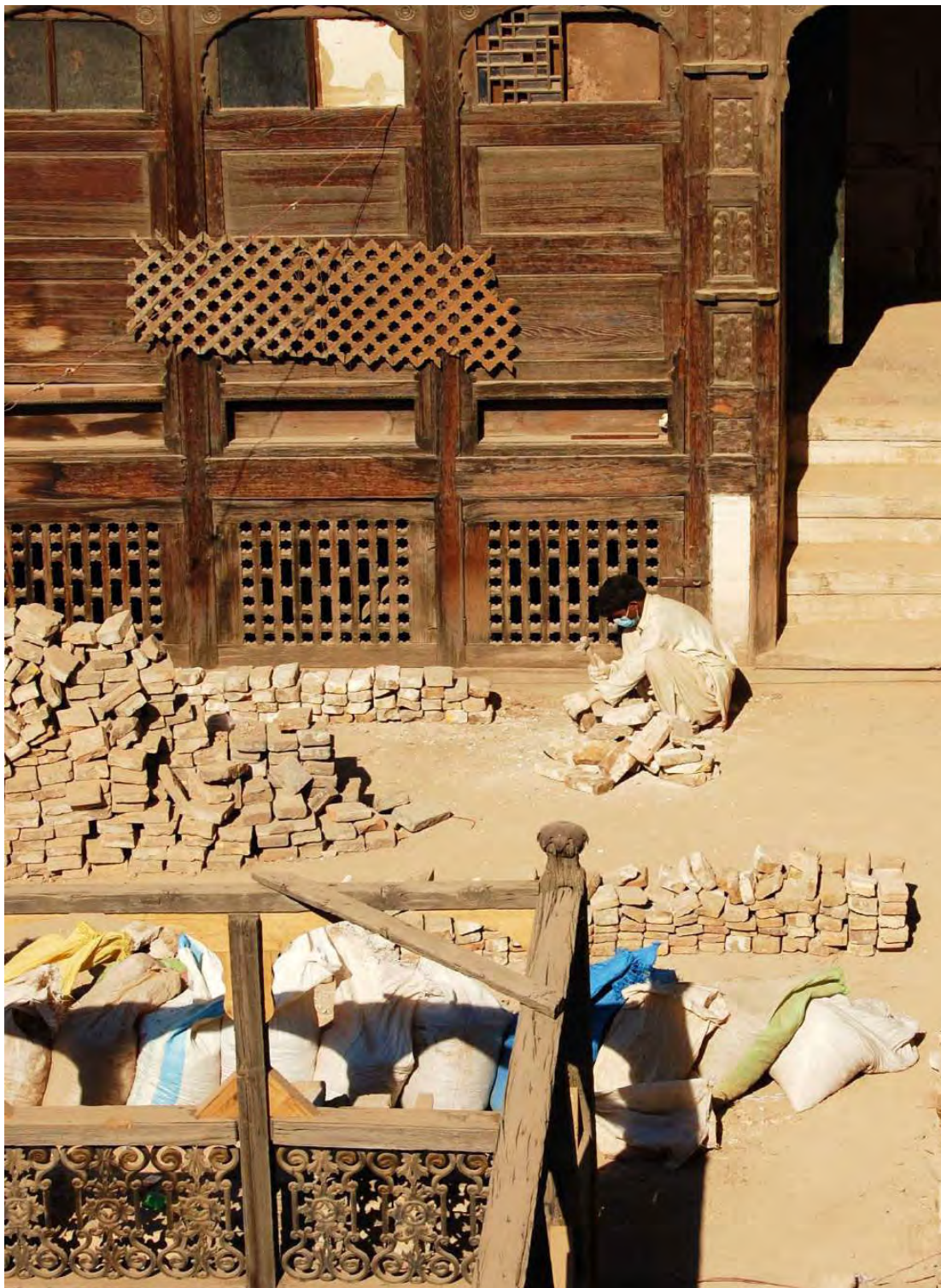


























WOMEN LEARNING CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES AND MAKING MUD BRICKS  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



ZERO-CARBON FUEL-EFFICIENT PAKISTAN CHULAHs, PAKISTAN, 2018  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN









ZERO-CARBON FUEL-EFFICIENT PAKISTAN CHULAHS, PAKISTAN, 2018

© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



INTBAU TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTRE, MAKLI, PAKISTAN, 2019  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN



P. 82: INTBAU TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTRE, MAKLI, PAKISTAN, 2019  
© HERITAGE FOUNDATION OF PAKISTAN





# WORKS AND PROJECTS

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**1965**

Indus Chemical Factory Ltd (Sindh Alkas Ltd), Factory and Offices, Karachi, Pakistan  
with MacDonald, Layton & Costain Ltd.

