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## Revitalizing the Built Heritage for Urban Development: A Case Study on City of Colombo, Sri Lanka

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### Abstract:

*The built heritage of a country is an assemblage of masterpieces created during several phases of the history. It is the best evidence to assess the quality of artificial and human resources available at that time. These unique creations have now become the heritage of the world whose disappearance would be an irreparable loss for all humanity, thus requiring special consideration. Though Sri Lanka is a small country in terms of its geographical area, the country has gained world reputation for rich assemblage of cultural and natural heritage. Sri Lanka is one of the few countries of which certain locations are inscribed on the World Heritage List. City of Colombo which is the commercial capital of the country has valuable built heritage, which records the memories of colonial administration for about three hundred years of the country. The government of Sri Lanka has taken a keen interest to conserve the historical buildings in Colombo through integration with urban development programme for the city. This paper discusses the way in which the conservation is integrated with the urban development and in turn its possible contribution to the urban development of Colombo.*

**Key words:** Built heritage, Conservation, Urban development

## 1. Introduction

The identity and image of cities is often built upon with the identity of their past. The history of cities is embedded with its built heritage which consists of an array of structures and artifacts including buildings, bridges, statues, monuments, and many other places with religious, cultural values. As stated by Ahlfeldt et al. (2012) in some cases, the existence of large collection of historical heritage can be able to define the identity of a city as a whole – or at least large parts of it – as can be observed in, for example, Istanbul, Rome, Jerusalem or Cairo.

The built heritage belongs to the past civilization and the natural environment in which people live, requires a special attention due to several reasons. Although they belong to different cultural areas and different historical periods they represent a valuable asset for modern society. They are the physical embodiments of the past history. For example, the remains of ancient cities provide valuable testimony about architecture and concepts of town planning. Such ancient concepts have greatly helped in nurturing the theories of modern town planning and design principles of architecture. On the other hand it is evident that a large number of properties are religious or cultural monuments. The value attached to such properties is of spiritual, aesthetic and cultural and these values are important to that particular society which it belongs to. The aesthetic value represents the artistic heritage of mankind. The cultural imprints associated with those properties display the salient features exist in that society and their cultural identity. It is also well known that those were the things that were appreciated at that time.

The built heritage not only provides the cultural, religious, and spiritual aspects belong to that particular country or nations. It also provides a substantial testimony to the literature for history of that country. They are remains of the major events and or phases of the history. For example the

buildings, transport network, bridges built by the colonial rulers such as Portuguese, Dutch and British in the cities of Sri Lanka like Kandy, Colombo and Galle are also elements of built heritage. Though they do not represent the cultural or religious aspects of the indigenous people it provides valuable information on the colonial administration and the cultural and religious aspects of their society during that time.

## **2. Objectives**

The objective of this paper is to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of heritage conservation and the potential role of the heritage conservation to promote urban development. The paper therefore is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted for theoretical explanations on some aspects like special characteristics of built heritage and its conservation, threats in conservation of built heritage in urban areas, urban re-development and conservation of built heritage and anticipated benefits of conservation. The second part is about the practical aspect of heritage conservation and urban re-development. This part explains how heritage conservation is carried out through re-development to promote urban development. City of Colombo which is the commercial capital of Sri Lanka has been selected as the case study as there are several projects that have been implemented and to be implemented which are planned and initiated by the government to promote the urban development in Colombo.

## **3. Methodology**

Methodology applied in collecting data for the research consists of several means. The theoretical explanations on the concepts, definitions etc. were obtained through reviewing the literature which ranges from text books, research articles, and reports. The aspects like threats in conservation of built heritage, issues

and challenges in conservation of built heritage were discussed based on the findings of the research articles. The information obtained from the Urban Development Authority of Sri Lanka and discussions with the professionals were the main source of data for writing the second part of the paper. Besides these sources author's personal experience and observations were also incorporated in writing the paper.

#### **4. Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

##### **4.1 Special Characteristics of Built Heritage and its Conservation**

Feilden (1994) described the value of historic buildings"..... an historic building is one that gives us a sense of wonder and makes us want to know more about the people and culture that produced it. It has architectural, aesthetic, historic, documentary, archaeological economic, social and even political and spiritual or symbolic values: but the first impact is always emotional, for it is a symbol of our cultural identity and continuity - a part of our heritage. If it has survived the hazards of 100 years of usefulness, it has a good claim to being called historic".

As cited in Sodangi (2013) Law (2000) stated that heritage buildings are tangible manifestations of town's identity and a physical expression of the cultural heritage of the people of the town. The buildings provide a link to the history and culture of a nation and particular town. Heritage buildings very often provide a suitable background, or home, for the cultural life of a town. Generally heritage buildings are located in central parts of a town and, combined with appropriate services; they help make the central parts of a town attractive area to visit by residents and tourists. The built heritage is important as it helps to maintain community identity, enhance the image of the area and local neighborhoods, contribute to the quality of life for residents and communities, assist with

economic development and tourism initiatives ; and initiate conservation led regeneration.

