University Space and Values: Three Essays

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Preface

These three essays look at educational space with a special focus on the Sri Lankan university. They deal with architectural issues only in so far as they are grounded in the belief that architecture – like every creative endeavor - is political. Space is indeed fundamental in any form of communal life and in any exercise of power.

When I began work on this issue I felt there was an urgent need to rethink the university space as a space of freedom and creativity, as it seemed to me that one could not dissociate the effective practice of freedom from the practice of social relations and spatial distributions. I hope that some of my comments and thoughts will help or at least encourage architects, educationists and planners to put their creative talents together to give birth to a new university.

These essays, based on readings, on my own impressions and on interviews conducted by two researchers, Gayani Silva and Mihirini Sirisena do not try to be scholarly and should be read rather as an intellectual 'intervention'. For academic work written by specialists the reader can consult the Select Bibliography compiled by Sanayi Marcelline that follows these essays

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Nira Wickramasinghe

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I

On Values and University Space

To think against values does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means rather to bring the clearing of the truth of Being before thinking, as against subjectivising beings into mere objects

<div align="right">Martin Heidegger</div>

Today's often deplored crisis in the university reflects and refracts in many ways, the crisis in values of a society at war with itself - the term 'values' taken not in a limited and conservative sense but as embodying what society holds as its most important qualities. The last three decades saw two leftist insurrections and an ethnic war that did not leave untouched what was commonly perceived as 'traditional' values and norms in society. If there was violence before, today it has magnified and reached levels of hitherto unheard of perversity. It does not come as a surprise that post-independence implants of modernity that were founded on by-gone humanistic values - the institutes of higher learning are a case in point - are today being challenged on many fronts. Policy decisions which seem to condone the eventual running down of the entire university system have met little

resistance from a disillusioned and passive academia. The very existence of such institutions is at stake, as society's perception of the need and role of a university is undergoing a shift unparalleled in the past fifty years.

The university of old was indeed created as a humanistic project, an oeuvre dedicated to knowledge, beauty and human dignity[1]. These values are decaying in the university of today, dying by resolve or by natural means. Another cause for concern is what will replace these values. Modern society, as Heidegger has shown, in its two incarnations, both the liberal democracies and the totalitarian states are equal products of a 'technological frenzy' which seemed to him the essence of 'the modern age'. It is this frenzy that has led to a devaluing of humanistic values and its eventual replacement with an Orwellian monster. Max Weber too noted that the whole cosmos of the modern economic order is an 'iron cage' producing its 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart,' under the 'delusion' that the modern outlook '…has achieved a level of development never before attained by mankind'.

This trend that pervades most state institutions including universities is alas not sufficiently highlighted by critically minded spirits. There is, in fact, quite an unfortunate though unintentional alliance that is taking shape in the critique of the crisis-ridden and fallen-from grace humanistic university between adepts of 'technology and development' and postmodern critiques of humanism. Indeed when postmodernism refuses any statements, positions, processes, cultural practices that pretend to offer or suggest an all-embracing or encompassing account of truth, value, reality they are in fact giving ammunition to those who wish to kill what is left of the humanistic university. When Postmodernism questions the possibility that one can provide an encompassing account of truth, value, reality it denies in effect the very purpose of the age-old university.

That it offers, however, an alternative way of looking at nature and humanity and opens up a space for a new type of humanism is not clearly stated. To save the idea of university education, looking back towards the past is pointless. The new university must grow from a critique of humanism that will spawn a new outlook that will in turn challenge what we already know or claim to know, without offering a 'vision', but a 'view'. This may be the saving formula for the university to be recreated from its ashes as a space where unequal relations of language and power are challenged and diversity recognized.

The crisis of the university is visible at every turn, especially in its physical appearance today. While the university of the 1950s and 60s in its exterior, its buildings and landscape reflected the mood of the time which was one of optimism and elitism, the university of today in its very appearance, talks of violence, populism, and despair. Can it be changed from the inside and the outside? This essay and the two that follow are in the spirit of an alternative university. They will focus particularly on humanities and social sciences for two reasons: because these are, first, the areas I am more familiar with and second and more importantly, humanities constitute the kernel of the humanist project of knowledge.

Space and values

Space is a constituent part of the polities, economies and cultures in any given society. As such it has, in the last decades, been studied by human geographers, sociologists, philosophers and architects to name only a few as an important medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced. The dwindling away of the public spaces of modern society such as the common square and the shift of the urban landscape to closed spaces such as malls,

freeways and gated communities has been read as the end of liberal politics. In the postmodern world public access and interaction is limited so as to avoid the chance encounter of diverse populations. In nineteenth century France the breaking down of old Paris and its replacement by large avenues created by Baron Haussman was designed to impede or deter any revolts of the volatile Parisian people. Space was quite early understood as a means of control.

The studies of space in Sri Lanka are few and of varying quality. From the over-theorised (Nihal Perera) to the brilliantly meticulous (James S. Duncan) space, essentially landscape and architecture has been read as a text that calls for interpretation[2]. There are no books known to me dealing specifically and extensively with the subject of university space in Sri Lanka, an indication of the lack of professional and public interest in the subject. Aspects of the topic have been treated in works relating to the university system in Sri Lanka or in works focusing on individual architects who happen to have planned campuses such as Geoffrey Bawa's Ruhuna campus[3]. Works on the university produced by social scientists have generally revolved around studies of syllabi, university population and policies.

Ideas and inspiration for these three short essays were mainly found in a few works that look at different aspects of campus planning in the Western world. Among these I must single out Richard P. Dober's *Campus Landscape. Functions, Forms, Features*. [4]This beautifully laid out book, which anyone planning an institution of higher education in this country should read provides information, ideas and instruction about planning and designing the green environment that situates, serves and symbolizes higher education. The text and graphics encompass the variety of colleges and universities in the USA and other locations with their distinctive purposes, sizes, locales, histories and senses of place. This book extols the view that in service and symbol today's campuses are the

contemporary equivalent of cathedral precincts in medieval life, palaces and civic centers in the Renaissance and railroad stations and central business districts in the age of commerce and urbanization. South Asian scholars have pointed to the significance of the dam – India's modern cathedrals in the words of the first Prime Minister - in the nationalist vision of South Asian state-builders from Nehru to J.R. Jayewardene.

This study's underlying argument is also strengthened by the ideas found in a fascinating study of New Universities in the western world that demonstrates how the architecture of a university is wedded to its institutionality[5]. In the 1960s when New universities were conceived in Britain and the US their creators aimed at a new kind of totality; they were utopian in a sense. This book studies the mutations and combinations of campus and college in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the utopianist mood that shaped the institutions and their architecture. It is particularly interesting to compare the lack of utopianism that prevailed in the creation of universities in Sri Lanka in the similar period. This book highlights the different concerns that guided the building of such varied campuses as the University of Sussex - 'Monumentalism on a parkland campus', the University of Warwick - 'last International Modern', the University of Kent - 'Fortress College' or the University of Essex - 'integrated urban'. The fact was that the choice of a particular type of campus was motivated by academic intention as well as ideas relating to education and community. At Essex for instance as the architect Peter Jokush argued ' there is not actually an area in the university which is devoted exclusively to social purposes, but there is also no place in the university which cannot be considered a social place'[6]. What this book highlights is a concern on the part of architects and educationists alike for the social purpose of the university, a concern that is sadly lacking in today's Sri Lankan university set-up, that would go beyond mission statements of universities.

Another valuable contribution to the study of campus space in America, although more descriptive in its nature than the previous study is, Thomas Gaines's *The Campus as a Work of Art*.

Thomas A Gaines defines a good campus in the following manner:

> A good campus consists of a group of harmonious buildings related by various means (such as arches and landscaping) that create well proportioned and diverse urban spaces containing appropriate furnishings –benches, pools, fountains, gazebos and walkaways [7].

Overall campus planning, he further argues, must be concerned with outdoor or urban space and how architectural elements work with each other. Campus planning determines whether a campus will be Oxbridge style such as the University of Peradeniya or in the more common style of non-planning 'take it as it comes' prevalent in the University of Colombo.

On the whole, these works share the idea that as the highest cultural center the university should march in the vanguard of aesthetic achievement. In many ways the appearance of the campus reflects the attention or neglect bestowed by society at a particular time to 'knowledge', 'learning', 'beauty' and 'human values'.

The conviction that the organisation of campus space influences the way in which students, staff and the administration approach these values triggered the writing of these essays. Every moment spent in the university is important for the development of the student's personality. The newly popular terms 'experience' and 'environment' signify this continuous process. Campus buildings are there to serve the client, the institution. But at the same time a building must aspire to something more. A higher value or art value may exist in an autonomous sphere, even in isolation of social, moral and political values.