**1966**

Capital Development Authority (CDA), Housing for Civil Servants, Islamabad, Pakistan

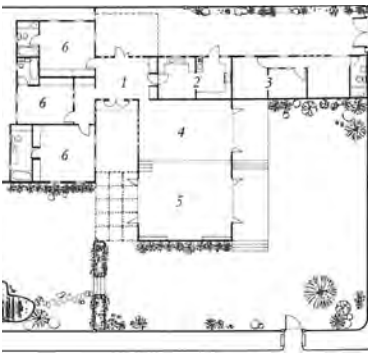
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**1967**

Allied Textile Mills Ltd, Staff Quarters, Larkana, Pakistan

Smith, Kline and French Factory, Karachi, Pakistan

Pakistan Cables Ltd, Offices, Karachi, Pakistan

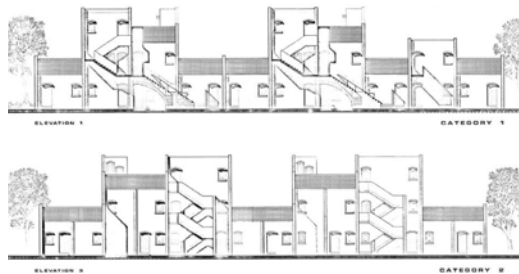
**1969**

Khan House, Karachi, Pakistan

02.

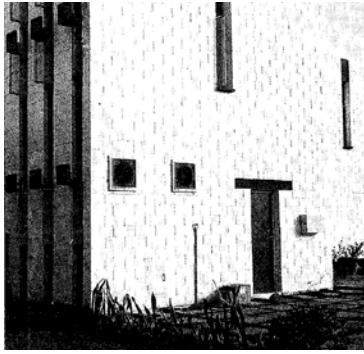
**1972**

Salvation Army, Hyderabad, Pakistan

**1973 | 1977**

Angoori Bagh Housing (ABH), Lahore, Pakistan





**1967**

Commodor Haq's House,  
Karachi, Pakistan

01.

**1968**

Lady Dufferin Hospital,  
Nurses Hostel,  
Karachi, Pakistan

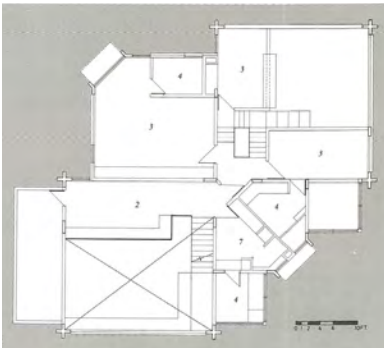
Lyallpur Township,  
Lyallpur (Faisalabad), Pakistan

Khyber Textile Mills Ltd,  
Baldher, Pakistan



**1970**

Pakistan Naval Officers'  
Housing at PNs Dilawar,  
Shifa and Karsaz,  
Karachi, Pakistan



Lari House, Gizri Street,  
Karachi, Pakistan

03.

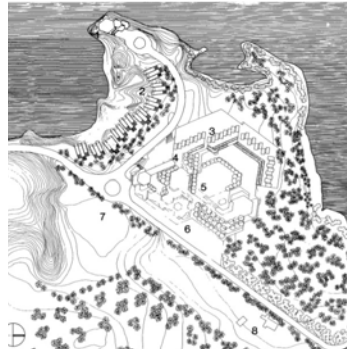
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**1974**

Karachi Development Authority,  
Slum Improvement,  
Karachi, Pakistan  
Project Consultant for Karachi  
Development Plan 1974-1985