The uniqueness of each heritage make the supply fixed which Ashworth (1997) explained the scenario as follows; "Historic resources are assumed to be fixed in supply, both in the sense that there is one unique unreproducible Stonehenge, or Taj Mahal, and also that there is - in principle - a finite quantity of the preservable"

Any study on historical buildings should consider the purpose of its creation and evaluation of the success of its realization. The political, social and economic aspects at the time of construction also to be studied to obtain a better understanding on the objective(s) of such creation. Buildings are not merely constructed for carrying out activities. They are also tools and devices and their use is highly complex and dynamic. Therefore almost every building has a transferred life.

The built form of the cultural heritage is non-living or abiotic components of the environment. It is differ from other abiotic components such as minerals, soil of the environment. The causes of decay in these historic structures therefore similarly differ from other. There are several natural causes as well as actions of man. These causes can be broadly classified as botanical, chemical and entomological. All these causes are on the other hand can be considered as threats to the sustainability of the built heritage. (Feilden 1994)

The dynamism of use of the building is due to several external factors such as change of population, their behavior and income, economic development and policies of a country, political situation and physical or natural reasons. As use of buildings are always liable to the effects of several external factors, mere negative preservation of a building, that is to say preventing change of any kind is not within the realms of practical possibility at all. However there are certain exceptions such as a building is to be kept as a dead specimen

of a type now completely demolished. Hence even buildings with historic or architectural value must be so maintained as to keep it fit for living use within its potentiality.

If built heritage is an environmental resource, there should be values assigned for it in conservation. Feilden (1994) said that, "Conservation must preserve and if possible enhance the message and values of cultural property. Values help systematically to set overall priorities in deciding proposed interventions, as well as to establish the extent and nature of the individual treatment. The assignment of priority values will inevitably reflect the cultural context of each historic building. For example, a small wooden domestic structure from the late eighteenth century in Australia would be considered a national landmark because it dates from the founding of the nation and because so little architecture has survived from that period. In Italy, on the other hand with its thousands of ancient monuments a comparable structure would have a relatively low priority in the overall conservation needs of the community".

Ashworth, (1997) suggested that in the process of conservation following questions to be considered and answered. What should be conserved? How should it be selected? Where in what quantity and for how?"

Hence conservation of built heritage requires considering all these special characteristics and sound judgment based upon the expertise knowledge of different disciplines as mentioned above.

#### **4.2 Urban Built heritage at Risk**

Generally it is accepted that in all developing countries, as well as in many developed countries, the governments have an obligation and duty to provide infrastructure, protect the environment and ensure the safety and security. Additionally there are several other duties and functions provided by the governments of developing and transitional countries of which

are highly demanded by the people. This is basically due to the precarious economic situations of such countries, which face the challenge of rational allocation of public money among the highly competing demands and necessities. Under such situation the question will arise how then can a case be made for allocating public funds and managerial capacities to the protection and conservation of built heritage? It is observed that in many countries components of built heritage has survived intact through years of which many of them are neglected and subject to destruction due to various forces both man-made and natural.

With the phase of development this heritage whether it be man-made or natural is continually exposed to many risks of deterioration resulting from causes such as natural reasons due to the wear and tear of time, pollution, irresponsible human action, excessive urbanization and mass tourism. Macroeconomic policies political and ethnic conflicts, war and global environmental issues such as ozone depletion, global warming, and loss of biological diversity also have threatened the safeguard of this heritage.

It is noted that Industrial Revolution and market economy have brought the new dimensions to the growth of cities and urban areas, which are quite different from the cities of pre-industrial era. Cities have been emerged and developed as market centers, centers for administrative functions and services, industrial centers and centers for international trade through air and sea routes. This phenomenon is common to developed countries like Western Europe, North America, and some Asian countries like Japan and developing countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In the process of rapid urbanization and urban expansion, land and buildings have become one of the basic resources, which accommodate many competing activities of the urban functional structure. In other words demand for space in the cities has become a crucial issue.

In this process the built heritage of cities are under stress due to several factors.

These buildings were constructed at a time when urban issues, needs and the future form of cities were not clearly visualized. The buildings, its landscape and city image have been most commonly valued on market principles on the basis of highest and best use. The buildings with historic values have been then categorized as obsolete compared to the new urban development based on intensive use of lands and buildings, in fact certain areas of the cities have been designated as areas for urban renewal. Many of the finest buildings in the cities have been transformed into other uses on the basis of economic return irrespective of their historic value. These conversions generally distorted the original character and use of such buildings. The agglomeration of activities as commercial administrative and industrial centers, caused congestion in cities with a flock of people coming to obtain various services, market transactions, employment etc. Traffic congestion, unacceptable level of pollution has begun to harm the human life, but the very buildings of historic value, monuments and other artifacts as well.