Values, we will attempt to show, grow in certain environments but they can also change through a reorganisation of space. At the risk of being condemned by a tribunal of technology-oriented critiques I would still argue in favour of the tradition that demands that universities sustain the spirit of humanism and cultivate the values of tolerance, fellowship and understanding. But these humanistic 'values' upon which the universities of old were created, may be recast as something else that needs to be defined by all concerned but that I would tentatively term 'critical humanism'. The crisis of the university is, I would argue, mainly due to its inability to deal with the present. Today's university cannot survive if its foundation remains the values and ethics of the past. Social space – in particular landscapes, the built environment and the interior - needs to be read as constructions that varied in time and as symptoms of the changes in values in higher education.

Humanities in the University

It is often assumed that students in the field of humanities and social sciences become the bearers and keepers of the gracious values that come with learning and thinking. Subjects such as history, philosophy and literature were taught from the very inception of the university in Sri Lanka and continue to be taught. There has been however a constant clash between the proponents of a curriculum based on 'classics' and those who advocate more practically oriented social sciences. When one looks at the evolution of social science teaching it is clear that educational policy, responding to social and political pressures, has moved towards a devaluing of the idea of humanistic knowledge per se.

Between 1200 and 1600 'humans declared themselves masters of their own lives, producers of cities and history and inventors of heavens' [8]. The creation of the first European

universities upheld the notion that the human mind was a divine machine of knowledge. Universities in South Asia created in the post-independence period were guided by the same principles and values as the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford since they clearly derived from these Western counterparts that had originated in medieval times. Sri Lanka's situation, however, differs in many ways from the subcontinent. While modern universities were established in the mid and late nineteenth century in India, in Sri Lanka one had to wait for the 1920s for the process to begin. From their creation and inception, most universities in the South shared and still today share with these age-old institutions in the West and with the modern institutions of the 20th century certain characteristics in terms of structure, methods, aims and form. Between all universities world - wide, invisible links exist. No one, even the most rabid cultural nationalist could ever argue for a complete autonomy of a university system, as the very premise is that the knowledge that is bestowed at the university has universal applications.

Until the 1950s, all of South Asia shared a common institutional system of higher education built around the universities established in the British period. The differences that have now emerged are the result of developments over the last fifty years. The first twenty years can be characterized by continuity with the structures established at independence. In 1921 the government established the first college of higher education in Sri Lanka, the University College of Colombo, which was affiliated to the University of London. The college provided courses of study in the arts and humanities, science and medicine and prepared undergraduate students for examinations of London University. It was a half - way house to a national university that provided the not-so very affluent with higher education at a reasonable cost. Since the 1920s economics was taught as a subject for the B.A. (London) and from the 1930s students were able to prepare for the

intermediate examination of the B.Sc (Economics) course of the London University. The number of graduates who read two or more Arts subjects was between three and five per annum[9]. In 1942 the university college was reconstituted as the University of Ceylon. The University of Ceylon commenced with four faculties of Arts, Oriental Studies, Science and Medicine that were located only at Peradeniya between 1967 and 1972 [10]. The Faculty of Arts as it existed until 1972 contained the following departments: Archaeology, Economics, Education, English, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy and Psychology, Sinhala, Sociology, Western Classics[11].

The University of Ceylon had two campuses, one in Colombo and the other at Peradeniya until 1967, in which year, owing to heavy enrolments, the two campuses of the university were separately constituted as two universities. At the university of Ceylon, Colombo, the faculty of Arts continued to exist and in the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya courses were provided in various departments of the Faculty of Arts and Oriental Languages. Academic disciplines concerned with historical, linguistic and aesthetic studies occupied the centre stage. In the 1960s humanities professionals were generally drawn towards the study of Sri Lanka's past rather than devoted to the study of contemporary problems and current issues[12]. This was also the case in the early 1960s post-graduate courses in the social science tradition that were made available in the University of Ceylon.

In 1959 the two universities of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara were established under the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara University Act No 45 of 1958. The University of Colombo grew out of the remnants of the old University of Ceylon in Colombo, and the new Departments of Study (mainly Arts) set up in 1963 to take those students who could not be admitted to Peradeniya. The mid-1960s saw a shift of

significance in the location of Arts subjects in the hierarchy of taught subjects. As the number of students enrolled in Arts disciplines grew, the prestige of Arts subjects declined. The switch to *swabasha* (vernacular languages) as a language of instruction was also a factor in the new perception of humanities as 'useless' subjects fit only for the children of the not so affluent classes who constituted the majority of the students.

1960 was the year when the first students educated in Sinhala and Tamil were admitted to the university. From then on the university authorities had little control over the numbers admitted for higher studies in the humanities and the social sciences. Siri Hettige has highlighted the most serious impact on the social sciences of the introduction of *swabasha* - the medium of instruction in the universities as the creation of a generation of monolingual academics cut off from the world of learning and from the professional bodies in Sri Lanka

> While this initially led to the creation of a truly bilingual academia in the country, with the expansion of university education and the gradual shift of emphasis from the social sciences to more professionally-oriented fields, more and more university academics did not longer turn out to be bilingual... [13]

After the 1971 insurrection, new legislation was passed in 1972 (University of Ceylon Act No 1 of 1972) that converted all four universities and the Institute of Advanced Technology at Katubedda into campuses of a single University of Ceylon (later Sri Lanka). This phase lasted seven years. All campuses gained or lost Faculties and departments in an effort to rationalize courses of study. The thought behind these reforms was that Arts graduates who formed the bulk of the future unemployed had to be reoriented towards more practical courses such as public finance, business administration, library science etc..[14]. The decline of the

humanities became entrenched in the move to develop social sciences. At the University of Colombo along with a Faculty of Humanities a Faculty of Social Sciences was created where Economics, Geography, History, Home Sciences, Sociology and Social Welfare were taught. 'Wasteful studies' in the domain of arts and humanities were curtailed but for the social sciences this period resulted on the whole in an increase in the number of students enrolled with the opening of another campus in Jaffna. During this period of import control and planned economy foreign exchange restrictions made it difficult for individuals and institutions to import books and journals from the outside world which had far-reaching consequences. Sri Lankan scholars were for all intents and purposes cut off from the rest of the world and universal knowledge.

The change of government in July 1977 led to a dismantling of the single university apparatus with the plan of establishing independent universities. New universities were created that taught Arts and Humanities: apart from the Faculties of Arts of the University of Colombo, Peradeniya, Sri Jayewardenapura (formerly Vidyodaya), Jaffna these subjects were taught at the new Faculty of Arts on the Dumbara Campus of the University of Peradeniya and at the new Ruhuna University College. The University of Kelaniya (formerly Vidyalankara) was the only one that had a Faculty of Social Science. An Open University was established in 1980 where the social science disciplines were divided between the Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies and a University College was set up in Batticaloa. These developments exemplified the state perception of arts and humanities as wasteful disciplines as opposed to the practical and professionally oriented social sciences.

Today Colombo, Jaffna, Peradeniya and Sri Jayawardenapura retain the traditional name of Arts, Kelaniya, Ruhunu, the Open University and Rajarata have

faculties of 'Humanities and Social Sciences'. The University of Kelaniya in fact has two separate faculties for 'social sciences' and 'Humanities'. The Faculty of the University of Sabaragamuwa combines 'Social Sciences and languages' and the faculty of 'Arts and Culture' is the preferred name by both Eastern and the South Eastern Universities[15]. Staff recruitment is however at a standstill while attempts are made to make arts courses more 'purposeful' through new policies that include for instance an implicit devaluing of the teaching of English literature as opposed to the more 'useful' teaching of English language.

The institutional history of the teaching of humanities and social sciences shows a withering away of the 'noble' disciplines of the earlier period, often taught in combination with new subjects – at the University of Colombo there is a Department of History and International Relations and a Department of Political Science and Public Policy [16]- and a gradual acceptance of the importance of subjects that have presumably a more direct bearing on society such as conflict resolution, or gender studies. The discipline of history has, however, in the last 15 years witnessed a significant growth as far as student numbers are concerned although it remains less popular than international relations. The introduction of history as a subject in schools from year 6 onwards may further consolidate its position. Furthermore the increase in the intake of students no longer permits the famed tutorial system based on the Oxbridge system where lecturer and student interact on a one to one basis. Just as the subject matter changed, moving away from 'useless knowledge', methods of teaching shed features that encouraged critical thinking. Teaching was no longer a conversation between minds but rather to use Plato's image a transfer of knowledge from one vase to another, which led – as an intended or unintended consequence - to the gradual pacifying of student minds numbed by years of rote learning.

The University and the Market place...In Praise of 'Useless' Knowledge

In Sri Lanka as in many other locations, liberal and humanistic education, the core of higher learning, is increasingly threatened by the constricting pressures of the marketplace. In the race for riches - symbolized by endless rhetoric about the need for Sri Lanka to become globally competitive, technologically advanced, and proficient at churning out "knowledge workers" - our universities are being forced by government policy to narrow their educational vistas. The decision-making autonomy that universities must have to provide cultural, intellectual, community-service, and training functions is being eroded. There is an urgent need to make an argument devoid of nostalgia or any neo-conservative underpinnings for the necessity of a new type of education in a world increasingly dominated by market forces and performance-minded governments.