**1975**

Interior Design Project,  
First National City Bank,  
Lahore, Pakistan

**1976**

Keenjhar Lake Tourist Resort,  
Keenjhar, Pakistan

**1977**

Interior Design Project,  
Khyber Insurance  
Company Ltd,  
Karachi, Pakistan

Interior Design Project,  
Karchi Pipe Mills Ltd, PIDC House,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1980**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
State Guest House,  
Karachi, Pakistan

Signal Corps  
Mess, Rawalpindi,  
Pakistan

**1981**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
Chief Martial Law  
Administrator Secretariat,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

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Interior Design Project,  
Board of Industrial  
Management Offices,  
Karachi, Pakistan

Interior Design Project,  
National Development Finance  
Corporation (NDFC), NSC Building,  
Karachi, Pakistan

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Interior Design Project,  
Pakistan Automobile  
Corporation Offices (PACO),  
Karachi, Pakistan

Interior Design Project,  
Federal Light Engineering  
Corporation, Karachi, Pakistan

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## 1978

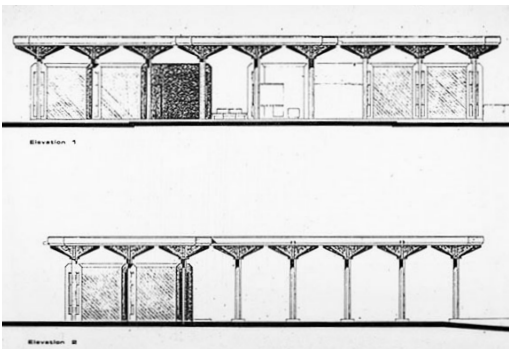
Pakistan Steel  
Mill Housing,  
Karachi, Pakistan

PASMIC Housing for  
Pakistan Steel Mills,  
Karachi, Pakistan

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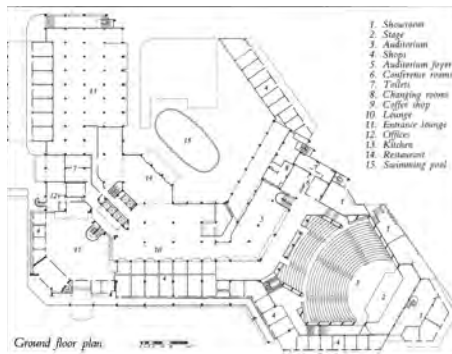
## 1979

Armoured Corps Mess,  
Nowshera, Pakistan



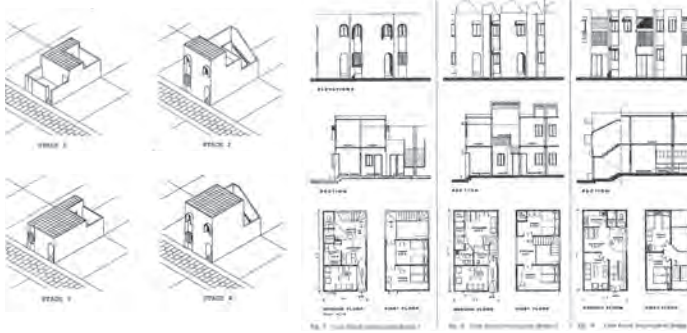
Compressed Natural  
Gas Station,  
Karachi, Pakistan





**1981**

Taj Mahal Hotel and  
Conference Centre,  
Karachi, Pakistan



**1981**

Lines Area  
Resettlement Project,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1982**

Interior Design Project,  
State Guest House,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Interior Design Project,  
State Guest House,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1983**

The President's Office,  
Chief Martial Law  
Administrator Secretariat,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan



Ordnance Factory  
Housing,  
Wah, Pakistan

Army VIP House,  
Lahore, Pakistan

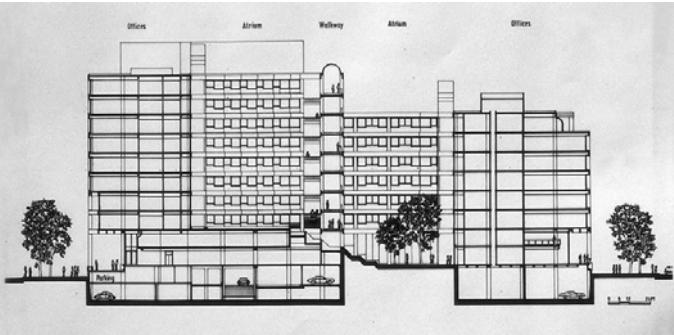
National Assembly  
Building,  
Islamabad, Pakistan

