INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PLACES:  
A SYSTEMATIC METHOD FOR THEIR IDENTIFICATION,  
EVALUATION AND DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE  
PART I: CORE DATA AND INVENTORY FORM

Dr. Anila Naeem  
Professor, Department of Architecture and Planning, NED-UET

ABSTRACT
Systematic inventory and recording is an effective and primary tool for facilitating good management and understanding of historic towns, cities and areas. This paper presents a method developed for inventory recording in the context of under-resourced countries not having efficient and well formed systems for definition, protection and preservation of their heritage properties. The paper focuses on an inventory format designed through a research undertaking in Sindh, the southeastern region of Pakistan, taking its historic towns as case studies. The research outcomes are presented in two sequential papers: the first part discusses Core Data Index Form (CDIF) and inventory layout in detail. The discussion expands on contributions and practical utility of database outputs compiled as a manual of inventory forms for use by heritage managers and decision makers to develop better understanding and management mechanisms for enlisted properties. Considerations for recording field data are explained in detail. The second paper presents comparison of two case study towns, where the developed method was applied for documentation.

Key words: Heritage inventory, listing criteria, degree of value, historic places significance, inventory database.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Historic environments contribute towards establishing the identity and unique character of any place. Realization of their irreplaceable value is however, not well recognized especially in the under-resourced developing regions, resulting in an absence of initiatives for their documentation and study to define significance values and attempt preservation. Their destruction goes unchecked leaving most historic towns vulnerable to pressures threatening the existence of their unique fabric.

Mid 20th century marks the emergence of area-based conservation, particularly in Europe where entire towns or historic districts were designated as conservation areas. This created a need for inventory and listing of existing historic fabric; gathering information on its qualities, condition, materials, usage, style, and other related aspects, and develop planning policies for better management and conservation. Recording, inventory or listing of cultural property is defined as the process for ‘documenting what is there’ or the ‘capture of information which describes the physical configuration, condition and use’ of historic places, identified for protection at regional, national or local levels. Comprehensive inventories are recommended in all major international conventions for heritage protection as essential for developing better understanding of the ‘wider historical, social and architectural contexts’ of any place; and considered indispensable not only for ‘definition, interpretation, education, protection, conservation, planning, rehabilitation and heritage management’ (CoE, 2001; p18), but also as an effective tool for creating public awareness and inculcating support for their legislative protection. The main purpose of heritage inventory is not only to develop a record but to facilitate an understanding for analyzing the forces and constraints which have weighed on a place and must be taken into account for managing future developments with coherence and harmony (CoE, 2001).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This paper presents a method developed to assess historical and cultural built form traditions, using systematic documentation as a tool for analysis of historic environments. The adopted methodology uses available resources and information, building upon it through methodical data collection from field surveys; using a pre-designed ‘Core Data Index Form’ (CDIF) for mapping and inventory listing of heritage properties. The CDIF, a primary outcome of the research process, has been designed to capture data that substantially covers tangible and intangible aspects, the