The essence of universitas

Unlike for instance in the western tradition where there is a body of literature that occupies itself with attempts to articulate the essence of the university, in Sri Lanka, this issue has hardly occupied the minds of thinkers and philosophers. The issues raised in the public sphere are more mundane. It is common for instance for newspaper critiques of the universities in Sri Lanka to highlight the poor quality of graduates, their lack of polish and manners, their faulty general knowledge, their lack of English skills, their attitude towards learning and their inability to fit into private sector enterprises ever-willing to employ them. The 35 000 unemployed graduates whose plight is constantly highlighted in the media are put forward as the example that the teaching of Arts is worthless since it only leads to a life of despair.

The comparison is with the golden age, the 1950s and 1960s when the Sri Lankan university was a seat of humanistic learning and teaching on a par with any leading university in the West. The solution advocated by bodies such as the Sri Lanka Chamber of Commerce - that reveal their lack of understanding of the social cleavages in society and their lack of vision - is simple: to immediately switch the language of instruction to English and to introduce courses that prepare students for employment in the city or in other walks of life with an emphasis on information technology and 'useful' knowledge.

While it is true that in many ways students are wanting in general knowledge, civility and urban manners any attempts to recast the role of the university so as to create a willing and disciplined work force for the needs of a globalising economy should be opposed. The issue of reintroducing English as a medium of instruction must take into account two fundamental functions of the university: its role as an agent of social mobility and the importance of multiplying options for students rather than restricting their choice with regard to selecting a preferred language of instruction or selecting courses. The Arts Faculty of the University of Colombo is prudently moving in this direction and plans to progressively switch into English medium from 2006 onwards. This essay will not address the issue of English as it requires in-depth analysis rather than the often flippant approach that one encounters in the press and at forums sponsored by the business community[17].

Redesigning the university to fit the imperatives of a globalised economy would kill the little spirit that continues to exist in spite of the brain-drain of qualified staff, the despair of poverty stricken students, the lack of library and teaching facilities and the dearth of incentives for research and creativity. It is not as though there were no other institutions rather than the university that can play this role

by providing graduates or school leavers with very focused and intensive courses on, for instance, 'the tourist industry' or 'project writing' etc.. Furthermore the worldwide trend is not towards a sacrificing of humanistic teaching. In most countries that encourage transnational institutions to advocate a streamlining and a rationalizing of universities in the South, their own age-old institutions are preserved as relics and repositories of an elitist type of teaching and learning experience. The University of Cambridge Mission and Core Values remains in this spirit:

> The mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence[18].

The University's core values are stated as follows: freedom of thought and expression and freedom from discrimination.

Nowhere is there mentioned any commitment to servicing the needs of the economy. In another example from Britain, every year hundreds of young people compete to gain admission to an undergraduate course in medieval history at the University of Bristol. Among the privileged twenty who were selected was the British Prime-Minister's son. Thus these courses remain sought after, not for their direct preparation to enter the job market but for the training they provide for the mind. The development of cognitive skills such as deductive and inductive logic, problem solving, and analogical and synthetic thinking are essential both to disciplinary learning and to moral discernment.

Where are the humanists?

The proponents of a university that imparts 'useful knowledge' will point to the students of today as examples that humanism is dead. If students have learnt about certain values through the teachings of their lecturers these do not

appear to have influenced their behavior. The teaching body is often castigated has having failed in this task of creating and nurturing a 'decent society'[19] .

Building on the formation imparted in the leading public schools, the development of character was considered one of the main goals of the Sri Lankan university of the early days. Character formation was, however, never central as it was in the United States for instance. In the nineteenth century the primary goal of a liberal arts education in the United States was the development of character. Most colleges were controlled by churches and the presidents were upright and often erudite clergymen. Most of the faculty were not scholars and education was at a fairly low level. The core course on "moral philosophy" or "ethics," usually taught by the president, concerned how a "Christian gentleman" should conduct himself in a sinful world. In the twentieth century, the demands of an increasingly industrial and technological society changed the nature of American higher education dramatically. The need for technical and professional training took precedence over the cultivation of virtue. The German model was adopted and colleges and universities became places to receive a specialized education leading to a career in such fields as engineering, law, medicine or science. Faculties became populated by scholars rather than young college graduates aspiring to be clergymen. The teaching of the important human virtue of character, once thought to be the hallmark of the educated gentleman, was largely left to others: parents or religious institutions.

Since antiquity western culture has cherished the notion that the humanities constitute an effective medium for the formation of character and for education towards right conduct. This was based on the principle that examples are as apt to move and to teach as are the arguments and proofs of reason because the former are particular and contextualized while arguments are general.

In Sri Lanka the teaching of character in tandem with a concern for high level disciplinary knowledge declined in the 1960s as the university opened its doors to the multitude and democratized itself. Character was seen as a thing of the past, a vestige of the colonial years which needed to be replaced by autochtonous values closer to the culture of the majority. The teaching of humanities and social sciences did not cease and remained seeped in Western intellectual history. Students continued to learn about Plato and the Industrial Revolution but in a disenchanted manner.

In early November 2002 a student at the University of Sri Jayawardenapura was brutally killed by a group of fellow students who belonged to a rival student organization. The intention was to hurt maybe even to kill. In an act of supreme irony, a computer was used as a weapon to crush the student's head. Why was everything decided through force and violence, through prepolitical ways rather than through 'words and deeds' as Hannah Arendt would say, lamented the editorial of a Colombo-based semi-academic journal Student politics reflected the habitual form of interaction between individuals. Confrontation rather than humanistic conversation was the norm. The humanistic values I spoke of, it was pointed out in a number of forums, had not been instilled through teaching or any other means to the student population.

Those students who have fought and killed on numerous occasions are the same who learn the literature and poetry of their forefathers in their mother tongue, disciplines of the Arts that according to Plutarch provide the preparatory teaching and like a friend or family member, accompany or escort the student, eventually, to philosophy and lead him/her to ethical judgment. More recently Paul Ricoeur had echoed this language and pointed out that narrativity serves as a propaedeutic to ethics. So what has gone wrong? Is it the teaching, the teachers, or the lack of in

depth knowledge that leads to a surface teaching and surface learning where values and ethics were absent?

Pop culture vs humanism

The argument is made that today's youth does not yearn for either humanism or critical humanism. Maybe. Last year the Cinema and Photography Society of the University of Colombo screened Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, the most brilliant indictment of modernity and modern society. Only four tickets were sold. Clearly Chaplin is not considered either a pleasant or interesting way of spending two hours. Students had flocked to see 'Pretty Woman' and 'Titanic'. The idea that there is a cultural capital that a student could acquire through other means than attending classes or reading lecture notes and that this would help him or her become a complete individual is absent from the mind of the average student. The student's avowed purpose does not seem to be a humanistic one. The model is Leonardo Di Caprio not da Vinci. The purpose is to obtain a Class in their First Degree.

Reading too is not in vogue. Today students write essays with the help not of books and journals but of websites the quality of which they are often unconcerned with. What Barthes calls the pleasure of the text, of reading or watching an oeuvre as opposed to consuming a product is appreciated neither by the youth nor by opinion makers and future employers, who believe that the youth who seeks employment does not need these worthless attributes. One consolation is that this is not a state of affairs unique to Sri Lanka. Eric Hobsbawm has acknowledged that in a classroom, the majority is dead wood. The university teacher, here as in most countries, fails to reach out to the majority of its students, but as long as a few remain who understand and value 'useless knowledge' humanistic values will not cease to be.

Should the teacher act as moral philosopher?

Education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary is not a neutral activity. Since it is designed to affect the way students look at the world, education will obviously have some effect on their character. Even those students who end up poorly educated in the subject matter they are supposed to master, learn many things from their lecturers that transcend the lessons found on a syllabus. Every decision a lecturer makes and every action he/she takes as an educator contains an ethical lesson of a sort. He/she is nolo/volo a moral philosopher. Decisions about course content, pedagogy, scheduling or canceling, involve a choice of competing priorities and therefore communicate a sense of values. How lecturers relate to the students in class, how they relate to the subject matter, how they respond to issues from other disciplines, and how they respond to questions in class, all provide lessons that go beyond the subject matter.

Clearly teachers and institutions of higher education promote a variety of values, whether they do so unconsciously or with self-awareness. There is some disagreement as to whether lecturers and educational systems should promulgate values, both intellectual and ethical. There is a tendency in some circles to maintain that public education deals, or should deal, only with "facts," and this stance has come to play a part in the current "culture wars" in Europe and American academia. In Sri Lanka it has also recently come to the fore in the clash between traditional historians and new or postmodern historians, the first accusing the latter of being 'ideological'.

If one accepts that higher education has, as one of its duties, that of transmitting values to students, what, then, are the most centrally important skills and abilities, attitudes, and values that should be developed and nourished? What are the things that seem most important apart from teaching subjects or subject matter?

