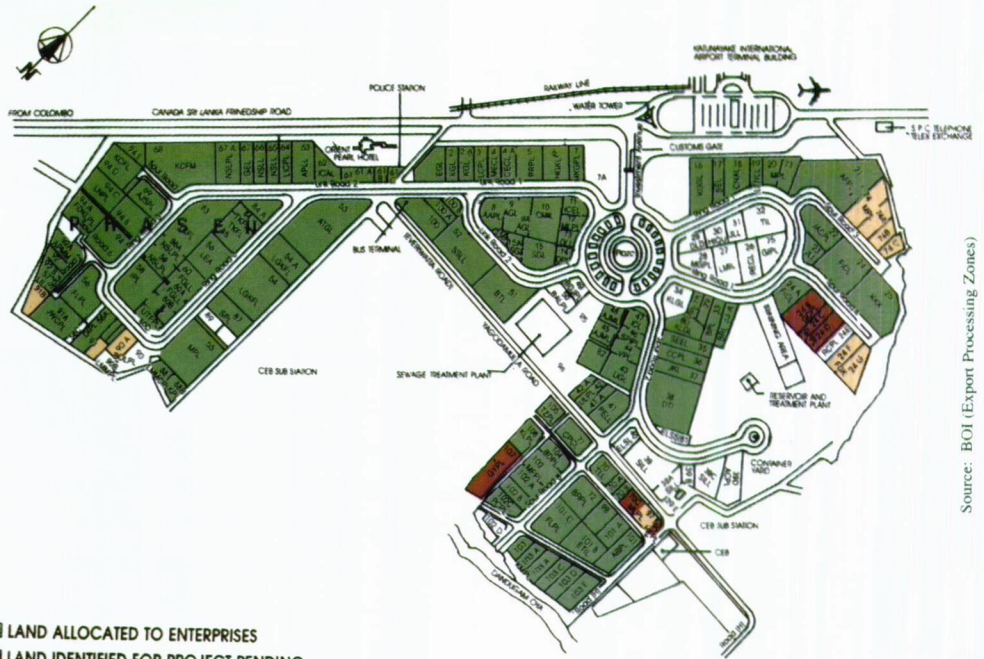


KATUNAYAKE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE LAYOUT PLAN



Source: BOI (Export Processing Zones)

- LAND ALLOCATED TO ENTERPRISES
- LAND IDENTIFIED FOR PROJECT PENDING
- LAND AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS

ENGINEERING SERVICES DEPARTMENT - BOI
Scale 1 : 2000 (Approx)
Date: 08.02.1996



Gamudawa Scheme

Development Policies



the Built Environment in Sri Lanka

By Dr. Nihal Perera

Development has been a major national goal of Sri Lanka for more than five decades. Both conservatives and radicals who had an eye on the national leadership began addressing the issue of national development even before independence. Although development appeared to be an impossible goal to achieve until the 1980s, only a few other states have matched Sri Lanka's rate of economic growth during the past fifteen years. National policies as well as their spatial constitution have also changed radically over the past fifty years which created some exciting challenges for planners and designers. In this paper, I shall outline the major transformations in the field of development, Sri Lankan strategies, and their impact on the built environment.

Development: The Notion

Development has been a primary national goal in the Third World from the late 1940s. It has been second only to national liberation. Major political actors, including the conservatives, nationalists, liberals, and Marxists, have reached a consensus on the vitality of development to a nation. Their differences have largely been in regard to who should benefit by development. Major strategies of the last five decades have included industrialization, import substitution, and export promotion. The national efforts in this regard peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, during which time almost every Third World state spent a large proportion of its national resources and foreign loans on development projects. The hegemony that this notion held has waned since.

The idea of development has also been debated by scholars. These debates also peaked in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1940s, the Economic Commission for Latin America (of the UNO) institutionalized the view that the most crucial impediments to development, such as economic dependency, operate at international level. The debates on the subject gave

rise to a number of theories, particularly those of dependency, unequal exchange, and underdevelopment, over the next couple of decades.

From a political economy perspective, scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank began to view underdevelopment as a structural condition of capitalism which has been facilitated by the unequal exchange of values across national boundaries. For Frank, therefore, underdeveloped and developed do not represent two stages of progress. It is in the process of development of now developed states that a large part of the world has become underdeveloped. Scholars and political leaders, therefore, became more suspicious about the promise of capitalist development in the Third World.

The debate also raised the issue of units of analysis. Instead of focusing on the relationships between two or more individual states, the analysts began to view the world-economy as a larger social system made up of a core and a periphery. These intellectual exchanges led to the emergence of world-systems perspective, which has taken this debate to a completely different plane, decentralising the whole issue of national development. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the modern world-system, the defining characteristic of which is capitalism, began in Europe in the long sixteenth century (1450-1650) and expanded outward in successions, as responses to internal crises, until it incorporated the world in the late nineteenth century. I employ "world-" to denote a fragment of the world society and space which is, in common parlance, a "world" which forms substantially autonomous economic, political, and cultural entity.

"Development" is a loaded Euro-centric notion with strong cultural undertones. It imposes "backwardness" on Third World societies which are, according to this notion, "traditional" and over populated; have low levels of production and

consumption, lack resources and capital, and lag behind in technology. These measurements, based on Western values, carry with them a disrepute for the Third World for not being able to match Western standards of living. By "West" I refer to the modern (capitalist) West which includes northwestern Europe and the USA. This understanding is premised on the Western belief that change is normal in a "civilized" society, and the Western societies have transformed progressively in leaps and revolutions. The non-Western societies might be very old, but have not been changing, at least until recently. These societies are, therefore, considered "primitive." It was not just prominent Western philosophers, like Hegel, who thought along these lines, but also, even as recent as the 1960s, eminent historian H. R. Trevor-Roper could assert that there is no such thing as African history.