As discussed above the built heritage of many cities is being impacted due to the rapid economic growth and advancement to the science and technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The complexity of the elements of the urban structure and their interdependence has been described in the Ekistics Grid by C.A. Doxiadis (1968) He stated that the five elements in the environment (nature, man, society, networks and shells or buildings) could be combined with four forces (economic, social, political and cultural) in more than 33 million ways, and that change in any force or element resulted in change of all others.

The interaction of those numerous attributes in many circumstances threatens the existence of historical structures and following are the consequences of the above situation.

- i) Generally all historic buildings and structures are at risk due to neglect and decay.
- ii) There is a tendency to convert the use for more profitable uses.
- iii) In the absence of proper legal and institutional mechanism to safeguard the properties, the owners or the users of heritage properties are motivated to alter, demolish or make adhoc extensions to the structures.
- iv) The new urban development projects, which do not consider the aspects of heritage management, can encourage the demolition of heritage properties under the names such as urban renewal or urban re-generation.
- v) Un planned construction of new buildings in the cities where historical properties are significant could distort or bring down the native character and value of them.
- vi) Generally deteriorated or neglected houses in the cities of developing countries are occupied by the poor. Lack of maintenance, legal disputes on the ownership, inadequate infrastructure caused further deterioration of these buildings. In spite of the architectural or historic value, these areas have become over crowded agglomerations of unsanitary housing.
- vii) Urban informal sector activities in the cities of developing countries often obstruct or even damage the elements of cultural or historical properties.
- viii) The cities in developing countries are most commonly congested with automobiles due to the absence of traffic management system which built environment has been badly affected due to haphazard parking, congestion and air pollution.

- ix) The social aspects like political and social violence, ethnic conflicts and war similarly affect the security of historical properties. The degradation of social values and ethics on the other hand leads to destroy the cultural properties through activities like vandalism, theft and illicit trade and trafficking.
- x) Excessive use of historic buildings or areas as centers of tourist attraction. Especially mass tourism creates several other negative impacts and threatens the existence of fragile monuments and sites.
- xi) The urban areas are centers of pollution hence destruction by pollution is also a factor to be considered. (Doxiadis 1968)

#### **4.3 Conservation of Built Heritage in Urban Re-development: A Challenging Task**

The major cities of the world irrespective of the level of economic development have been facing the pressure of new development and re-development during the last few decades. This accelerated re-development has brought about many threats for the heritage in these cities. Every new development or re-development destroys the vernacular built environment, and socio-economic character of towns and cities. The popularity of the term “sustainability” in the development urges the urban planners, developers and policy makers to create a balance between development and heritage conservation in the coming times. Besides this public perception and awareness on heritage conservation has made a firm ground to look for the “Win Win” situation between heritage conservation and urban re-development.

As per Randall (1987) standard definition for both conservation and preservation includes the terms such as preventing exploitation, destruction or neglect. Nevertheless the dictionary recognizes a subtle distinction between the two words. Conservation connotations of wise use, whereas one of

the shades of meaning offered for preservation is to keep intact. Randall further stated that, economic approach for conservation is compatible with the “wise use” concept. However, conservation and preservation issues pose some special challenges for the economic concept of optimal allocation of resources.

Dobby (1993) viewed conservation in relation to the planning and described covering wider areas of concern. He stated that, “Conservation movement recently switched to wider issues such as heritage, the balance of past and present, the atrocities of modern architecture and planning in such a way as to imply criticism of modern life and the taste”. He clearly understood the practical difficulties in protecting the old buildings under the pressure of market economies. It is stated that there are many fine buildings quite unsuited to present day use. The cost of adopting them would be greater than demolishing them and replacing them by new buildings. It is therefore frequently extremely difficult to decide whether to impose a preservation order, and this especially so in areas, which require redevelopment but which nevertheless contain number of fine buildings because of the importance of not prejudicing the future for the sake of the past. It would be folly, except in the most exceptional cases, to allow an existing building awkwardly situated to ruin the satisfactory redevelopment of a whole area. Conservation therefore seeks to retain the symbol of the past.

Having identified the critical issues in conservation, Dobby explained the central terms used in conservation according to the implied amount of change. From this it can be seen that conservation can cover all circumstances from absolute retention to demolition for sometimes partial or complete demolition is necessary for the benefit of an overall project. (See Table 01)

**Table 01 Possible Degree of Changes in Conservation Implied in a Particular Artifact or Area**

CHANGES				
	None (except mini repairs and maintenance)	Some	Much	Total
Repair	*			
Preservation	*			
Enhancement		*	*	*
Conservation	*	*	*	*
Restoration		*	*	*
Reconstruction		*	*	*
Démolition		*	*	*

**Source:** Allan Dobby, Conservation and Planning, Hutchinson and Co., (Publishers) Ltd., U.K., London, 1993.

The importance of conservation in the paradigm of environmental sustainability has been strengthened and firmly established through various regulatory measures nationally and internationally. Generally conservation refers to a resource, which is useful to the society. Usefulness has been justified on the basis of assigned value to a particular resource. The urban built heritage as a resource therefore should possess value to become qualified for conservation.

