

Editorial

During the past decade, Sri Lanka's urban built-environments have been undergoing dramatic change. Since the end of the disastrous war situation, attention had been focused to the cities, particularly Colombo and sudden and fast-track developments had engulfed most of the urban environments of the island. Much of these mushrooming developments, it is doubtful, have had proper research to back up what was being done, either in terms of the construction of low-income high-rises, or the sporadic urban renewal projects. This is not to undermine the enormous progress that was visible, but there remain many questions as to the pertinence of some of these activities in the absence of a practice culture that recognizes research as a sound basis upon which judgments must be made.

Be that as it may, signs are that researchers do focus their attention at least occasionally to what happens around them within the opportunities they have, to bring to public attention the theoretical ways in which these can be examined. In this issue, we see researchers looking at the emerging condominiums and questioning their maintainability, examining the rental markets of boarding houses around universities in the city as well as trying to gauge how flood-risk mitigation of the vernacular villages have persisted long before the term was coined. An exception perhaps is the paper on the 'bangles' and how they have evolved over time, which tells us about the significance of ideas and culture on the emergence of material form.

Nevertheless, the trouble is, these research activities happen now and then, occasionally coming to light, rather than as an established practice underlying policy formation, to provide data and information to re-think, question and redirect what we do in the built-environment of Sri Lanka. This journal has been trying to promote a research culture among the built-environmental professionals much to the dismay of many who do not see much changing as sufficient and powerful enough to buttress practice.

Today, the need for such environmental research has become even more acute with the announcement of the present governments intention to transform Colombo and the Western Province to a 'Megapolis'; an urban conglomeration envisioned to take Sri Lanka to a new level of urban existence. While the idea is exciting and has great potential, this requires a good pool of research based data and information to create that urban enclave suited to the Sri Lankan context, geographically, culturally and environmentally. Indeed, without a research based practice that will guide such a huge endeavor, built-environmental professionals will be paralyzed unable to take the right decisions missing a great opportunity to envision and direct its evolution.

SLIA calls upon those who care, and those who have the capacity to spearhead such a research culture to do what is necessary to take up their professional responsibilities—backed not just by common sense but by valid scientific research. Built-environment Journal will remain open to clear the path for this endeavor as it progresses.

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