The notion of development is largely an avatar of the concept of "industrial revolution," the biggest myth in Western history. According to historian Eric Hobsbawm, the industrial revolution was more a social transformation than a technological jump. In comparing the differences between France and England, which led the revolution, he asserts,

"Whatever the British advance was due to, it was not scientific and technological superiority... Fortunately few intellectual refinements were necessary to make the Industrial Revolution. Its technical inventions were exceedingly modest, and in no way beyond the scope of intelligent artisans experimenting in their workshops, or of the constructive capacities of carpenters, millwrights, and locksmiths."

In this context, "development" is a racist concept that fixes the present of the Third World behind that of the West within a time line that privileges the West and, thereby, one that directs non-Western societies toward a future that is located within European history. In other words, development is also a strategy of dehistoricizing the non-West and transplanting it into an industrial and capitalist Western history highlighted by the Industrial revolution. Along these lines, the celebrated historian Walt Rustow has proudly claimed in the 1960's that development is both feasible and likely, and that countries in the rest of the world will "take off" the same way as the Western states did as soon as the preconditions are met. Rustow even gave dates for some countries.

Prioritizing the economy over society and culture, and glorifying the particular path taken by Western industrialized states, Third World states adopted "economic development" as their main policy objective from the mid 1940s. The World Bank, for which societies are economies, was quick to provide these societies with the economic identity of "undeveloped economies" —later, underdeveloped and developing— and extended its support to raise their per capita income. Marking the 1970s as the "development decade," the UN brought this discourse to its peak. Western Banks, which were looking to lend money in the 1960s and 1970s, poured large sums of development aid into the Third World, leading them to debt crises in the 1980s.

For most leaders in the Third World, however, development implied both economic growth and greater internal equity at the same time. They expected development to bring about a more equitable redistribution of resources. Hopes soon failed the test of time. It is well known that many "developing" countries had indeed enjoyed rapid economic growth on some absolute scale, more rapid than what Western industrialized states had generally experienced in the nineteenth century. Yet this growth had not eliminated poverty but had frequently been accompanied by a widening gap between rich and poor.

Nonetheless, a number of states from Japan to Mauritius, including Sri Lanka, have industrialized over the last two decades. Since there was no lack of effort on the part of those governments for more than five decades, this change was largely facilitated by the weakening of the core powers' ability to regulate the world-economy in their favor. This is perhaps another instance of what Frank has argued as the development of some peripheral states when their ties with the core were at their weakest. The way in which the peripheral states are making use of this conjuncture to expanded their capacity for political bargaining and cultural expression also demonstrates that development is no longer seen as the principal national goal. Although how far they could go is yet to be seen, the non-Western societies have certainly begun their journey away from Eurocentric perceptions of development.



An Estate Bungalow

The Colonial Development

Let's now turn our attention to Sri Lanka and its specific development policies. The British discontent with the level of "societal development" in Lanka was apparent in their rewriting Lankan history, right at the beginning of their rule. Here I use Lanka strategically to refer loosely to the indigenous society prior to its colonization. The "empire-builders" from the British upper classes were carrying with them their patronizing attitude toward the people of their own country. British colonial writers such as James Cordiner, Robert Percival, Anthony Bertolacci, and John Davy refused to accept the possibility of a Lankan historiography that was not myth or fable. Commenting on some of the oldest historical literature in the world, Davy did not hesitate to assert that the Sinhalese do not possess an accurate record of events, and they are not sufficiently advanced to relish it. The first modern compilation of Sri Lankan Tamil history, the *Yalpana Vaipava-Malai*, was written in 1736 at the initiative of a Dutch official administering Jaffna. One after the other, British writers continued to rewrite Lankan history, including the translation of ancient chronicles such as the *Mahawamsa* and *Culawamsa* from Pali, so that the Ceylonese, once they learn their master's language, could read this new history in English.

The British also constructed in Ceylon an economy that is compatible with that of the contemporary European world-economy. Incorporating Ceylon into the European world-economy, the British placed Sri Lanka on the path of Western historical development. From a developmentalist perspective, this was the beginning of the transformation of

Ceylon from a primitive to a modern society. It is very clear in the jubilant words of Colonial Secretary, James E. Tennent:

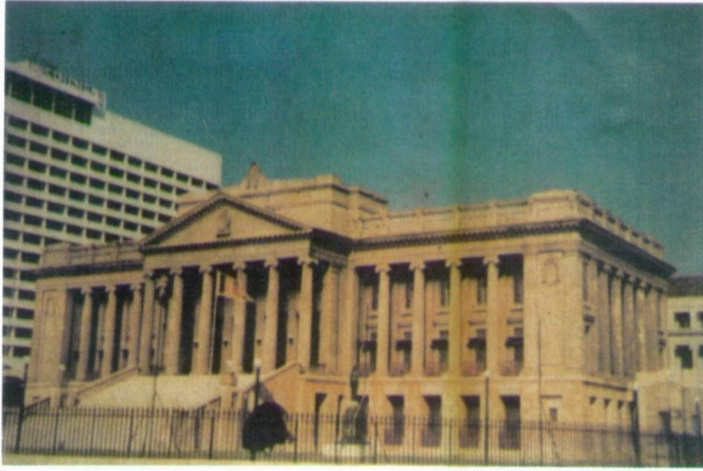
[the plantation] experiment ... inaugurated in the Kandyan highlands ... within less than a quarter of a century has effected an *industrial revolution* in the island, converting Ceylon from a sluggish military cantonment into an enterprising British colony, and transforming the supply of one of the first requisites of the society from the western to the eastern hemisphere.