As per Dix (1995) it can be concluded that the towns and buildings in them have developed for a long period of time to fulfill the needs of the people and in accordance with the circumstances of those who live or work there. They continue to respond the social and economic characteristics of the times. For a town or city to be sustainable in the process of urbanization and urban development, it must be viable: to remain viable it must be change as circumstances change. This dynamism is significant in urban context compared to the rural. Therefore if towns to be a living element, the changes should be allowed, accommodated and even encouraged. The true conservation is the wise use of the resources of our

environment. Conservation of built heritage therefore means incorporating new and old to the best advantage

With many challenges affecting the survival of built heritage there is a strong argument and rationale behind the conservation of built heritage in the process of urban development. The negative effects of physical deterioration and obsolescence of historic buildings are being addressed through a series of solutions like repair, renewal, refurbishment and ultimately re-development. (Mansfield (2000).

Urban re-development involves the re-habilitation or even the replacement of physical components like infrastructure net works, traffic circulation systems, buildings and urban spaces to meet the changed technical, economic, and social conditions. The main indicator used for the determination of re-development is the depreciation of values of properties in a particular area. Mansfield (2000) quoting Wofford (1983) defines depreciation and categorizes its three sources as physical deterioration, functional obsolescence and economic or locational obsolescence.

The renewal programs however would have to ensure the continuity of historical and cultural character of that particular city. It is noted that cities in the world are built upon over a long period of time. This development process has passed several stages and landmarks by adding and changing the physical fabric and the cityscape. The values (specially the non-use values) assigned to historical properties are merely based on its age appearance and setting. Historical significance is the importance of a place or a building to past, present and future under several set values such as historic value, relationship with the people, visual qualities or aesthetic appearance, social value, scientific value, rarity and the type of representation. (Feilden 1994)

The process involves in preparation of urban re-development plans basically lacks a mechanism to value the historical buildings in such designated areas. The common

practice applied in many development plans is the general listing of buildings mainly based on few indicators like age, use, and architectural elements. The value of religious or cultural properties though not assessed is accepted and recognized due to its other values like spiritual, cultural and religious inherited with such properties. But many other buildings like houses, warehouses, and buildings used for different functions in the past history generally do not represent the values associated with religious or other cultural properties or monuments. Therefore general practice is the mere listing of buildings on common indicators. The empirical evidences proved that historical conservation has become neglected or marginalized in urban re-development plans due to the absence of a scientific method to assess the value of such historical properties. As a result these buildings just stand as listed buildings in these plans. The current historic value and the appreciation of historic value in the future and the measurement of time involved in such appreciation to be measured to formulate a sound conservation plan, which harmonize or balance the conservation to achieve the desired objectives of the urban re-development plans.

The assessment of current and future values of historical properties and possible time period of appreciation provides a good guidance to formulate policies on conservation in the urban development process. First and foremost it provides information on why and how people value such properties and the values given by the people in monetary terms, which is a strong base to formulate policies compared to the just listing of buildings. It also provides information to decide whether all buildings listed as historical buildings to be conserved. Secondly if the current historic value is less than the cleared site values it gives a signal to policy makers to identify the possible issues and threats in conservation of such properties. The measurement or rate and time involved in appreciation of value as a historical property provide good

guidance to the nature and kind of intervention of the government under the conservation policy. It also provides guidance to decide the kind of role to be played by other stakeholders like property owners, private sector, non-governmental organizations and the community.

There are several issues in assessing the value and establish firm grounds for conservation. Built heritage as a resource is entitle for economic valuation as other resources. Economic valuation on environmental resources is essentially about discovering the demand curve for environmental goods and services: the values which human beings place on the environment. The practical problem in economic valuation is the deriving credible estimates for that value in situations where there are either no apparent markets or markets are very imperfect.

Pearce (1993) described that the value of an environmental resource is of two forms. One is the value of preference of people for or against environmental change, which is called economic value. The other is the intrinsic value – value that intrinsically resides in environmental asset-, which is not of human beings, or value that exists not just because individual human beings have preference for them. The built heritage similarly possesses these two kinds of values. Intrinsic value generally associated with non-use values. The non-use values of built heritage can be aesthetic, cultural, religious or spiritual. The use value generally means the economic value of that resource.