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
State Guest House,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan



**1981 | 1983**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Army Mud Barracks,  
Bahawalpur, Pakistan



**1982 | 1988**

Finance and Trade Centre  
(FTC Building),  
Karachi, Pakistan  
with Eva Vecsei

Interior Design Project,  
The Presidency,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**1983 | 1990**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
General Post Office,  
Lahore, Pakistan

---

**1983**

Baloch Officers' Mess,  
Abbottabad, Pakistan

**1984**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Mud School for Sindh,  
Sachadino Village (Mirpur  
Sakro, Sindh) Ibrahim  
Haideri Village, Pakistan

---

**1984**

General Post Office,  
Extension,  
Lahore, Pakistan



**1985**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
Quaid-e-Azam House  
(Flagstaff House),  
Karachi, Pakistan

---

**1986**

Al-Shafa Eye Hospital,  
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

**1988**

All Pakistan Women's  
Association (APWA)  
Women's Complex,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1989**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Rice Husking Mill,  
Sachedino Village (Mirpur  
Sakro, Sindh), Pakistan

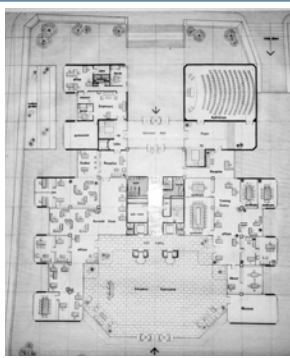
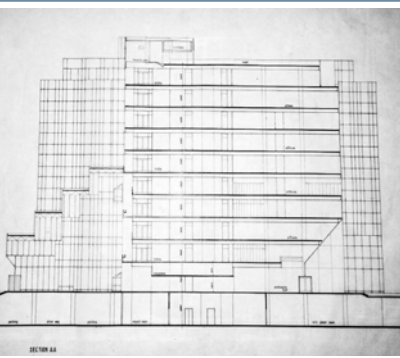
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**1990**

Hotel Bilz, Redesign  
and Extension, Multan,  
Pakistan

Indigenous Mud Project,  
School and Women's Center,  
Sachadino Village (Mirpur  
Sakro, Sindh), Pakistan





Pakistan State Oil House (PSO)  
Head Office, Karachi, Pakistan

Pakistan State Oil  
(PSO) Prayer Hall,  
Karachi, Pakistan

Gulistan Colony  
Housing Project, POF,  
Wah, Pakistan

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Army VIP House,  
Karachi, Pakistan

Design and Development Building,  
Lahore, Pakistan

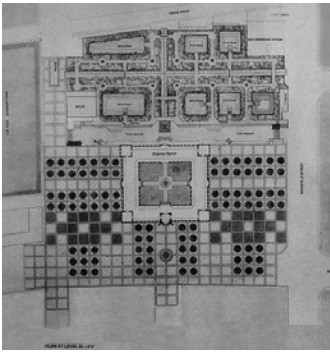
Army Corps Commander  
House, Karachi, Pakistan

---

**1991**  
Shopping Mall,  
Jhelum, Pakistan

**1994**  
KMA Hospital,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1995**  
Holiday Inn Hotel,  
Multan, Pakistan



**1996**

Urban Renovation Project,  
Empress Market Gardens,  
Karachi, Pakistan

KMC Women's  
Sports Complex,  
Karachi, Pakistan



**2003 | 2005**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
Stabilizing Shish Mahal  
Ceiling of the Lahore Fort  
World Heritage Site,  
Lahore, Pakistan



**2008**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Research House, Heritage  
Foundation Base Camp,  
Chattar, Pakistan



**2009**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Community Kitchens,  
IDP Camp,  
Mardan, Pakistan

**2010**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Seismic-Resistant Traditional  
Dhijii in Bamboo,  
Swat, Pakistan