There is not much reference to the Lankan history here, but to the fact that the plantations injected some life into the stagnant society in Ceylon. For Tennent, this transformation is as significant as the industrial revolution in the West.

On the plantations they established a class society parallel to that of the West, the principal actors of which were the plantations capitalists and the estate labourers. Each estate was organized both hierarchically and as a divided settlement, spatially evident in the forms of accommodation, and their location. Planters' dwellings, part of a system of accommodation utilized in cash-crop production operated by representatives of British colonial culture, were political- and culture-specific forms known as bungalows. Accommodation provided for so-called "coolies" represented a completely different world, in which the reproduction of labour power took place at a bare minimum level. Unlike the extensive consumption spaces of the bungalow, lines were mere "shelters" of a purely utilitarian nature, with cooking mostly done outside. "Lines" had no self-provisioning, and little attention was paid to drainage, ventilation, and privacy.



Galle Fort



Old Parliament a mansion in Colombo

The planters not only created the space of the lines but also the culture, which could easily be called “uncivilized” compared to that of the colonial community and also the labourers’ original communities in southern India. Rooms were gloomy, dismal, and unhealthy. They had no windows, but only a mere opening for entrance. Maternal and infant mortality rates in plantation lines were far greater than the rest of Ceylon. Most estates did not provide latrines and the labourers developed the habit of defecating on the surface of the soil. Such conditions not only accustomed labourers to “unhealthy” habits but, from a metropolitan perspective, encouraged the development of prejudices against plantation workers who were seen as having such habits “naturally.”

The colonial writers did not hesitate to highlight the “backwardness” of the Lankan built environment. Henry Marshall and Robert Knox note that the Sinhalese *did not care* to make streets by building their houses together in rows. Here they evaluate the Lankan built environment in which, from a European perspective, streets and buildings did not define each other. Streets were not laid out geometrically and buildings were located as clusters at varying distances from each other defined by their cultural norms and functional needs. As in contemporary European cities, the streets in the fort were principally lined with buildings and constructed in rows. The British also excluded indigenous buildings. In 1803 Percival wrote that, “none of those huts (*sic*), peculiar to the natives, are allowed to be erected in [the fort].” Cordiner was certainly able to emphasize the “beauty” of the fort area: “the streets being broad, straight, regularly planned, intersecting one

another at right angles, and shaded on each side by double rows of trees ...”

The most contrasting aspects of the colonial bungalow are its division into rooms for specialized and exclusive functions, the use of furniture, and the aspect of conspicuous consumption built into it. This is especially evident in the perception of “the view” as a consumption good. According to Cordiner the bungalows in Colombo were constructed to provide a panoramic view. On one side, the upper balconies provided an extensive outlook over the sea, the road, and shipping in the harbour. On the land side, inhabitants enjoyed the “richest prospect comprehending the lake, [the] Pettah, cinnamon plantations, and a wide range of the inland factories bounded by Adam’s Peak, and many larger mountains.”

I am highlighting two interrelated processes here: the colonial community not only imported European urban and built forms to Ceylon, but also taught the Ceylonese to appreciate these. Their success is apparent in the moving of Ceylonese political and economic elite into the neo-classical parliament building and the colonial suburb of Cinnamon Gardens without ever questioning the values they were propagating by doing so.

Agricultural Development (1830s - 1950s)

During the first decade after independence, the political leaders of Ceylon strictly followed the British example of development. Yet independence, which transformed Ceylon from a colony within a larger empire into a self-contained state, exposed its new rulers to new realities.



Town Hall

Photo Credit : Tilak Hettiarachchi

Although the plantations continued to occupy the centre stage of the national economy, the post-colonial rulers viewed self-sufficiency, particularly in regard to staple food, as an essential national requirement. As they were antagonistic to industrial development, the first two governments focused on agricultural development as a basic requirement of the plantation based economy.

The post-colonial state assumed that self-sufficiency in rice could be achieved, as the ancients had done, by revitalizing and expanding the ancient, but partly ruined, irrigation infrastructure. The revitalization of segments of ancient irrigation infrastructure had already begun under the colonial regime in the late nineteenth century. This policy has been continued by all post-colonial governments and, by 1980, nearly 90,000 farming families had been settled in 105 major irrigation projects consisting of about a million acres. Although historically this may have operated at the level of the village, and under colonialism at an imperial scale, the post-colonial concern was to achieve self-sufficiency at the national level. After five decades, however, self-sufficiency still seems to be an elusive goal.

What the governments have provided in these projects were primarily large reservoirs that constituted large irrigation systems. For example, Chandrika wewa was expected to irrigate 5,000 acres of forest land. Planning and development was also carried out at the larger project scale and not at village scale, using heavy machinery for the clearing of land, ridging of paddy fields, and construction of canals and roads. All these have contributed

to the homogenization of the landscape. The mass-produced settlement units (hamlets) did not have names, but simply identification tags —tract numbers— useful for the “colonizing” agency in Colombo to differentiate each unit. The project focus has usually been on the more tangible physical infrastructure made up of dams, canals, and roads. Settlers, individual buildings, and identity were not given much significance, and settlement units, planned in Colombo, were replicated with very little variation. Architectural involvement has been minimal at best.