The cultural capital which accounts largely for non-use value has been described by Ahlfeldt et al. (2012) as follows; “If a city hosts a large endowment of built heritage, it thus contains a large stock of cultural capital that has to be separated from the pure economic asset value. This cultural capital may give rise to a flow of different goods and services over time, which may also have cultural value of their own”.

The use value of a building can be measured as there is a market where indicators are rather set out compared to the non-use values. The structural condition, floor space, number of floors, facilities available, current use, state of maintenance are some indicators which value can be assessed and compared with the values assigned or decided to another property with similar characteristics for the justification. The measurement of non-use values is a difficult task, assigning values to aesthetic, cultural, spiritual or religious aspect of a building has commonly been debated on several grounds. The first and foremost these values have been derived from a hypothetical market and figures are drawn through the subjective valuations of people with different levels of education, knowledge, income, preferences and other social status. Secondly the techniques used to derive values have been criticized on the basis of their practical problems in application. (Pearce 1993)

Apart from these technical deficiencies there are other difficulties in valuing the built heritage in urban context. There are array of questions and queries. Who values the urban built heritage? Is there a real value assigned with it? Or is it an imposed value? Is the general public concern on the value of urban built heritage? If so who are they and for what reasons? If not, the rationale for not conservation etc, all these questions queries to be answered or clarified for the justification of conservation.

As per Gerald (1995), the answers to the following questions to be carefully analyzed and assessed which built heritage to become a sustainable venture in the urban development process.

- i) Is the building architecturally and in all other respect including structural worthy of the capital costs involved in any necessary conversion or adaptation? and when converted or adapted will

- it be able to pay its way, covering all costs-in-use from the rent it earns? and
- ii) Would it be better to invest in a new building of appropriate design?

Harvey (1994) explained that development means respond to changes of social and economic aspects of a city. Accordingly development of built heritage in the cityscape can be three forms.

- i) Modification of the existing building through conversion (conversion into more profitable uses or to suit current requirements).
- ii) Re-development – existing buildings are demolished and replaced by new building.
- iii) New development through outward expansion (urban expansion) on undeveloped land.

Further, Harvey discussed the important aspects related to the development. He stated that decision for development basically depends on the answer to the following question. Will the value of a replacement building exceed value of the present building plus the cost of re-building? If so, re-development will be profitable. In order to arrive at this decision the developer has to

- i) Select between development projects.
- ii) Estimate demand for different developments.
- iii) Decide on the quality of the building.
- iv) Calculate how intensively the site can bid for the site.
- v) Estimate how much the developer can bid for the site and
- vi) Obtain finance.

The conservation plans therefore require paying the attention to the following aspects in order to make them viable under these economic considerations.

- i) Ways and means to integrate conservation concepts horizontally across the different related institutions. It helps to establish a mechanism to work together to resolve how development can take place while the heritage remains intact.
- ii) How to utilize heritage as means to make money.
- iii) How to not exhaust but rather conserve heritage properties as an environmental resource so that they can continue to be a source of profitability.
- iv) How to maintain intact without vulgarization the cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, architectural aspects on which the values are inscribed that cannot be measured easily.

#### **4.4 Benefits of Heritage Conservation**

Heritage is simply what all agree that something worth keeping. Built heritage is an inheritance of the legacy of history. The legacy records the special events and development process. It establishes the character and identity of a country.

On the other hand the need for conservation of built heritage has been duly recognized under the threats faced by various ways. Many countries have formulated necessary institutional and legal framework for the conservation of historical properties. There are special programs for conservation and some of them are even funded by international organizations mandated for conservation.

There are many economic, social and environmental benefits of heritage conservation provided that it must be associated with a sound heritage management plan prepared in coordination with the urban development plan. Following is a brief account of these benefits.

## **Economic Benefits**

- i) The enhancement of economic value by contributing heritage character to the value of the property. Conservation creates positive impact on property value by providing a form of insurance of future neighborhood quality. Besides the direct effects on property values in an area, there are positive spillover for neighbouring areas where by designation of areas as conservation areas leads to ripple effect of rehabilitation and upgrading of properties in the surrounding area.
- ii) Many hedonic pricing studies conducted in the countries like Canada, USA, Australia, Germany, Netherlands found that there is an increase of property values in the neighboring areas due to the historic preservation.
- iii) Increase the value of assessments as a result of renovation and restoration.
- iv) Enhance the use of historic sites and structures as functional areas.
- v) Enhance highest and best use of land which is compatible with the urban development process.
- vi) Increase opportunities for cultural tourism. It is noted that according to the World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism accounts for 37 per cent of world travel and this is growing at the rate of 15 per cent a year.
- vii) Where historic heritage is conserved for tourism purposes, other private benefits can arise. For example, hotels, shops and restaurants may be established in such conservation areas to cater for tourists. This development of tourist infrastructure may, in turn, return additional

benefits to heritage conservation by increasing visitor numbers.