Obviously these values would differ from one society to another just as the understanding of what constitutes 'humanism' varies. Heidegger made this point:
'But if one understands humanism in general as a concern that man become free for his humanity and find his worth in it, then humanism differs according to one's conception of the 'freedom' and 'nature' of man. So too are there various paths toward the realization of such conceptions'[20]

He further explains that the humanitas of homo humanus is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole. One scholar in a particular society and location might stress the importance of developing values such as integrity, tolerance, respect for difference while another might suggest equality and community as central values.

There is of course the wider question of the existence of values. One cannot today ignore the postmodern insight that a metaphysical ethical philosophy, with its notions of the universal individual and the common social good, is impossible and oppressive. Heidegger's thought can help us deal with this issue.

'To think against 'values' is not to maintain that everything interpreted as 'a value' –culture, art, science, human dignity, world and God – is valueless. Rather it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as 'a value' what is so valued is robbed of its worth.'[21]

The act of valuing is tantamount to subjectivizing. The proclamation of 'God' as the highest value is in fact a degradation of God's essence. Thus the opposition to humanism is not a defense of the inhuman but rather opens other vistas[22] . Moral action then, requires both doubt and uncertainty as Zygmunt Bauman suggests. The *moral self is a self always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough.*

Some would argue that lecturers should try to share their uncertainty and anxiety with their students and teach them not what they know, but that they can never know anything.

Against this approach is the view that the highest good is neither private, marketable, relative, nor trapped within the warren of ideology, although it can be experienced, accommodated, instrumentalized, and ultimately devalued by all of these means. Other scholars argue that if they convince themselves, as teachers, that students can never know anything which is outside of ideology or which is not in relation to someone else's approbation or censure, or not subject to a variety of contexts or to a mise-en-abime of indeterminacies, then one lets the darkness close in on them. They would argue instead that teaching is more than a job, it is a calling. There is a voice that calls upon certain people to teach with an attention to caring for others. In the land where teaching appointments are often made as rewards for political work and loyalty, the idea of calling and ethical obligation may seem almost ludicrous. In western philosophy this voice that calls upon certain individuals to labor for justice has been called by various names, including God, Morality, Reason, Philosophy, and Ethics. The teacher if he or she hears this voice would be able to incline her students' ears to hear this voice, and to be compelled by it. While there are many who will argue, often cogently, that politics and morality have no place in the classroom, and that teaching practices must be oriented, as much as possible, towards disinterestedness, allowing students to make their own uncoerced choices regarding how they should read texts or conduct their lives, it can be argued that a pedagogy divested of moral purposefulness, on the teacher's part, is empty and meaningless. Feeling strongly that students must be impelled to conceive of their learning practices as connected to some kind of active and critical participation in the larger, civic society is not the same thing as telling students what to think.

Asking students to consider and to interrogate their position in society and within the university as citizens and learners, is to ask them to revision themselves, not as passive receivers of their teacher's opinions or of their culture, but as makers of their education and culture. Simone Weil brings the two opposing points of view together when she points out that what is most important is to instill in students the skill and ability to apply their full attention to the object of inquiry. Thus whatever the values may be, the teacher who enters into the vocation of teaching has one pedagogy: to train the attention.

Debates

Among educationists too, ideas differ about the purpose of a university education. While traditionalists would conceive it as a total experience that provides the student with a gift for life that goes beyond his or her disciplinary specialization, the present trend – at least in the decision making arenas of this country – is to consider the purely functional purpose of the university i.e the preparation of an individual for a useful role in the workforce of the state. The debate between 'humanists' and instrumentalists cannot be easily resolved. Mission statements of the universities tend to embrace both points of view: universities are said to be founded on the understanding that 'meaning in academic studies cannot be separated from the meaning of life as a whole and that academic vitality stems from the total human experience. Together with this traditional aspiration is another underlying idea that the purpose of the university is to understand the needs of the market or the community and to help meet them. This aspect is most apparent in the newer universities of the country. The recently created South Eastern university has the following vision:

'To emerge as a center of excellence for dissemination of knowledge through teaching, learning and research of highest quality, relevant and most appropriate to the needs of the individual, the region, the nation and the global community"[23].

There are signs, however, that more students in Sri Lankan institutions are advocating the second approach as the only way for them to acquire the skills that will stem the growth of graduate unemployment.

This issue has been debated in international circles too. A recent report by the Task Force on Higher Education in Developing Countries (TFR) jointly convened by the World Bank and UNESCO broke new ground in its pitch to governments and donors to reconsider the advantages of investments in higher education, not in relation to market alone but to the public interest. 'The best higher education institution is a model and a source of pressure for creating a modern civil society' [24]. There is a relationship between values imbibed in the experience of higher education and its effects on society. Higher education is indeed the domain where liberal democratic values flourish: the stress on intellect and merit over wealth and connections, critical openness to new ideas and possibilities, peer review and reasoned debates to evaluate the relative strengths of competing ideas. Universities are institutions deliberately designed for thinking.

This report contrasts with the rationales for a renewed emphasis on higher education in developing countries offered by the World Bank's World Development Report (1998/1999), Knowledge for Development[25]. Although both reports recommend strengthening higher education they differ considerably in the meaning they give to university education. The first report that advocates that to be a player in global markets, scientific and technological training is what counts is narrow in its scope. Countries that lag behind must

acquire the know-how but will remain consumers of knowledge rather than producers. The second report is quite different and has a more sophisticated understanding of the place of knowledge in modern society. The best universities provide sites for debates about social values, demonstrate pluralism and tolerance and act as repositories for shared social memories. In order for these values to become widespread the report makes a strong pitch for broadening access to higher education, especially encouraging women and the historically deprived.

Thus the importance of a liberal and general education has been given a new lease of life in international higher education debates. But few countries in the South are able to follow these principles. The reasons are twofold: first, in Sri Lanka liberal arts graduates have for decades joined the pool of unemployed, unskilled young people. There is therefore no case for producing more of them; second, neo-liberal policies advocating fiscal restructuring are affecting the university system and its priorities: information technology and 'English as a work tool' are stressed as the prime targets of higher education in the future.

But, one could argue, liberal arts graduates are hardly humanists in their behavior or their approach to knowledge. What is required of higher education is then to produce a new breed of young persons. Not more but better should be the motto in higher education. Can teaching alone help in the forging of community and humanistic values. Some studies on British institutions have shown that values are transmitted in other ways, for instance space plays a part: in residential campuses rather than city universities where students live at home or in digs and visit the university for classes such values have been shown to thrive[26]. In Sri Lanka however, even a cursory comparision of recent graduates from Peradeniya and Colombo does not seem to corroborate this view point in a very conclusive manner. Rather than

residential or not, it is perhaps the nature of the institutional space that convey certain values, encourages or precludes the development of others. It would be difficult to change all the academics in our universities so that their teaching and personalities begin to touch students' minds and transform them. Space however can be changed, so if it plays a role in the transmission of values and the forging of personalities more in consonance with the 'Renaissance Man' of the West or the 'thinking elite' of Japanese educational planners or any other higher ideal it deserves at least to be studied.

Conclusion

The social political and moral values of an important public undertaking such as the university resides in its claim to social power. It has the power to educate, that is to transform minds. At present its alchemy is faulty. It produces educated but uncultured citizens, historians who lack visual appreciation, mathematicians who will rarely step into a museum. It no longer strives to create humanists but is equally equivocal at creating anti-humanists.

If there is a solution to the dilemmas of the academy, it may be in approaching the subject as a critical humanist, who while refusing transcendence does not negate the revolutionary potential of Renaissance humanism that believed in universal freedom and equality of humanity. It may also rely on understanding the scholarship that nourishes universities not as accomplishment, not as the *state* of being accomplished or learned, but as the *act* of learning. The ideal of the university as a community of scholars was of a *universitas* of learners. The professor or the student who is learning, whether that learning occurs in the laboratory or the studio or the library, would be a worthy member of the guild. The reform of tertiary education can therefore start

with a reform of the educational space where community becomes a central value.

Endnotes

1   See for instance Hilary Cruz, 'Aims and Ideals of University Educa-tion', *Marga*, 2 (3), pp. 86-91.

2   See the various approaches of Nihal Perera, *Decolonising Ceylon. Colonialism, Nationalism and the Politics of Space in Sri Lanka*, New Delhi 1999; James S. Duncan, *The City as Text: the Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*, Cambridge 1990; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Paris, 1974, transl in 1991.

3   There are a number of case studies undertaken by architectural students in the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects, Colombo School of Architecture. For example No 33 Ruhuna University Faculty of Agriculture (1984), No 408 Construction of Administration Building, University of Colombo (1998) and Technical Reports, for instance Technical Report No 15 Space Definers in Architecture by Aruni Malalesekera, 1995.

4   Richard P. Dober, *Campus Landscape. Functions, Forms, Features*, John Wiley & Sons, INC, New York 2000.

5   Stefan Muthesius, *The Postwar University. Utopianist Campus and College*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2000.