The manifestation of a distinct cultural expression in architecture was not an issue of any significance for

Ceylon's post-colonial rulers. Ceylonese leaders who continued to rule the country within the British-made constitution of 1947 were quite at home adopting the symbols of the colonial elite. They thus moved into former colonial spaces, re-inventing their own identity, and reinterpreting these spaces as those of their own nation. The colonial fort area, where the colonial military and administrative apparatuses had long been located, came to be identified simply as “Fort,” a politically neutral name.

With the gaining of power, however, the national leaders rapidly Ceylonized the government sector and its built environment. The “Neo-Classical” parliament house, built by the British, was transformed from its status of State Council building to the House of Representatives and Secretariat. The building itself was not changed, but the processional way and council chamber were altered to accommodate more elected representatives. Later, the construction of statues of the late Prime Ministers followed the colonial model but customized to the needs of the



Central Bank

upper class Ceylonese. The former residence of the British Governor, the Queen's House, was occupied by the new Governor-General, the ceremonial head of the state representing the Queen of England. Most colonial buildings built in Georgian and Neo-Classical styles, such as the General Post Office and the Colombo town hall, were directly adopted.

The elite followed the late colonial model of living in residential suburbs. Colonial living styles had been of particular interest to the nascent elite from Dutch times. Dutch

country houses built to the north of Colombo, near Kelani River, attracted the so-called “leading citizens” in the colonized society to Mutuwal, Hulftsdorp, and Grandpass, and remained a socially preferred location until the mid-nineteenth century. Later, British residential neighbourhoods to the south of the fort area, in Kollupitiya and Cinnamon Gardens, set a new trend for the Ceylonese upper classes to follow. These housing and locational choices were part of a broader emulation of British colonial culture, which also included eating habits, dress, consumerism, and even naming practices. The city of Colombo, and Cinnamon Gardens in particular, became one of the prime sites for symbolic display. According to Michael Roberts, the construction of palatial mansions with neat driveways and gardens was just as much a part of this status competition as forms of elegant dress, profligate wedding receptions, and the use of material artifacts of Western origin. Conspicuous consumption for symbolic purposes was played out through material forms.

Racial inequality built into the colonial urban form was reproduced within the post-colonial spheres of status and class, although with little more permeable boundaries. The culture of looking down upon the common landscape is evident in the upper level bureaucrats’ position on government quarters. Although the Committee Appointed to Advise on the Type Plans of Quarters for Government Officers in 1952 noted post-colonial realities, such as the expense of maintaining detached houses for higher-ranking officers with a garden close to the work place and the furnishing of these, the actual provision of quarters for them was not questioned. Its recommendations, rather, aimed at reducing the cost of housing for the lower ranks of government servants, providing them with flats and reducing internal areas below the minimum requirements specified in the Housing Ordinance. The Committee, advised by (British) Government Architect, T.N. Wynne Jones, —who had designed grand “Neo-Classical” buildings in Colombo— did not place much value in what it called “conventional features in building,” “such as extensive overhang of eaves, high valleys, embellishments, broken outlines, and mouldings” and recommended avoiding such “non-essentials.”

These modified colonial building practices also required architects capable of producing them. From about

the 1930s, compliant Ceylonese were trained in the metropole. The Commonwealth also increased the capacity for post-colonial subjects to travel to other Dominions to study architecture. These Ceylonese professionals also studied the same material, culture, and history as their British predecessors had done so that their products hardly transformed the colonial landscape.

If Ceylonese architects and politicians were ambiguous about post-colonial architecture and the relevance of so-called Gothic or Neo-Classical buildings in Colombo, architectural modernism provided a spuriously “neutral” terrain for the transfer of architectural ideas from the centres to the peripheries. Within their budgetary constraints, post-colonial societies seem to believe that “ornament” is costly and modernist buildings, which lack ornamentation, are cheaper to build. As demonstrated in the cases of Chandigar and Brasilia, Modern Architecture has also been seen as the expression of modernization. As “development” has been far out of sight, Third World societies have been welcome modernism, “Westernizing” their economically lagging landscapes. In Colombo, the main institutional buildings that were built up until the 1970s, for example, the Central Bank of Ceylon, the Irrigation Department headquarters, Ceylinco House, St. Thomas’s Primary, Peoples Bank headquarters, were all designed in the so-called “modernist” mode. The privileging of Western norms and forms have made the rest of the Ceylonese landscape seem rather undeveloped, making the following of such norms and forms a principal cultural goal of the society.

In brief, the colonial directions of development were not subjected to any significant change immediately after independence. First, the policy of agricultural development had not caused much change in the national landscape. Second, the colonial ideological foundation within which the Ceylonese cities and building had been built, and which provided the necessary knowledge to understand, manage, and maintain the built environment, persisted during the first decade after independence. The process of independence largely took the form of indiginizing and modernizing colonial social and spatial structures.

Industrialization (1950s - 1970s)

Two main criticisms of the elite policy came very early from the socialists and nationalists. One preoccupation of the two Sama Samajists in the Legislative Council in the 1930s was to call for the industrializing of Ceylon. Even earlier, nationalists such as Anagarika Dharmapala had raised the issue in the form of promoting a Sinhalese industrialist class. Marking a clear break from the policies of the previous governments, that of 1956 took the initiative in industrializing Sri Lanka. For the lack of interest on the part of capital, nationalist-socialist governments between 1956 and 1977 depended on the state to industrialize the nation. Industrial production was gradually viewed as a way to cut down on imports. These governments also saw development as a means to build a more egalitarian society. As history has taught us, the period of downturn in the world economy that began in the late 1960s has not been favourable to the states that strove to achieve this combination of goals. Nevertheless, the changes in the meaning of the built environment during this period was glaring.