- viii) As per the concept of sustainable development active building conservation maintains the developed areas of cities which to contain their growth. Therefore, building conservation contributes to the potential economic benefits of compact cities.
- ix) Activities involved in renovation are more labor intensive than new construction. Thus it provides more employment opportunities and provides benefits for local economies of countries.

### **Social Benefits**

- i) By maintaining the existing stock of historic heritage places, conservation activities enhance a community's cultural capital
- ii) Historic buildings create a focal point that people can relate to and are familiar with – giving a sense of place.
- iii) They may be well loved local landmarks which the community identify with and will rally around to support or save.
- iv) The fabric and design can add a distinctive identity to the new build part of a regeneration scheme – enhancing townscape and lifting the overall quality of the built environment.
- v) They may have interesting historical and cultural associations which can be interpreted and developed through the wider regeneration area.
- vi) They may attract tenants/occupiers who would not be interested in a less distinctive building.
- vii) They feed people's interest in the past.

- viii) Historic buildings have option values — the value to community members of having the option to visit the historic heritage place in the future. Bequest values — the value associated with the knowledge that the heritage asset can be endowed to future generations. Existence values — the benefits gained from knowing that the historic heritage place has been conserved, irrespective of whether the community member enjoying the benefit actually visits it.
- ix) Conservation of historic buildings encourages the people to live, work and shopping in the area which can address problems of de-population of city areas.
- x) Conservation of existing landscape enhances the aesthetic beauty of the area. Thus it contributes psychological benefits of the people.
- xi) Building conservation can play the lead role in capturing it by retaining those structures that make up the environment in which people interact.

### **Environmental Benefits**

- i) Ensure the sustainable development through conservation and management of built heritage, which is a non-renewable resource.

(Thurley et al 2013, Yeksavich 2001, Ahlfeldt 2012, Navrud & Ready 2002 , Richard 2006, Meng 2007, Bishop 2004, Leichenko 2001 and Rypkema 1994)

## **5. Application: The City of Colombo, Sri Lanka: Revitalizing the Built Heritage for Urban Development**

### **5.1 Historical Importance of Colombo**

Colombo- the Colombo Municipal Council Area- which was selected as the case study of this research is the Commercial Capital and the primate city in Sri Lanka.

Colombo bears a historical value as it is located in a strategic position in the Indian Ocean. Colombo - first heard of as a Moorish trading settlement. Its port was frequented by trading ships from China, Persia, India and Arabia. Once Ibn Batuta in 1344 described Colombo as one of the largest and most beautiful; (towns) in the island of Serendib. (Colombo Centenary Volume 1965).

The development of Colombo was heavily under the influence of foreign nations like by the Portuguese (1587 - 1656) Dutch (1656- 1796) and the British (1796-1948). Colombo served as both the Commercial Capital and the Administrative Capital since the colonial times until the segregation of two functions by establishing the new National Capital at Kotte Sri Jayawardanapura in 1980. The importance of Colombo still remains along with the development of harbor and institutions of financial and commercial activities. As Colombo was always under strong foreign influence until the country received the political independence in the year 1948, the built form of the city represents the remains of “Western European culture” compared to the “traditional culture” found in other ancient cities like Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy.

Colombo has a rich assemblage of historic buildings of which most of them are inherited from our colonial rulers. There are about 242 such buildings scattered all over the city which nearly half of them are in Fort and Pettah area which is

the central business district of the city. (City of Colombo Development Plan 1999).

**Table 02 Historical Buildings in Colombo**

Area	No of Buildings
Fort	76
Cinnamon Gardens	45
Pettah	33
Kotahena	31
Hultsdorf	21
Modara	11
Maradana	09
Kollupitiya	05
Galle Face	04
Borella	04
Slave Island	03
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>242</b>

**Source:** City of Colombo Development Plan 1999, Vol. 1, UDA.

Many historical buildings found in Colombo belong to the British period. The areas developed before 1939 are Fort, Pettah, Slave Island, Galle Face, Kollupitiya, Cinnamon Gardens, Hultsdorf, Kotahena, Mutuwal and Modara. Most of the historical buildings therefore found in these areas. Most of the older streets bear names which have links with the past. The Portuguese often gave names of Saints to whom the churches and convents in the vicinity were dedicated. (e.g. San Sebastian Hill, St. James Street) The Dutch adapted many Sinhalese and Portuguese names but they sometimes commemorated one of their Governors like Hulft or recalled their native land such as Leyden and Delft. The British named the streets often after monarchs and famous men their native country and Governors and other senior officials. In some occasions the streets were named after Christian Saints (Colombo Centenary Volume 1965)

## **5.2 Revitalizing the Built Heritage in Colombo for Urban Development**

Colombo City which covers under the Municipality limits of Colombo is in extent of 3729 hectares (37.3 Sq. Km.) of land is the largest among the Municipalities in the country. As per the Census of 2011 the population of Colombo was 555031. As per a report of the World Bank 2012 additionally there are about 400,000–500,000 daily commuters coming to the City for various purposes. (World Bank, 2012).