6   Ibid, Muthesisius, p. 138.

7   Thomas Gaines, *The Campus as a Work of Art*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut London, 1991, p.2.

8   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 70.

9   K.M de Silva, 'The Early Years and the University College', in ed. K.M de Silva and G.H. Peiris, *The University System of Sri Lanka: Vision and Reality*, Kandy: ICES, 1995, pp. 3-11; D.L. Jaysuriya, 'Development in University Education: The Growth of the University of Ceylon, 1942-1965', *University of Ceylon Review*, XXIII (172) 1965, pp. 83-153.

10   A medical college had been established in Colombo as early as in 1870.

11   W.M.K. Wijetunga, 'Development of *University Education in Sri Lanka*', in University Education and Graduate Employment in Sri Lanka, Unesco Paris, Marga Institute Colombo: Tisara Dehiwela 1983, p. 115.

12   G.H Peiris, 'Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies at Peradeniya', in eds. K.M. de Silva and G.H. Peiris, *The University System of Sri Lanka*, pp. 111-112.

13   S.T. Hettige, 'Is there a crisis in the social sciences?' *Proceeedings of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science* 53 (2) 1997, p. 87.

14   Report of the Committee appointed by the Hon. Minister of Education to Report on the Re-organisation of Higher Education, Colombo 1971.

15   *Faculty Bulletin*, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Vols 3.4, May-Aug 2001.

16   In 2003, from the Department of History and Political Science, renamed Department of History and International Relations emerged a new Department of Political Science and Public Policy.

17   On the issue of the language of instruction in the university see for instance De Lanerolle, Kenneth M, 'National Language in Higher Education', *Ceylon Teacher*, 18, (96), Oct. pp. 603-605.

18   www.cam.ac.uk (University of Cambridge website)

19   Avishail Margalit, *The Decent Society*, Harvard University Press, 1995.

20   Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper Collins San Francisco, 1993, p. 225.

21   Ibid, p. 251.

22   Ibid, p. 250.

23   *South Eastern University Handbook*, 2003, p.I.

24   See Itty Abraham, 'International Trends', *Seminar* 494, June 2001.

25   World Bank Development Report 1998/1999 cited in *Seminar* 494.

26   Muthesius, p. 22.

II

Sri Lankan Universities
Sites, expansion

Climbing through the incipient jungle was no easy matter, and I knew not whether there were snakes around. Sitting on a tree stump on the bank of the Mahaweli Ganga, I spread Sir Patrick Abercrombies's site plan before me. I began at last to see the magnificence of the scheme ...No university in the world would have such a setting.

Sir Ivor Jennings
(Cited in Amal Jayawardane, 'Jennings on University Education' in ed. R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *More Open than Usual*, 1992, p. 45)

Gaston Bachelard regretted that where houses were no longer set in natural surroundings the relationship between house and space became an artificial one and intimacy fled. Would this remark borne of a nostalgia for an idyllic rural setting be true, mutatis mutandis, for other buildings too? 1 Should this concern for preserving intimacy or community be the determining factor in the choice of the place to build a university? City or countryside? Seaside or mountain? Cut - away from the rest of the population or entrenched in populated surroundings?

Answering this question is only possible for one who has a clear and definite idea of what a university landscape should be, based on an equally clear and definite idea of what function a university should serve. There has been little thought given to either of these issues except perhaps during the battle of the sites of the University of Ceylon and during the designing of the University of Ruhuna. The history of the creation and expansion of universities in Sri Lanka is linked to factors other than creation of intimacy, beauty or suitability of a landscape or site. In most cases the pressing need to accommodate a growing student population has been the decisive reason for governments to create a new university or expand an existing one. Landscape, site, aesthetics are often considered elitist concerns of a by - gone past. Public opinion although generally favourable to free higher education is not agreeable to wasting too many public funds on infrastructure for young people prone to violent and destructive protest. Furthermore there is little understanding among the majority of people – who have nothing to compare with – what a university could be in an ideal world. Throughout the decades that followed the birth of modern education in Sri Lanka, for the youth that yearned for instruction those who had promised the sky had however delivered the pit: sheds as classrooms, race - course steps as amphitheaters, make - shift buildings, crowded residential hostels. Why was there no concern that quality would suffer? Would not the more encompassing meaning of a university education as a total experience rather than a dignified tuition class be submerged and disappear? Because students knew nothing better they were given the least possible. Because education was free, governments, public opinion and very soon most students convinced themselves and the cohorts of future students that the aims of higher education were only limited to producing degree holding individuals.

Space and the pressure of numbers

The evolution of the university system in Sri Lanka and the expansion of universities can be summarized as a constant negotiation between space and numbers. In a sense the space/number relation has been the only way in which university space entered the public discourse but clearly the issue of numbers always overrode the issue of space.

In 1942/43 the enrolment was only 904 students. Fifteen years later in 1958/1959 it had trebled reaching 2825. The adoption of universal free education in 1945 and the gradual switch over to Sinhala and Tamil as media of instruction led to a democratization of higher education which had been until then the monopoly of a small elite group. The purpose was to help the education and mobility of mostly poor rural children. As a result of pressure for university places two Buddhist centers of learning, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara pirivenas were converted into universities in January 1959 in what was then an ad hoc measure to relieve the pressure. In the year that followed there was further pressure for university places by students educated in the national languages. As a response to this need the second Faculty of Science was established at Peradeniya and the intake of Arts students was doubled. The relationship student/educational space also underwent a significant change: a new category of student was created, the 'non - residential external student' who had the right to attend classes and a limited access to library facilities. Being a student did not entail residency anymore. In a sense university life as a total experience was negated as more emphasis was laid on the end product, namely the degree certificate. But these measures were not sufficient. A number of qualified young men and women in the Sinhala medium aspiring to study Arts and Humanities were accommodated in 1963 in the Second Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo.[2]

The year 1965 saw the largest intake of Arts students: 3990 entrants. The University of Ceylon arranged for lectures to be held in the buildings of the race course adjoining the university premises. Lecturers addressed students using loud speakers. By these ad hoc measures the Government was able, until 1966/1967, to provide access to university education to every deserving youth even though instruction was sometimes dispensed on a grand Stand of the race course. But this expansion in numbers was done at the expense of the quality of education. The per capita real expenditure on a student had declined considerably since the 1950s.[3]

Through the New Universities Act No 20 of 1966 the Universities were brought under the control of the Ministry of Education and a National Council of Higher Education was created to advise the Minister on matters pertaining, for instance, to the coordination of higher education with the perceived needs of the state for social, cultural and economic development. 1966 was a turning point in another way too: for the first time in 1966/1967 the intake into universities was smaller than the number of young people who qualified for university entrance. A multitude of reasons had led the government to this unpopular decision – apart from the financial difficulty, for a developing country, that arose from providing higher education to a large number of students. Students had grown indisciplined and staff were finding it increasingly difficult to cope. Already in the mid-1960s there were 10,000 Arts graduates who had been unable to secure employment. Interestingly the mismatch between facilities in terms of buildings, canteens, library space, recreational space at the universities and the increasing numbers of students was never highlighted as a major reason to restrict numbers. These were obviously not the priority when the issue of quality education was raised. The feeling was – and still is in many quarters – that for an Arts graduate a table and a chair were quite sufficient an investment.

In 1966/1967 admission to the Arts faculty had dropped from 5000 in the preceding year to 3000. Admission to the university was controlled because of the lack of resources and the priority given to primary and secondary education, and because of the perceived excessive supply of arts graduates who were finding it difficult to obtain employment. The drop in admissions did not lead to visible changes – for better of for worse – either in the standard of teaching or of research. While the teacher-student ratio decreased in the Arts faculties, there was more space available for lectures, tutorials and recreation. But this turning point in educational policy was not followed by a similar rethinking of the functions and possible reform of university space as a whole.

Between 1970 and 1977 the intake into Arts courses was frozen at 2000 while a modest increase in science-based courses was permitted. The resources diverted to university education were also increased presumably to 'improve its quality'.[4] Recent surveys have shown that the amount spent on higher education does not invariably lead to an improvement in quality. My own thoughts on this issue may be a little iconoclastic. I feel the quality of the education is primarily related to the quality of the lecturer and his/her ability and willingness to share his/her knowledge with the students. Among the enabling factors are the university surroundings which at their best can create a sense of community that nurtures strong intellectual bonds.

The number of places available in the universities of Sri Lanka today remains limited, which makes admission extremely competitive. Every year large numbers who have satisfied the minimum entry requirements fail to gain admission. Although the total number admitted has increased by about 2600 or nearly 30% during the period 1995-2000 the number admitted was only 16.2 percent of those having the minimum entry qualification.[5] There was, for a long time a demand on the part of the youth for democratization of

university education so as to make it available to all those who qualified, as in most European countries. A recent development highlighted in the newspapers shows that, today, out of the nearly 90,000 who qualify for university education only 30% seem to want to enter university. Thus the pool of candidates is getting more restricted as other options are cropping up for young people seeking higher education, and as the realization is spreading that a university education is no guarantee for a public service job. One can foresee a situation where only the sons and daughters of the most deprived of this nation will seek admission to the university. The role of the university as an agency of social transformation and leveler will be ever more challenging in these circumstances, but one also must be apprehensive of the further process of leveling downwards and its consequence for quality of research and teaching for future generations.