---

**1997**

ABN AMRO Bank,  
Karachi, Pakistan

**1998**

ABN Amro Bank,  
Lahore, Pakistan

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**2005**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Karavan Ghar,  
Emergency Shelter,  
Hazara, Pakistan

**2006**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Primary School,  
Kodar and Jabbar Villages,  
Mansehra District, Pakistan

**2008**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Household Washrooms,  
Kodar, Pakistan

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**2009**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Winter House, Heritage  
Foundation Base Camp,  
Chattar, Pakistan



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Indigenous Mud Project,  
Zero Carbon Footprint  
House, Demonstration Unit,  
Marghazar, Swat, Pakistan  
Project supported by the  
University of Glasgow and  
the Scottish Government  
International Development  
Fund (SGIDF)



Indigenous Mud Project,  
Green Women's Centre,  
Matta, Swat, Pakistan



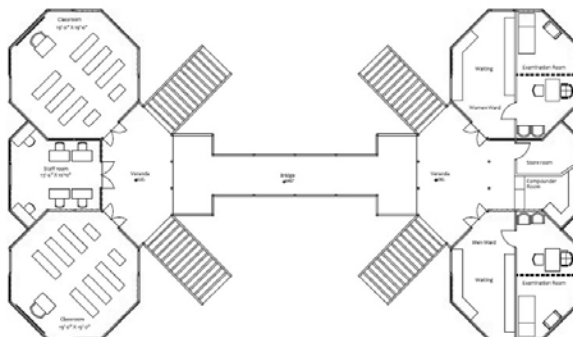
**2010**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Experimental Unit, Heritage  
Foundation Base Camp,  
Chattar, Pakistan



**2011**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Karavan Shelters,  
Moak Sharif, Pakistan



**2011**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Linked School and Dispensary  
Buildings on Stilts,  
Khairpur, Upper Sindh, Pakistan







**2011 | 2012**

Restoration and Conservation Project, Sethi House, Peshawar, Pakistan

**2012**

Restoration and Conservation Project, Khairpur Heritage Centre, Kot Diji Fort, Pakistan



**2012**

Indigenous Mud Project, Improved Green Chaura, Moak Sharif, Pakistan



**2012**

Indigenous Mud Project, Residential Suites on Stilts, Guava Orchard, Moak Sharif, Pakistan



**2012**

Indigenous Mud Project, School on Stilts in Low Lying Areas, Karim Dad Wasan, Pakistan



Indigenous Mud Project,  
Karavan Shelter,  
Khakoo, Wasan, Pakistan



Restoration and Conservation  
Project, Stabilizing Endangered  
15th Century Tomb of Samma  
Noble I, Makli Necropolis,  
Pakistan

**04.**



Indigenous Mud Project,  
Jamil Parho Pakistan Center,  
Moak Sharif, Pakistan



**2012 | 2014**  
Indigenous Mud Project,  
Build Back Safer with  
Vernacular Methodologies,  
IOM Shelters

**2013**  
Restoration and Conservation  
Project, Stabilizing Endangered  
16th Century Ashabi Mosque,  
Makli Necropolis, Pakistan



**2013**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Karavan Latrine,  
Moak Sharif, Pakistan



**2014**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Seismic-Resistant  
Mud Wall Shelter,  
Awaran, Pakistan



**2014 | 2016**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
Sepulchre of Mirza Jan Baba,  
Makli Necropolis, Pakistan



**2017**

Restoration and  
Conservation Project,  
Tombs of Sultan  
Ibrahim and Amir Sultan  
Muhammad,  
Makli Necropolis,  
Pakistan





**2014**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Karavan Pakoswiss Chulah,  
Lower Sindh, Pakistan

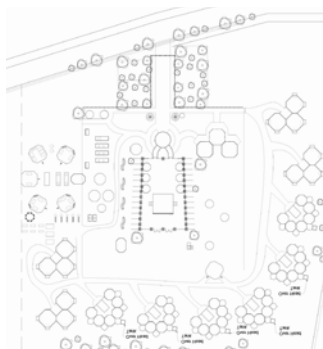


**2014 | 2015**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Sayani DRR Park,  
Kot Diji, Pakistan  
with District Government,  
Khairpur and Funded by  
Spiritual Chords, South  
Africa