The current land use pattern of Colombo is an outcome of several interrelated factors like its history, location, accessibility; natural factors as well as planning and political decisions take from time to time. The general land use pattern represents the role of Colombo as the Commercial Capital. As per the year 2010 about 28% of the land was utilized for commercial activities and about 14% of the land occupied the port related activities. Residential use represents somewhat low share which is about 21% of the total area compared to the other regional towns in the country which the share for residential uses ranges from about 50 to 70% of the total land area.

The Urban Development Authority (UDA) which is the key institution for planning and management of urban areas in the country is vested with some powers related to the conservation of historic buildings as stipulated in the respective legal enactment called Urban Development Authority Law No. 41 of 1978. In part II Section 8 a) of the law stipulated that the “UDA has powers to carry out integrated planning and physical development within and among the respective areas”. Also the UDA has powers to develop environmental standards and prepare schemes for environmental improvements in such areas. The term integrated planning and the powers given to prepare environmental improvement schemes imply the wide range of powers and functions covering the conservation and management of historical buildings in urban areas.

The Urban Development Authority (Amendment) Act No. 4 of 1982 further strengthens the powers and established this fact. In the schedule following two aspects have been included among the matters for which provisions may be made in the Development Plan. They are:

- i) The control of architectural features, elevations and frontage of buildings and regulations for attaining urban design objectives.
- ii) The provision for preserving and promoting landscaping including preservation and planning of woodlands, trees and preservation of views and prospects, places of historical architectural interest and scenic beauty.

The conservation and management of historic buildings in Colombo similarly considered as an important aspect in the Development Plan prepared for the City of Colombo in the year 1999, and its amendment plan of 2008 which are still the base documents use to regulate and guide the development of the city. The second objective of this Development Plan is to conserve, revitalize, repair and cautious replacement of the architectural and historical masterpieces, urban scale of the national patrimony of individual buildings and the urban space in between which will lead to continuation of the urban fabric in harmony with the existing urban tissue.

Among the proposed projects and action programs included in this plan, the following have been identified as key projects to be implemented in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology with the support of other stakeholders both in the public and the private sector.

- i) Revitalization of historic areas such as Fort and Slave Island and
- ii) Identification of architectural, archaeological and environmentally valuable buildings and areas.

Recently the government has taken a keen interest to plan and develop Colombo in par with the standards and qualities that prevail in the cities of developed countries which will give Colombo an identity in the global context. The pioneering institution bearing this responsibility is the Urban Development Authority (UDA) under the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development. The UDA has formulated many urban development programs some of which are joint ventures with foreign developers for the development of Colombo.

The government commitment is to develop Colombo as one of the top six destinations in the world to live in. Thereby several projects have been initiated (some of which are already completed) to provide Colombo with better network of infrastructure, living environment and enhanced beauty of the city. Having considered the potentials it is observed that Colombo can be a role model for urban development in the country. For example Metro Colombo Urban Development Project (MCUDP) (2012-2017) is to support to reduce flooding in the catchment of the Colombo Water Basin, strengthen the capacity of local authorities in the Colombo Metropolitan Area (CMA) and to rehabilitate, improve and maintain local infrastructure and services through selected demonstration investments. There are several re-generation projects like Beira Lake, Race Course, Independence Avenue and Slave Island to change the old and outdated land uses for better opportunities. As per the information from the Urban Development Authority several mega- development opportunities are available in Colombo under the guidance and assistance of the authority. The city beautification program which is being implemented along with these development opportunities has made a very favorable investment climate for both local and foreign developers. A number of underserved development projects are in operation to improve the living conditions of slums and shanty dwellers of Colombo. On the other hand the blooming of

high-end apartments in all over the city reflects the suitability of Colombo for all classes of people to live.

Revitalization of heritage building is a key element in developing Colombo to stand with a positive image for branding the city in the arena of global competitiveness and a place for people to live, work and leisure. As such several historical buildings in Colombo have been renovated and utilized in a manner to obtain the best possible usage. The Urban Development Authority under the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development is the pioneering organization in designing and implementing the projects while the financial resources for re-habilitation are also provided by the authority. Following is a brief account of such revitalization projects in Colombo.