For some time government policy and youth demands focused purely on increasing numbers: number of students, number of universities, number of graduates. The public was not concerned with either improving the quality of teaching and learning or with any imaginative restructuring of the higher education sphere. Today universities are deemed unproductive institutions by those who formulate educational policy. Their vision is to limit the production and teaching of a particular type of knowledge – especially based on humanities disciplines – and encourage the increase in numbers of students of IT, management, etc. Many scholars feel this would not only spell the end of the academy as it had been envisaged at the outset of the university system in Sri Lanka, but act as an obstacle to any measures to improve the quality of the students. One could argue for instance in favour of bestowing extremely high quality education to a very limited number of students in the disciplines that have been deemed 'useless'. The investment instead of being

reduced could be directed to a smaller group and shared among them in order to create, by these means, an elite of the mind. In the same way the shape of the new campus of the twenty first century must become a subject of discussion in the public sphere not only among educationists but among architects, planners, government officials and international donors.

Designing Institutions: genres/types

Although the terms campus and university are used interchangeably, the word campus signifies a particular type of entity. First met with at Princeton University in the late eighteenth century, the Latin word campus, meaning field, became common as an expression for an ensemble of buildings usually for higher education. Thus campus indicates primarily a location but it also underlines the self-containedness of the institution and thus its separateness.

Campus landscape is not an abstraction but a reflection of dimensioned reality, of which site size, configuration, and situation and the character of the environs are formative determinants. In the US about 1,000 acres were acquired for a new public campus in California. Brown University in Providence exists on 148 acres. It has been estimated that 125 acres would be sufficient for a campus core area for up to 5000 students – with reasonable open space and no recourse to high rise structures.

From at least the nineteenth century onwards, campus and college developed as largely Anglo-American phenomena. The USA produced a vast variety of institutional solutions and in particular created the model of the out-of-town campus, while in England the venerable model of Oxbridge – which both countries treated as 'common heritage' – dominated thinking and let the institutional practices of the newer universities in the provinces appear

less important. In the 1960s England created new kinds of institutions in which elements of the American campus and elements of the English were fused. After the 1960s a new trend of reintegration of the campus into the town was experimented with.

In the case of Sri Lanka trends in university campus design and concept are more difficult to highlight. At a given period a number of different types of institutions emerged in a parallel fashion. Thus while Peradeniya was built on the Cambridge model in relative isolation from the outer world – its Colombo wing was growing in a haphazard way as a city university. In the same way the Open University, the University of Moratuwa, and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura were conceived as universities integrated with the town while the University of Sabaragamuwa was located far from any center of urbanity. Clearly there has been no evolution or thinking about the kind of institutions best adapted to the specific needs except in the case of the University of Ceylon where there was a true intellectual debate nationwide which grappled with some crucial issues. However despite the exceptions of the Universities of Ruhuna and Sabaragamuwa there seems to have been a move away from residential universities and towards city universities, related to new needs and much larger student numbers. The University of Ceylon grew from the University College established in 1921 which according to K.M.de Silva, was always regarded as a half - way house to a national university and was considered to be the nucleus for such a university. The process of conversion however took twenty one years due to a number of reasons, foremost among which was the long drawn out dispute over the site of the new university. [6]

Today the issue of city vs campus style university needs to be addressed anew. Indeed the example of other city universities shows quite clearly that the city and the new

disciplines associated with globalized communications and systems of production feed upon each other. On the other hand, is the hustle and bustle of city life the best setting for imaginative minds to thrive? The university as a retreat for thinking and the creation of thinkers may call for a new location and a reorganized space.

One can then visualize a return to a campus style university in disciplinary fields where proximity to the city is not absolutely necessary. For instance it would be feasible to have faculties of history and archaeology near archaeological sites. In order to encourage the faculty to reside on the campus and interact as much as possible with students, university schools, daycare, transport and improved road facilities to the city for spouses working in the city should be planned. The purpose would be to increase the quality of life of students and staff and in that way improve their commitment to the pursuit of excellence. Needless to say such measures would entail significant and path-breaking policy decisions. Alas, the trend among policy makers and bureaucrats is to believe that university academics do not do their share of work and do not deserve even the (miserly) salaries they obtain. Here again there is an attempt to quantify the number of hours that academics spend 'working', as though time spent reading, thinking, discussing, debating, listening, writing, creating were not activities that constituted the core of academic life. Any rethinking of the university system must take into account the organization of space so as to encourage rather than dissuade academic life.

The 'Battle of the Sites'

The discussions that took place over the site of the new university were the only occasions when issues of site, location and landscape were taken up as significant variables in the establishment of a university. A number of sites were

suggested during the two decades in which this dispute took place. There were three principal sites that were studied in detail, namely Colombo, Dumbara, and Peradeniya.

The site in Thurstan road, Colombo was favoured because it was also then the site of University College which consisted of the buildings of Royal College and Regina *Walauwe* (now College House). This whole area including the playing fields consisted of 18.5 acres.[7] In addition, a site occupied by the Infectious Diseases Hospital, south of Bullers Road, consisting of 95 acres was to be taken for the university. The site in Colombo was favoured for reasons of economy, since the existing buildings of the University College could be utilized. Planning a university outside of Colombo on a new site was seen as taking up more time and money. Jennings writes:

> Twenty years later there can be no doubt that the Bullers Road site was inadequate and that in time the University would have found itself hemmed in an inadequate site by urban and suburban development. Not only in England but also elsewhere urban sites have been found unsatisfactory even for non-residential universities.[8]

Arguing against the site in Colombo were those who believed that the University should provide a learning environment and that therefore it should be situated outside of Colombo in an area with adequate space and residential facilities. One of the foremost proponents of this idea was D.R. Wijewardena the owner of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon. Another was D.B. Jayatilaka.[9] Writing on the importance of a residential university Jennings himself states that a university education should not consist of merely acquiring 'useful knowledge' or degrees but physical, mental and moral development of a type not easily available in a non-residential university. [10]

In the mid-1920s opposition against the idea of the Colombo site was increasing. Newspapers drew the public

into the controversy. Apart from the inadequacy of the land area in Colombo for a residential university, its opponents put forward the need for a 'more congenial climate'. Dr S.C. Paul argued that there was no intellectual life in Colombo:'we want a university with the atmosphere of a great center of learning, not that of mere book-learning'.[11]

After the Akbar Committee Report of 1926 had established that the university should be located outside Colombo, another Commission appointed in 1928 with Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddel as Chairman, decided in favor of the Dumbara Valley.[12] Three sites in the Dumbara Valley were considered, Uyanwatte, Mawilmada and Aruppola. Aruppola was considered the most favorable and in 1938 steps were taken to acquire the land. However the discovery that malaria was endemic in the area and that additional costs would have to be incurred by the government to adopt permanent malaria control measures influenced the decision in favor of Peradeniya.

The site in Peradeniya that was finally selected was known as the New Peradeniya Estate. Jennings writes that some of the factors that tilted the decision in favor of Peradeniya were:

1. Good communication,

2. More land for building,

3. Acquisition was easy due to single ownership of land,

4. No villagers would be displaced,

5. Expansion was possible,

6. Land for playing fields was compact and more was available across the river,

7. The site was open and healthy,

8. Good water was available in the Hantana range,

9. It was a beautiful site. and

10. It was close to the Botanical Gardens and the School of Agriculture. [13]

In brief the following sites were taken up for consideration for the University of Ceylon:

1. Thurstan Road, 18.5 acres.

2. Thurstan Road plus Royal College, about 35 acres.

3. Lunatic Asylum, Bullers Road, 24 acres.

4. The same enlarged, 50 acre.

5. Bullers Road (including Infectious Diseases Hospital), 95 acres.

6. The same enlarged, 223 acres.

7. Ratmalana (opposite Railway Workshops), size unknown.

8. New Peradeniya Estate, including Block B, Racecourse etc., 470 acres.

9. The same, south of the railway only, 343 acres.

10. Dumbara valley, Uyanwatte site, 253 acres.

11. Mawilmada, 100 acres.

12. Aruppola scheme 1,390 acres.

13. The same 2,291 acres.

14. The same 3,223 acres.

15. Kesbewa, site unknown.

16. Kalutara, site unknown. [14]

The site selected in Peradeniya stretched from the Hantana peaks at a height of over 4,000 feet to the Mahaveli river, a drop, generally gradual, of over 2,000 feet. The university site was divided by the river into two unequal parts by a stream that rolled down from Hantana peak to join the river close to the railway bridge. The property known as New Peradeniya Estate was owned by a British plantation company. It was a mixed plantation with rubber on the lower slopes of the hills, and tea at higher elevations and a large extent of forest further up the mountain.[15]