In addition to the lack of capacity and commitment among the Sri Lankan entrepreneurs to industrialize the nation, the governments did not favor private capital, particularly foreign companies. The 1956 government reversed the privatization policy of the previous government, not only by continuing to appoint the members of executive boards, but also by increasing the number of state corporations. Concurrently, nationalization was carried out across all businesses whether owned by Ceylonese or foreigners, including institutions such as schools and, in the mid-1970s, plantations. Complementary to nationalization was the expansion of state activity in sponsoring banks, insurance corporations, new industries, and development projects, particularly in agriculture. The state policies, thereby, further narrowed the room for development of large private enterprises. Taxation, price controls, and the welfare system largely regulated the rest of the (private) economy. Moreover, in the early 1970s, elected workers' councils were given a role in the management of many departments and corporations. What we see between the 1950s and 1970s is therefore a quasi-Soviet type of economic development, guided by five-year plans, and not very different from developments in many states in the periphery, particularly India. Holders of private capital were, therefore, reluctant to

invest, except for a few who received state patronage, such as Piyadasa Mudalali.

Building a more egalitarian society was integral to the development policies. Despite its declining economic indicators, particularly the ones employed by the World Bank based on national incomes, suggesting Sri Lanka's "backwardness," its social indicators have always been significantly high. For example, in 1988, life expectancy at birth (68 years) was the highest in South East Asia and the population growth was a moderate 2.0%. Moreover, the United Front government's economic policy helped Sri Lanka evade a "debt crisis" common to a large number of states in the 1970s and 1980s. The nationalization of schools in the 1960s further socialized education making it available to all school going age children. What this demonstrates is that economic indicators do not adequately represent social reality; social indicators can be high while economic indicators such as income per capita, quite low, and this was certainly the case with Sri Lanka.

The nationalist-socialist governments concentrated on rural development, and particularly in the provision of collective consumption goods such as transport, educational, and medical facilities to remote areas. Although the buildings constructed during this period were themselves small in scale, the number of building projects, such as bus stations, depots, hospital wards, clinics, and primary schools, spread across the national territory was high. The industrial policy of the SLFP-led governments also led to the scattered location of factories throughout the island. Most of these were located in small urban centres, far from Colombo. This policy of the dispersed location of industries, however, seemed somewhat ambiguous, particularly since the aspect of profitability was overshadowed by this government's desire to increase social benefits, especially employment opportunities, outside the main urban areas. Most of these have large plants, which not only required immense resources to maintain, but also operated only at a fraction of their capacity.

The continuation of projects to improve irrigation works in the rural areas also reached a high point in the mid-1960s with the proposal for the most ambitious and largest single development project in Sri Lanka, the Mahaweli Project, which accounted for about a quarter of government's capital expenditure.

If these policies left the historic sites untouched, the tourist industry, promoted as a response to a worsening deficit of foreign exchange conditions, incorporated these into post-colonial national space. A new ministry was also created in the 1970s for the promotion of tourism. Two major developments affecting the built environment were the growing concern for historic monuments and the numerical expansion of hotels. Although Sri Lankan concern about religion and culture was on the rise from the 1950s through the 1970s, large scale restoration of historic landscapes has only taken place from the 1970s.

This period of national transformation was marked not so much by changes in Colombo's built environment, but by the profound change in its meaning. The continued significance of the British-built Parliament complex stands witness to the central political and economic role of the former fort area. The government replaced the Queen's representative, the Governor-General, with a President, and the highest court of appeal, the Privy Council of London, with a Sri Lankan Appeals Court. The United Front government also installed a new constitution and changed the name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka in 1972. Despite these changes in the constitution and nomenclature, the colonial landscape of the Fort area remained the same, and the Queen's House was simply renamed *Janadhipathi Mandiraya*. The colonial mansion, entirely derived from seventeenth and eighteenth century European architecture and dated at least from the 1770s, was used by the Dutch as the Government House, the residence of the Dutch administrator of the maritime province. The British who called it the Queen's House (earlier King's House) used this as the Governor's residence. In 1972, however, no significant architectural changes were made. In short, architecture had not mattered in these changes.

The agencies responsible for the construction of the official built environment were indigenous and expanded. Not only was the Public Works Department separated into the Highways Department and the Buildings Department, but many new specialized institutions were also established. While the Buildings Department designed accommodation for state institutions, for example, town halls, hospitals, and police stations, the new State Engineering Corporation was responsible for the building

needs of the corporations and banks. The expanded role of the state in the production of spaces was also constituted through the increase in the number of buildings it built, which was accommodated by replicating type buildings and homogenizing the national built environment.

In the area of housing, it was not so much the landscape, but the meanings that changed during this period. For the first time, the government of 1970 created a separate cabinet ministry for housing, and the official perception of poor tenements was changed from "slums" that had to be removed from sight to one that saw these dwellings as in need of upgrading. With the Ceiling on House Property Act of 1973, which limited the ownership of housing property to two units, Colombo's rented housing stock fell from 41% of the total in 1971 to 28.6% in 1981, and many tenants of so-called slums were transformed into homeowners. The meaning of the housing landscape of Colombo, thereby, radically changed.

The state regulation of the building industry, however, reduced construction activity, making the state the principal builder. This led to the reuse of existing spaces and the transformation of building functions. For instance, spacious private bungalows were increasingly adapted as offices, and state institutions intruded into the fashionable colonial suburbs of Cinnamon Gardens. This was especially the case with the Bauddaloka Mawatha.

