



Editorial

Bhumi is a result of a continuous effort of the Town & Country Planning Research Unit of the University of Moratuwa. One of the main objectives of establishing the Town Planning Research Unit was to initiate a wider discourse for the advancement of the body of knowledge in planning and related disciplines, extending interactions into other parts of the region and the globe. Bhumi is the vehicle for that and it provides the opportunity for academics, practitioners and students in planning related disciplines to publish their work in the form of reports of empirical work, conceptual discussions, project presentations and critique of current research.

The name 'Bhumi' is a careful choice for a research journal of this nature. It has multiple meanings in a large number of languages spoken and written in a vast region extending from Persian gulf to Pacific Asia. In all these languages, *Bhumi* means the earth, its surface, geo substance, land resources, and the sense of being and belonging to it. In many cultures, the term is associated with the identities of the guardian deities or the protective forces of the earth. The word also implies the 'arena', not only for demonstrations and the performance of skills, but also for contesting actors and conflicting forces to meet. It also means the 'ground', from which the activists' movements surge and let their voices be heard to the outside world. In a more sublime mode, it is the 'path' or the 'foundation' to progress towards an achievement and the enlightenment. For all of these meanings, the name 'Bhumi' appropriates this journal as it is an 'arena' for discussions on matters related to 'land', 'geo resources' and its 'guardians', in order to initiate a 'ground' for a wider discourse that will lay a 'path' towards enlightenment.

The purpose of Bhumi is served by four thoughtful and provocative research presentations in this issue. The first paper, titled the changing pattern of housing in Chandigarh, discusses how the micro aspects such as the house designs, height of buildings and mode of providing basic infrastructure could be affected by the macro aspects such as the changes in the economy and the urbanization trends. In spite of the laws, rules and regulations, which are there to maintain the architectural character, environmental quality, etc, the changing needs and the priorities of the people give an unprecedented outlook to the city. The question posed by the author here is that whether conventional static architectural metaphors such as Le Corbusier's radiant city could serve planning urban areas in fast developing societies.

Urban conservation, for many decades by now, has been in the agenda of many national and local level planning and governing authorities all over the world, and it has also attracted research interests from many disciplines including architecture, urban planning and real estate. Yet, the widely adopted, dominant conceptualizations, methods

and therefore, the practices involved in urban conservation are not free from ambiguities throughout. Perceiving conservable areas as physical entities devoid of the ones sheltered in them in order to facilitate exhibitive settings for visitors, is detrimental to the communities living in those settings and give way to a series of other issues related to the conserved environment. Patrick Geddes's conservative surgery can be viewed as an alternative to this dominant practice of urban conservation, which is at the focus in Harsha Munasinghe's paper.

Nalini Hennayake's paper on postcolonial geographies brings in another debatable subject into our attention. The paper highlights the manifestations of nationalist projects on the geography of Sri Lanka. 'Nationalism', no doubt has been providing a hot topic for a continuous debate for last number of decades, and no wonder will remain so for a few more decades to come. Arguments for and against nationalism, opinions on the form in which it becomes apparent in our societies and discussions on politics underlying its use are common in contemporary literature, but its implications on geography and physical space are not. In that context, this paper certainly adds from a new dimension to the current debate.

Lessons learnt from a resource exchange between Sri Lanka and Australia in the post-tsunami context presented by Trevor Budge, Andrew Butt and Rangajeewa Ratnayake are what is presented in the last paper. Professional organizations such as planners' institutions volunteer to give hands to their counterparts in other countries at difficult situations to uplift moral and to provide needy resources. Most instances this is visualized as a one way process, in which only one party is seen benefited. The case presented in this paper is informative in that context to widen our understanding on cross-cultural learning that happens through such programmes. It discusses the modes of resource sharing, capacity building, student exchanges, etc, as well as the impasses that such operations have to come across due to cultural differences in planning practices, institutions and in wider societies.

All four papers, in some manner, propose some alternatives to the widely accepted perspectives and therefore, no doubt, are subject to debate. To that extent with its first issue *Bhumi* could not only provide some valuable substance to its readers, but also some matters for a long run debate and a discussion. In its forthcoming issues the journal intends to facilitate such discourse and invite all those who are interested in planning related research to partake.

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