The area of the university today covers approximately one square mile, the larger 'right bank' segment of the site which reaches towards the foothills of the Hantana range in its eastern flanks, contains the main center of university administration, the library, four clusters of faculty buildings, the gymnasium and playgrounds, and the majority halls of residence and staff quarters. The 'left bank' is occupied by the Faculty of Engineering, two halls of residence and a few houses. [16]

The model for the new university, though never explicitly stated, was Cambridge, Jennings' own university. While Sir Patrick Abercrombie was in charge of the designing of the campus Jennings himself was involved in every aspect of planning. [17] In his unpublished biography he described the University of Peradeniya as "one of the finest small universities in the world".[18] At its inception the planners did not think in terms of large numbers, the Buchanan-Riddell commission envisaged a figure of 550 or so and Jennings in the late 1940s stated that the "immediate objective of the Peradeniya scheme...[was] to provide a residential university for 1600 students...."[19]

Thus the site of the new university was selected for very specific reasons, other than practical ones: beauty of the site – "beautiful buildings and lovely surroundings" [20] as the Duke of Edinburgh said when he formally opened the University buildings – and residential facilities for students. Underlying these motives was the idea that higher education needed an enabling landscape and that the purposes of higher education were best pursued in a residential university.

After the battle of the sites came to an end in 1938 the growth of institutions of higher education became, however, related to political developments rather than to a reflection on the purpose of higher education in an ideal situation. Universities were created either as answers to very specific needs, as fancies of high bureaucrats, and as political projects. In any event sites and landscapes were not variables.

Expansion of institutions: sites and other variables

After Peradeniya, which was selected for the beauty of its surroundings, Ruhuna University was the only other campus built with similar ambitions. The University of Ruhuna was established as the Ruhuna University College in 1979 by a Special Presidential decree, and was raised to university status in 1984. Located in the south of the island, this was the second university complex since the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, to be designed on the same lavish scale and style by a distinguished architect, namely Geoffrey Bawa.[21] It was in a sense a gesture towards the young people of the South who after the insurgency and counter-insurgency of 1971 had yearned for a university of their own. The University at present has its five faculties located at four centers: the faculty of Agriculture at Mapalana, Kamburupitiya, the Faculty of Medicine at Karapitiya, Galle, and the Faculty of Engineering at Hapugala, Galle. Finally the University complex in Wellamadama, Matara where the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Science are located is situated on an estate of about 72 acres bordered by sea and paddy fields, very close to Dondra – the southern tip of Sri

Lanka. The site has three hills which rise to about 120 feet with valleys between. It was planned that the hill nearest the beach would be for residential buildings, the other two for arts and Science Faculties respectively and the valley between the Arts and the Science Faculties would be bridged by the library, the open air theatre, and a canteen.

In Geoffrey Bawa's architecture, the central role of geography must be highlighted. The buildings as they are conceived are strongly influenced by "the character of the natural terrain, the vegetation, the potential for developing vistas out onto the landscape and hence light and shade and of course the related and ever present aspect of climate".[22] In the Ruhuna campus constructions are intimately tied to the topography and the territory they occupy.

In the case of the University of Sabaragamuwa the beauty of the site was accidental. Indeed the university, located in the hilly landscape of Belihul oya grew out of the remnants of a hydro-electricity scheme. It was first established in 1992 as the Sabaragamuwa Province Affiliated University College, on an idea in 1988-89 of the then UGC chairman Prof. Aluvihare. Most of the buildings were originally built as residences for the Samanalawewa project staff. It was founded as a University by amalgamation with the Buttala Affiliated College and Uva Province Affiliated College in 1995/96.

Other Affiliated Colleges were established and elevated to the status of a university with little concern for site or landscape. The assumption was that whatever buildings, facilities, plans that had been deemed adequate for a university college would also be adequate for a university. This was the case of the Eastern University established in Vantharamoolai, Chenkaladi, 16km north of Batticaloa. Inaugurated in 1986 it was previously the Batticaloa University College founded in 1981. The University of Rajarata, located in Mihintale, Anuradhapura in the North

Central Province, was established in 1995/96 by the amalgamation of the Affiliated University Colleges of Central, North-Central and North-Western Provinces. The South-Eastern University, located in Addalaichchenai, Oluvil, on the south-eastern coast of Sri Lanka originally the South-Eastern University College, was upgraded to the status of a university in 1995/96. In all these cases, public pressure for creating universities in all the provinces was answered by the overnight transformation of colleges into universities. There was absolutely no thinking through the meaning of a university education as the creation of a very specific space where an academic community can thrive. This was a typical case of what Henri Lefebvre has described as 'appropriation' where an existing space may outlive its original purpose and the raison d'être which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible to being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one. Lefebvre cites the well-known case of the reappropriation of the Halles Centrales, Paris's former wholesale produce market, in 1969-71. For a brief period, the urban centre, designed to facilitate the distribution of food, was transformed into a gathering-place and a scene of permanent festival – in short, into a centre of play rather than of work – for the youth of Paris.

Political exigencies also led to the establishment of the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara universities within the premises of the respective *pirivenas* (traditional centres of learning). The principal motive behind the establishment of the two universities was that in 1959 the children who started schooling in the national languages on the basis of the C.W.W. Kannangara reforms (of the mid 1940s) were coming to Year XII. Of them, the Sinhala language students were almost entirely monolingual and were thus likely to be deprived of higher education unless the medium of instruction was changed. The negotiations (by the government) with the

university of Ceylon did not help to resolve the issue, whereas the two *pirivenas* expressed their willingness to face the challenge. A committee on Sinhala Degrees and *pirivena* University Status was appointed to look into the matter, but the Minister of Education W. Dahanayake, without waiting for the committee report, directed the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara *pirivenas* to submit drafts to raise them to university status. His reason for doing so was that commissions would take a long time to report.

Vidyodaya university commenced its operation on 1st January, 1959 from the premises of the Vidyodaya *pirivena* in Maligakanda, Colombo where it remained for three years and then shifted to Gangodawila. Vidyalankara continued to function in the premises of the *pirivena* till the buildings at the new site in Dalugama were completed . When the Vidyodaya university shifted to Gangodawila in 1961 it functioned with an administrative cum academic building, three student hostels, a student center, a health center, one large lecture hall, a sports complex, and a few ancillary buildings.[23] In the late 1960s the two universities shed many of the features of their 'parent' *pirivenas* and were converted into lay institutions. A Science Faculty was established in Vidyalankara in 1967, while Vidyodaya took steps in the same direction a few years earlier.[24]

The way in which universities in Sri Lanka grew and expanded reflects the lack of attention paid by government to issues of space beyond simple practicalities. The growth of the Colombo campus is a case in point. The site of the University of Colombo, originally the site of the University College, was situated in Thurstan Road. When the University of Ceylon was set up in 1942 the University College became a part of it. Until the construction of the university in Peradeniya was completed the University continued to function in Colombo. The shift to Peradeniya took over ten years. However this process was not completed in the sense

that shifting some of the departments and faculties i.e. the Science and Medical Faculties was found to be impractical (in the absence of a proper hospital in Peradeniya) and therefore continued to function in Colombo, administered from Peradeniya.[25]

As early as the 1950's, the vice-chancellor of the University, Ivor Jennings wrote about the need to plan for a second unit in Colombo when the student numbers in Peradeniya exceeded 4000.[26] However this plan was not followed by his successor, Sir Nicholas Attygalle (1955-1966). Instead, when the intake of students to Peradeniya increased considerably in 1965/1966 steps were taken to accommodate them in the Thurstan Road complex. For this purpose the racecourse in Colombo, located close by, was taken over. Of the 3,790 students admitted that year 2,904 were allocated to the Colombo unit.[27] A committee of inquiry on the University of Ceylon, Colombo in 1974 observed that the limitation of financial resources compelled the University authorities to make use of the Grand Stand and other buildings in the Race Course as a permanent part of the University campus – an arrangement that led to references in newspaper reports to the Colombo *Ashva Vidyalaya (college for horses)*.[28] The term was popularized by inventive bus conductors who played on the similarity of the word Vishva Vidyalaya (university) with Ashva Vidyalaya[29].