**2015**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Memorial Library with Mud  
Walls by School Volunteers,  
Kot Diji, Pakistan



**2015 | 2019**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Zero Carbon  
Cultural Campus,  
Makli, Pakistan



**2018**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
ZC3, Zero Carbon Cultural Centre,  
Makli, Pakistan



**2018**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Community Forest,  
Makli Villages, Pakistan



**2018 | ongoing**

Restoration and Conservation  
Project, Proposal for the Restoration  
of Historic Calcutta House  
Nanakwara, Karachi, Pakistan



**2019**

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Lari Octa Green (LOG)  
Cottages, Makli, Pakistan



**2019 | 2021**

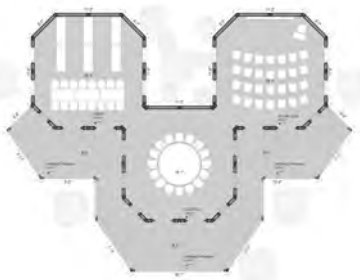
Regeneration of Historic Core,  
Denso Hall Rahguzar Walking Street,  
Karachi, Pakistan



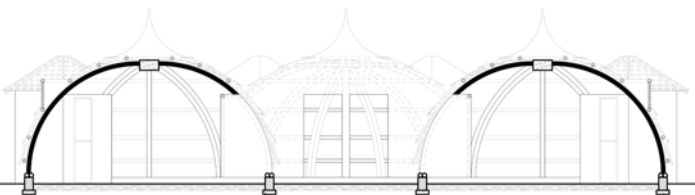
Indigenous Mud Project,  
Zero Carbon Fuel Efficient  
Pakistan Chulahs, Pakistan

## 2019

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Handpumps in Mandicant  
Villages in Makli and Chulah  
Villages, Pakistan  
with Spiritual Chords and  
Al-Imdad Foundation



Indigenous Mud Project,  
INTBAU Training and  
Resource Centre,  
Makli, Pakistan  
with the Support of The Prince of  
Wales' Charitable Fund



Indigenous Mud Project,  
Igloo Shelter, Cluster,  
Makli, Pakistan

## 2020 | ongoing

Indigenous Mud Project,  
Zero Carbon Emergency  
Isolation & Field Ward  
Facilities for COVID-19



## 2020 | 2021

Indigenous Mud Project,  
World Habitat Centres,  
Pakistan  
(Heritage Foundation has  
completed the construction  
of 5 World Habitat  
Centres and 11 are under  
construction)











## PUBLICATIONS BY YASMEEN LARI

1975. "Slums are not a Lost Case." *Pakistan Economist* 15 (28): 14–28.

1978. "Discussion, Section 3: Toward a Revitalization of Traditional Habitats." In *The Aga Khan Foundation, Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam*, edited by Renata Holod, 81–2. Proceedings of Seminar One in the Series Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World. Aiglemont, Gouvieux, France, April 1978. Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

1980. (With Suhail Lari.) "Recreational and Tourist Complexes: An Overview." In *Places of Public Gathering in Islam*, edited by Linda Safran, 57–68. Proceedings of Seminar Five in the Series Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World. Amman, Jordan, May 4–7, 1980. Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

1982. *Research Paper in Thatta*. Karachi: Goethe Institute.

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FROM ABOVE: YASMEEN LARI TOGETHER WITH SOME BAREFOOT ENTREPRENEURS. INTBAU TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTRE, MAKLI, PAKISTAN, 2019  
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DARYA KHAN SHEIKH VILLAGE, WOMEN'S CENTRE, PAKISTAN, 2011-2015  
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## CONFERENCES AND LECTURES BY YASMEEN LARI

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# BIOGRAPHY

Arianna Scaioli, Politecnico di Milano

Yasmeen Lari (Dera Ghazi Khan PK, 28 June 1942) graduated in architecture in 1964 from Oxford School of Architecture (now part of Oxford Brookes University) and her first professional engagement was with German firm Zhan & Co., in Hameln. After her return to Pakistan she became the country's first woman architect, challenging age-old prejudices to overcome countless obstacles.