Finally, attempting to bring order to all these transformations, which had reached the threshold, the government of 1970 embarked on a project to reorganize Colombo. With the support of the United Nations, it established the Colombo Master Plan Project in 1974. If the "socialist" partners of the United Front government had until then been an obstruction to Western-style city redevelopment that came along with financial aid, this opened the channel. Despite the "communist" representation in this team, its initial suggestions hardly differed from any other development project of the time, and its language of "growth," "growth poles," and "growth corridors" is a good indication of this.

In short, what nationalist-socialist policies had foregrounded was an ambiguity in their policies. SLFP-led governments operated within the hegemonic Eurocentric narrative; striving to "catch up" with the industrialized West. At the same

time, these governments attempted to subvert this dominant narrative, ensuring the equitable distribution of the social benefits from economic progress. Yet the latter goal seem to have hindered the former, especially during the economic downturn of the world-economy in the 1970s. In effect, therefore, these governments also maintained the colonial-produced import-export economy and the primacy of the plantations within it, but complementing these with new state-run industries and within a framework that was dominated by the state. Nonetheless, both the reality and the meaning of national landscape as well as that of Colombo changed radically during this period.

Export Promotion (1970s - 1990s)

The government policies after 1977 focused on "export promotion" in place of previous economic policies of import substitution and industrialization. In addition to the creation of Export Processing Zones for export oriented production, the United National Party governments between 1977 and 1994 also launched a number of large-scale development projects. The transformations that occurred during this period, which also include the relocation of Sri Lanka within new world regions, such as the SAARC and industrializing Asia, are intimately related to the demise of the Cold War and its bipolar political structure and the reorganization of world geopolitical structures. The very notion of development has been questioned and the model for emulation has shifted from the West to Asia, particularly Singapore.

One of the principal tasks of the government of 1977 was to rebuild the capitalist infrastructure that was destroyed by the previous nationalist-socialist regimes. By crushing the general strike of 1980, however, the government not only undermined the working class but also the primacy of social and economic issues in the national political agenda, which was replaced by the ethnic conflict. Despite the success the economic programs achieved, the ethnic conflict has drawn more resources than any other conflict ever before.

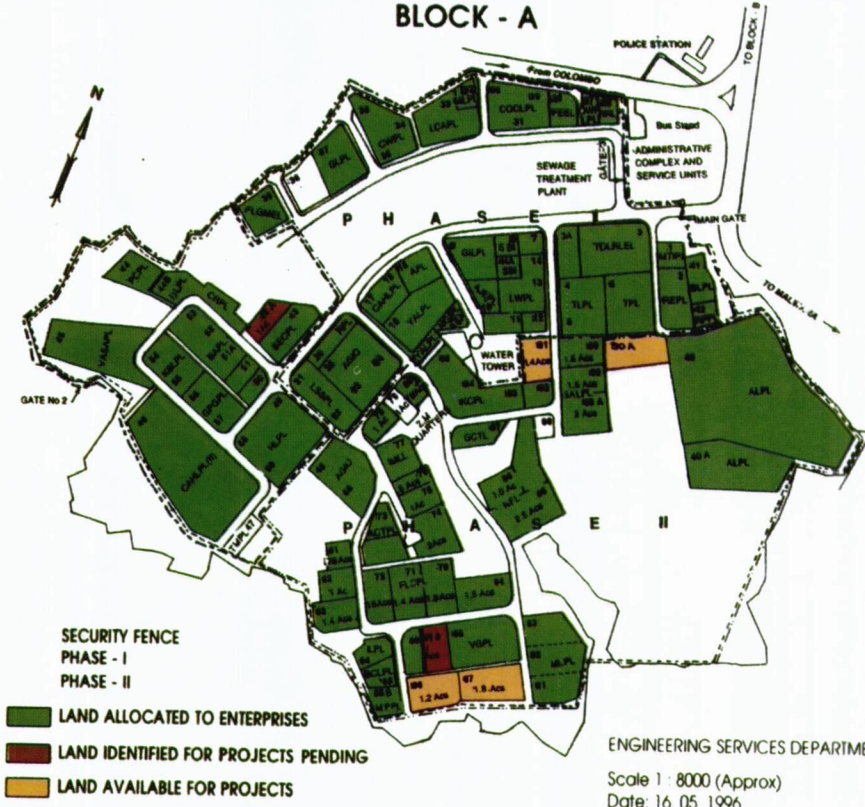
Spatially significant state-sponsored projects and programs of these governments include, first, the shifting of the seat of the government from the former colonial Fort area to Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte. Second, the Fort area was transformed into a central business district by relocating its former occupants and replacing them with banks and private

businesses. Third, export-processing zones were introduced within what is called Greater Colombo in order to attract foreign investment. Fourth, the compression of the major construction and resettlement component of the Mahaweli Project into six years. Finally, a program to build one hundred thousand houses in six years was followed by a One Million Houses Program. The state also stimulated private investment through the removal of legal and administrative constraints, and the provision of fiscal incentives. This transition, undertaken by the governments since the late 1970s as part of a larger program of planned privatization, generated the most profound building boom since independence, and one which changed the whole physical landscape.