**Table 03 A Summary of Some Historic Revitalization Projects in Colombo.**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Previous use and brief account of historical value.</b>	<b>Current or anticipated use after revitalization.</b>
Colombo Dutch Hospital	This is the oldest building which belongs to the 17 <sup>th</sup> century found in the heart of the city in the area known as Colombo Fort. This was a hospital during the Dutch colonial administration and later this building was utilized for various administrative activities of the government	After the renovations the entire area along with the building has been transformed into a finest shopping, entertainment and recreational prescient targeting the high end customers such as foreign tourists who visit and stay in the luxury hotels of Colombo. The cost of the project is Rs. 100 million.
Fertilizer Building	This is another old building belongs to the colonial administration located adjacent to the Colombo Dutch Hospital. Currently this building is badly dilapidated and abandoned.	The UDA expects to renovate the building and utilize for the commercial cum recreational activities similar to the Colombo Dutch Hospital targeting high end customers. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 75 million.
Colombo Race Course	During the British colonial administration which is about 120 years ago this (open) area was utilize for horse riding ground and later utilized as a play ground in the city.	The ground has been fully upgraded and developed as an International Rugby Stadium.
Grand	These two buildings were	These two buildings have been fully

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Stand and Mini Stand (Colombo Race Course)	built in 1923 during the British administration as pavilions for watching horse riding. Later it remains as it is a part of the play ground	refurbished and developed as an exclusive shopping mall with restaurants and other required facilities for rugby matches. Total cost including the International Rugby Stadium is Rs. 01 billion.
Gafoor Building	This is another land mark in Colombo found in a unique location near to Colombo harbor. This building which is more than 100 years old was constructed by the British. The building represents British architectural features and designed to match with the shape of the land. This was utilized for restaurants, cafes and basement was utilized as a vehicle park.	As per the information of the UDA the initial refurbishments have already been commenced with a keen interest of conserving the old colonial architecture. Once the project is completed the building will be utilized to accommodate several super markets and a hotel. The ground floor will be reconstructed to accommodate six supermarkets and a hotel with sixty rooms will be built which will belong to the City Hotels Group and the area would be from the first floor to the third. This will also be another place for tourist attraction which all services are targeted for high end customers. The UDA expects to complete the project by the year 2015. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 1750 million.
Tripoli Market	This is another area with old buildings inherited from British colonial administration. Historically this was utilized for trade and commercial activities. The area surrounded to the buildings is very large which is about 20 acres in extent. The location is vey prime as it is in the area known as "Pettah" where the main retail and whole sale commercial hub of Colombo.	Renovations to the old buildings are almost completed and there are 13 units known as "Bays" each having a floor area of 5000 sq.ft. is now ready to release for the investors for development of IT related activities. This is known to be the first stage of the project which the cost is Rs. 600 million. The second stage of the project is to develop the entire area with high density to match with the nature of the development in the area.
Film Corporation Building	This building is located a little far away from the Central Business District of Colombo but accompanying a prestigious residential cum mixed uses. The building has no significant historical value	Once the renovations are completed the area will be utilized for office activities with improved vehicle access and pedestrian promenade. Estimated cost of the project is Rs. 132 million which is a joint venture with the National Film Corporation of Sri

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	as this was constructed in the 1970s. However it is now obsolete functionally and structurally as well. The building was utilized for government administrative activities.	Lanka.
Government Auditor Generals Department Office	This site with buildings constructed during the Dutch and British colonial administration is located close to the area where Film Corporation Building is located. These buildings were utilized for government administrative activities.	The revitalization is now completed and the new project is named as Arcade Independence Square Shopping Complex. This is also another project which provides shopping cum recreational facilities compatible with the development of the surrounding area like Colombo Race Course and its development. The project cost is Rs. 550 million.

**Figure: 01 Revitalization of Colombo Dutch Hospital**

**Before**



**After**



**Figure: 02 Revitalization of Government Auditor Generals Department Office**

**Before**



**After**



## **6. Conclusions**

The buildings, images, arts and crafts in the cityscape have its unique features which is very different from that of most other man-made objects for several reasons. The dynamism of use of the building is due to several external factors like change of population, their behavior and income, economic development and policies of a country. Except the national or religious monuments, conservation of other urban historical buildings should be justified on the basis of the possibility of incorporating them into the development process where it can earn its keep. If not it will become a burden to the owner and conservation represents a waste of resources. Hence mere preservation of a building that is to say preventing change of any kind is not a viable solution. Even buildings with historic or architectural value must be so maintained as to keep it fit for living within its potentiality.

The revitalization of historic buildings along with the urban development provides ample opportunities to contribute city's economy in a positive manner. Revitalization of historic buildings in Colombo, Sri Lanka is a notable effort taken by the government to integrate conservation with urban development

which following are the anticipated benefits. Enhancement of city image through revitalization of historic character and strengthening the identity of the city, Improved environment of the city as a place to live, work and leisure, Attractive environment for cultural tourism which is one of the significant foreign income sources of the country's economy, Increase opportunities for service sector targeting the tourism, Contributes to real estate development by releasing additional space for urban development, Appreciation of land values and assessment values thereby increase the income of the local authority (Colombo Municipal Council) and Ensures the highest and best use of land which aims to accomplish the development that is socially, economically and environmentally balanced.

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