In Karachi, in 1964, she opened the Karachi Artists' Gallery (KAG). Here she curated personal and collective exhibitions.

In 1965, she was appointed chief architect for the Karachi firm, MacDonald, Layton & Costain Ltd and that same year she opened her own Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers in the city. The firm was awarded countless contracts for public buildings, including the Karachi Finance and Trade Centre (FTC Building) in 1982–88, and social housing complexes like Angoori Bagh (ABH) in Lahore (1973–77).

In 1966 she was appointed lecturer at the Karachi School of Architecture and in subsequent years she has spoken at many international conferences about Pakistani architecture and the housing emergency.

In 1969 she was elected a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

In 2000, Lari Associates, Architects and Urban Designers closed and Yasmeen Lari began to devote her time to the disadvantaged areas of her country, designing dwellings and centres of aggregation in areas struck by natural disasters. Engaging local workers and renovating local building systems, Lari coordinated informal, carbon-neutral, earthquake-resistant settlement projects. Last but not least, she became involved in restoring and preserving many rural villages, saving their Pakistani historical and cultural heritage.

In 1980, with her husband, the historian Suhail Zaheer Lari, she founded the non-profit Heritage Foundation of Pakistan – HFP, whose mission is: "to document and conserve the traditional and historic built environment of Pakistan; create an awareness of Pakistan's rich and diverse historic architecture and art; and to promote cultural heritage for social integration, peace and development."

Following Heritage Foundation of Pakistan survey actions, the Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act 1994 was approved and the Sindh Culture Department raised the number of protected buildings to one thousand six hundred units.

In 2002, Heritage Foundation won the UN Systems Recognition Award for promoting culture and peace.

In 2004, Lari became a Fellow of Ashoka, a community of the world's leading social entrepreneurs. In 2016, with the support of UNESCO and Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust, Heritage Foundation initiated the Revitalization of Ancient Glazed Tiles in Sindh project, which helped to complete the sixteenth-century tomb of Sultan Ibrahim, while training the most disadvantaged communities to make pottery, thus handing down a legacy for future generations.

Her conservation projects have been supported by UNESCO, the United States Ambassador Fund, German government funds, the Prince Claus Fund of the Netherlands, and Spiritual Chords (South Africa). Lari is designated as one of the sixty women worldwide who have contributed most to UNESCO goals.

Lari has received numerous awards including the Sitara-e-Imtiaz in 2006, and in 2014 the Hilal-i-Imtiaz, two of the highest civil awards from the Pakistani government for her work as an architect and for national heritage conservation. In 2016 she received Japan's Fukuoka Prize and in 2020 the Jane Drew Prize.

She was UNESCO National Advisor from 2003 to 2005, member of the Punjab Government Steering Committee for the Lahore Fort and the Shalamar Gardens, member of the UNESCO Advisory Committee for Moenjodaro, board member of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), and trustee of Transparency International Pakistan.

From 1980 to 1983, Lari was president of the Institute of Architects Pakistan (IAP) and spearheaded the movement to create legislative measures that would recognize the role of architects and planners in her homeland. In 1983, she then founded the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners of which she was the first director.

Lari is deeply committed to activist work with various social campaigns to give back public spaces to local communities. She has been a member of Government of Pakistan advisory bodies.

Her designs have been exhibited in the Venice Architecture Biennale (1982), the Chicago Architectural Biennial (2015), and the RIBA's London exhibition Creation from Catastrophe (2016), and in the Vienna Biennale for Change (2019). Her work is also part of the RIBA's permanent collection in London. In the 1980s, Lari taught the MIT-Harvard Seminar in Cambridge (Mass).

#### *Awards and Acknowledgements*

2002, UN Systems Recognition Award to Heritage Foundation of Pakistan  
2006, Sitara-e-Imtiaz [Star of Excellence] Award, Pakistan  
2011, First Wonder Woman of the Year Award  
2014, Hilal-i-Imtiaz [Crescent of Excellence] Award, Pakistan  
2016, Fukuoka Arts and Culture Prize  
2020, Jane Drew Prize W Award  
2021, Honorary Degree in Architecture, Politecnico di Milano





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