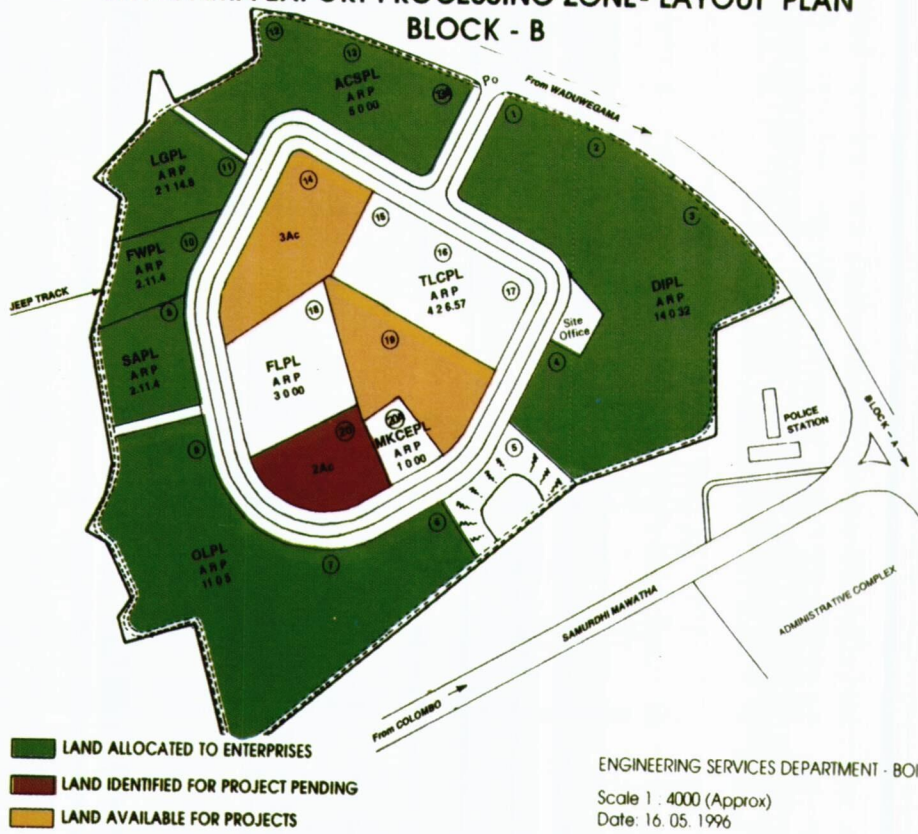
The Accelerated Mahaweli Project, the largest single development project undertaken by a Sri Lankan government, comprised the construction of five major dams across the Mahaweli river, irrigating 320,000 acres of new land, and reinforcing the irrigation system in an area of 32,000 acres. This was anticipated to provide farm employment for 500,000 and off-farm employment for another 50,000 people. The Acceleration added its own share of problems to others inherent to this long-term, large-scale program. As does any dam project, this too uprooted people from fertile basins which were turned into reservoir beds and the massive clearance of forests became natural to the project. It was only with the intervention of the Mahaweli Architectural Unit in 1984, through the proposal of a tree policy, that saving some of the trees became important.

The huge size of the program also offered opportunities. Architects and planners were major groups that made use of these opportunities from a professional standpoint. Earlier, planning had been approached from a master plan perspective where a whole large town was planned and laid out and then gradually filled in with buildings like a puzzle. Since what was built depended on the annual budgetary allocations, the towns represented a landscape of uncertainty, which consisted of a several buildings separated by patches of vegetation. From 1983, however, the Architectural Unit took a new approach, designing and building a dense core and leaving the bulk of the land for future expansion. The towns have, therefore, functioned well from the outset without having to wait until they were fully developed over a several decades.

BIYAGAMA EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE- LAYOUT PLAN BLOCK - A



BIYAGAMA EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE- LAYOUT PLAN BLOCK - B



Source: BOI (Export Processing Zones)

In the area of housing, the large-scale state intervention can partly be understood as a reaction to the previous government's emphasis on housing. The transition from the Hundred Thousand Houses Program to the Million Houses Program in 1983 meant a transition from providing state-built housing, largely in the cities, to the provision of more limited support for self-builders across the nation. The magnitude of the Million Houses Program (1983-1987) can be contrasted with the total housing stock of Sri Lanka, which was just below three million housing units in 1981. The huge numbers represent a particular quantification of housing programs. Although setting numerical targets for programs is not uncommon, those carried out under the guidance of the popular leader, R. Premadasa, were strikingly so.

the state implies a part of its regulatory function. In practice, the state had decided who needs access to what resources, and most crucially, what need makes such state intervention desirable, and how to balance its own account books. According to James Brow's study of a new development, the process produced a settlement but destroyed a community.

While the JVP and the LTTE were undermining Colombo's centrality, the government was reproducing it in a grand scale. This process of centralization culminated at the level of government. The establishment of an Executive Presidency in 1978, concentrating political power in the President's office, strongly demonstrated the government's drive to centralize political command functions.



The New Parliament

The most significant aspect of the Million Houses Program was the idea of supporting those who build their own housing, instead of the state building housing —what it could afford— for the distribution among a selected group of beneficiaries. In arguing that “self-builders” will decide what support the state (sponsor) should provide, however, the proponents of the policy of “support systems” seriously underestimated the power and the regulatory functions of the state. What was ignored here is that even support coming from

Centralizing industrial production, the government established industrial enclaves in the vicinity of Colombo. Beginning in Ireland in 1959, these were established in countries such as Taiwan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The objective was to produce exports at competitive prices, relying on direct foreign investment. The government also removed dual exchange rates and, in effect, devalued the currency. Guarantees were also provided against nationalization, and labour unions were kept out of bounds. This



A Mahaweli Town

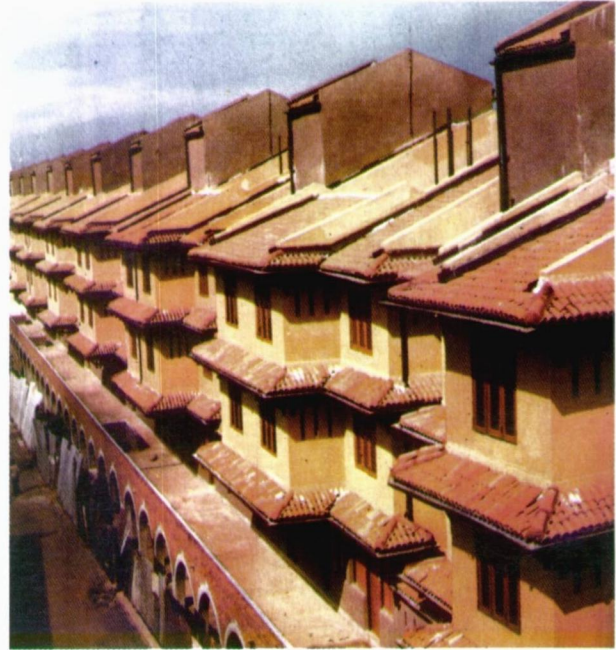
privileged treatment of investments in the EPZ, however, disadvantaged private industries and discouraged new investments outside this.

Despite the failure of EPZs in south Asia (beginning from the first one, Kadla Free Trade Zone of India, opened in 1956), and the fading away of the hope of attracting electronics industry, the garment industry provided the backbone of the EPZ at Katunayake. Garments became the principal job creator, which accounted for 88% of the jobs created by the end of 1981, and also the main export earner of Sri Lanka in 1988.

EPZs were not only constructed as legally exclusive safe havens for private investments, but were also physically separated by fences and walls providing only limited access from outside. As compared to the distributional location of factories by the previous governments, the location of factories in the vicinity of Colombo represents a centralization of industrial production activity.

In regard to Colombo, changes were the result of a massive restructuring carried out through a series of government policies and projects. The restructuring of Colombo was carried out first by the separate location of political and administrative functions in Kotte and economic command functions in the Fort, economic production in the EPZs, and warehousing at Peliyagoda, outside the northern boundary of the municipal council. Then these distributed functions were reincorporated into Colombo by expanding its perceptual boundary, within the notions of "Greater Colombo" and "Colombo Metropolitan Area."

The moving of the government to Kotte was part of the larger plan of action which included the reorganization of the Fort area for the attraction and unrestricted consumption of private capital. Although the state's involvement in the economy continued, the objectives of the government were dominated by private interests and the privatization of state



Gunasinghepura Housing Scheme Re-Development

Source: Sri Lanka Housing By People.

institutions. The construction of this particular relationship between the economy and the politics, and the centralization of Colombo within the national space, is constituted in the moving of the seat of government, but by only about five miles, and not to a distant place such as a historic capital of the Raja Rata period.

It is important to explore why there were such grand programs to reorganize Sri Lanka. As illustrated above, nationalist-socialist governments had sufficiently ruined the capitalist structures of the state that the resurrection of a central role for capitalist activity, which was the major goal of the 1977 government, demanded the reversal of the measures taken by the previous governments and the building of a new social and spatial order. The magnitude of such a need and the government's use of this opportunity to enhance the prospects for capital were expressed in the pretentious programs of the 1980s that transformed the whole post-colonial landscape. Internationally, the state's policies constituted a response to the

downturn in the world-economy from the 1970s, which had also brought stagnation to the Sri Lankan economy. The desire to move quickly and fill in significant gaps made them invite in foreign capital and produce enclaves where the above constraints did not apply, hence the special project areas. The deployment of a strategy of “special project areas” thus staked out particular nodes in the national landscape from which such programs could be initiated, which would gradually spread out transforming the larger society and space.

Sri Lankan architecture and built forms have also been diversified in the post-1977 period, but within a particular unity. Instead of a single source, such as the colonial PWD, or the state-run departments, the agencies involved in architectural production began to diversify, as did their approaches. The role of both Sri Lankan and foreign private architectural firms was expanded. Increasingly, diversity was introduced into the built environment, the new buildings of the central business district, the Parliament complex, the Mahaweli Project, and the housing programs all exhibiting a variety of designs, approaches, and styles. In regard to the built forms employed, the most glaring contrast can be seen between the CBD and the seat of government. As discussed above, emulating the dominant global and regional capitalist centres, the UDA opted to develop the new CBD in so-called “International Style,” while the government employed more distinct Critical Vernacular architecture to construct a national identity.

Conclusion

My main conclusion for architects is that national development opens up extraordinary opportunities for the profession. As they are not the familiar type, these distinctive challenges cannot be identified without a knowledge of development policies, processes, and their potential implications on the built environment. This is precisely why I have written a lot about politics, economics, history, culture, etc., expanding the boundaries of my inquiry, and adopting a historical and multidisciplinary approach to the transformations in the built environment. Secondly, creativity requires a knowledge base. Buildings and built environments have meanings, and they change over time. As I have argued in my *Society and Space*, society is integral to the understanding of the space—and vice versa—and creativity that is meaningful to the society does not arise from pure intuition. Although the meaning depends on who interprets them, the only way to share

the interpretation with others is by explicating the intellectual framework employed to interpret the particular built environment or the design.

As far as development is concerned, the model that the Ceylonese leaders followed in the early post-colonial period was essentially British colonial. After five decades, the governments are now looking up to Asia for models of development. As much as the blind following of British and American forms of development, the following of new Asian leadership might not be efficacious. With the demise of the Euro-American hold on the European originated capitalist world-economy, the Eurocentric idea of development has also reached its impasse. This situation has opened up a lot of room for creativity in a large number of areas, including that of cultural interpretation and expression, as represented in the Parliament complex at Kotte. The academics and the professionals need to get used to this freedom from Eurocentric ideas, and watch closely for the changes and opportunities. Sometimes it is hard to believe that one is outside the jail.

Notes :

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