Since the unit in Colombo was being administered from Peradeniya the blame for the lack of facilities and financial resources was leveled at University management in Peradeniya. During 1965-1967 the students and members of the staff at Colombo carried out a campaign to gain recognition for the campus as the University of Ceylon, Colombo. The Colombo campus was converted to a separate university in 1967 by order of the Minister of Higher Education, Act No.20 of 1966.[30]

It is obvious that the cost factor played a major role in establishing a university in Colombo. The Needham Commission in 1959 had observed that Colombo was the ideal site for the extension of university facilities, since the University of Ceylon already had certain buildings and laboratories in Colombo and therefore the capital outlay could be small compared to the setting up of another fully fledged and independent university, which would strain the resources of the country and take time to materialize.[31]

Commission reports of this time indicate that the emphasis placed on residential universities a decade or two earlier was changing. The Needham commission, for instance, suggested that the best interest of higher education in Ceylon could be met by establishing a university that provided external examinations, non-residential facilities, and certain types of non-graduate courses of study.[32] Echoing the sentiments of the Needham commission the Thistlethwaite report of 1967, stated as follows:

> The University of Ceylon at Peradeniya was designed on the principles inherited from a more spacious age when the student was educated as an intellectual and social elite in a paternalistic and collegiate environment. The growth and altered character of the student body has made many of these assumptions obsolete....[33]

The Thistlethwaite report therefore advocated the provision of hostel facilities in Colombo only so far as it was possible.[34]

In the late seventies and early eighties new buildings were erected on the old site of the University College, for the first time since the establishment of the University of Colombo in 1967. The latter grew into a major metropolitan university.[35]

The construction of the Peradeniya university took many years. While the university was established in 1942, the first faculties - agriculture, law and veterinary science -

started functioning in Peradeniya only in 1947.[36] The Arts Faculty shifted in 1952, the Science and Medical Faculties in 1961 and the Engineering Faculty in 1963.[37] In 1978 an arts campus at Dumbara was set up on the site proposed for the University of Ceylon in 1928. This decision was taken on the assumption that the arts students were the principal troublemakers and that it was best to isolate them. The campus lasted for ten years, from 1978-1988.[38] During the period 1978-84 the University Peradeniya enjoyed a period of expansion, the first since the early sixties. Most of the expansion was in the science, medical, dental, engineering, agricultural and veterinary faculties. This included the construction of Peradeniya's university hospital, something envisaged in Jennings plan.[39]

Statistics on living accommodation provided in the four universities during the late 1960s is indicative of the shift away from residential status. In the period 1968/1969, out of a total student population of 12,716 only 3,573 were provided with residential facilities. The distribution is given below.

University	Resident	Non-resident	Total
Colombo	606	3,280	3,886
Peradeniya	2,721	2,026	4,747
Vidyalankara	375	1,323	1,698
Vidyodaya	215	2,170	2,385[40]

The expansion of the University of Jaffna has been linked to the political crises of the state, but interestingly while other universities closed for long periods of time the University of Jaffna remained open. It was first established in 1974, as the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, offering courses in science and humanities. The first batch of 104 students was admitted in October 1974. In 1978, with the implementation of the Universities Act no. 16 of 1978, it became an independent and autonomous university as the

University of Jaffna. The Faculty of Medicine was established at Kaithady in October of 1978, and 70 students were admitted. The faculty was subsequently moved to join others on the Thirunelvely site. The Agriculture faculty was established in Kilinochchi in 1990 and foundation for Engineering faculty was laid in 1995. The main campus of the University is located in Thirunelvely in Jaffna in a 43 acre campus. The Ramanathan Hall is the main building at the university, one of the original buildings from Parameswara College, a boy's school built by Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. The school buildings were given to Jaffna University in the early 1970's while the school boys were shifted to other schools in the area. The requirements of university space were clearly understood as equivalent to those of a secondary school.

New Universities

Sir Ivor Jennings believed that the task of a University education is to:

> produce educated men and women in the fullest sense of that phrase, men and women who are capable of fulfilling any function in the world that may fall to their lot, citizens of high intelligence, complete moral integrity, and possessing energy, initiative, judgment, tact and qualities of leadership.[41]

Apart from useful knowledge, a general education was a priority. This approach was criticized by proponents of a university either adapted to local needs or set firmly in local knowledge and culture as one attempting to make 'gentlemen' out of 'natives'. In today's world, notions of beauty, just as an understanding of the ideas of Locke or Bourdieu, are not considered necessary by policy makers who lay emphasis on the need for students to acquire a knowledge of information technology and a working knowledge of the English language. In a parallel fashion there is a move towards introducing subjects and courses related to vocations or current problems such as development studies, poverty issues etc.

In a way the lack of interest in the exterior of the university, the demise of landscaping and the choice of the city as a center for higher education have killed the higher aim of the university as an institution that would create an elite of the mind. One can of course dismiss the idea of the residential university as a thing of the past putting forwards reasons of economy – it costs too much – reasons of security – keeping young people together and letting them think will invariably lead to rebellion – reasons of postmodernity – in the cyber age is not a cyber university community feasible or at least worthwhile experimenting with? I have no quick answers to these questions. My sense is however that a cyber community lacks what is crucial to a university life, which is human experience. While new technologies can help forge links between institutions and demultiply possibilities of knowledge acquisition they cannot replace the Socratic experience of teaching.

Since the mid-1990s some scholars have been arguing for the creation of a decentralized South Asian University with different colleges spread over South Asia, each specializing in a particular subject area particularly relevant to its physical, social and economic environment. One imagined a Faculty of Conflict Studies in Colombo and a Faculty of Hydro - power and environment in Kathmandu. Cyber links would of course make such arrangements possible.

The university as an institution may not however survive such dismemberment. Henri Lefebvre's question on the Church comes to mind in relation to the university: What would remain of the Church if there were no churches?

Endnotes

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3   Ibid.

4   Ibid, p. 18.

5   *Sri Lanka Universities Yearbook 1999/2000*, p. 3.

6   K.M. de Silva and G.H. Peiris, *The University System of Sri Lanka: Vision and Reality*, ICES, Kandy, 1995, p.6.

7   Sir Ivor Jennings, 'The Foundations of the University of Ceylon', *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. IX, no. 3, July, pp. 247-262.

8   Ibid, pp. 234-235.

9   Ibid, pp. 226-227.

10   Ibid, p. 235.

11   K.D.G. Wimalaratne, 'The Battle of the Sites and the Establishment of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya' in ed. R.A.L.H. Gunawardena *More Open than Usual*, Peradeniya, 1992, p.5.

12   Ibid, p.7.

13   Jennings, pp. 245-248.

14   Ibid, p. 249.

15   De Silva and Peiris, *The University System of Sri Lanka: Vision and Reality*, ICES, Kandy, 1995, p. 13.

16   Ibid, p. 189.

17   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, p.16.

18   Amal Jayawardane, 'Jennings on University Education' in *More Open than Usual*, p. 30.

19   W.I. Jennings, *Autobiography*, as cited in K.M.de Silva and G.H. Peiris 1995, p. 17.

20   Wimalaratne, op. cit., p. 9.

21   De Silva and Peiris 1995, p. 42.

22   Brian Brace Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa*, London Thames and Hudson, revised ed. 1996, p. 9.

23   *University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1959-1984*, p.40.

24   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, p. 32

25   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, and the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry University of Ceylon Colombo*, Part I, Student Grievances: Dilemma of Higher Education, October 1971, p.14.

26   De Silva and Peiris, p. 29 and Jennings, p. 251.

27   De Silva and Peiris, ibid.

28   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, University of Ceylon Colombo, p.14.

29   I owe this detail to Professor George Cooray.

30   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry* University of Ceylon Colombo, p.14.

31   *Sessional Paper XXXIII of 1959*, Ceylon Government Press, p.156.

32   Ibid, pp. 154-155.

33   *Sessional Paper XXVI of 1967*, Ceylon Government Press, p.28.

34   Ibid.

35   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, p. 42.

36   De Silva, 1995, p. 17.

37   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, University of Ceylon Colombo...p.14.

38   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, p. 4.

39   De Silva and Peiris, 1995, p. 42.

40   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry*, University of Ceylon Colombo, p.25.

41   Amal Jayawardane, p. 42.

III

The Sri Lankan University Spaces of Community–Spaces of Conflict (Buildings-Gardens- Interiors)

Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty, never grows old.
Franz Kafka

One way of studying institutions is to write a chronicle of their underlying ideals, plans and built forms. Another is to ponder on what role buildings, gardens and interiors play in the forming of a university community, in the forging of an ethos of the individual 's engagement with the wider group he/she finds herself in? One of the criticism made against academic life in Sri Lanka is the divide that has grown up between students, academics and administrators and the forging of further divides within these three communities. For an academic who is familiar with institutions of higher learning in the West, the absence or state of neglect of staff common rooms where between lectures academics sit and drink tea or coffee while reading the day's papers or discuss books and reviews is quite startling. From the outset the architectural layout of the university seems to say: do not talk, do not discuss, do not communicate!

This essay will look at the organization of space in universities and assess its relation to the development or absence of development of a sense of community.

Campus space

Most universities across the globe have certain common characteristics, especially in matters relating to aims and objectives, modes of organization and administration, courses of study and methods of instruction and investigation. The variations which are in matters of detail, depend on local circumstances and requirements. Universities are also agencies through which the methods of processing knowledge are universalized to a point where comparison is possible. No university can develop in isolation.

In some universities, at every turn, buildings and landscapes seem to extol the virtues of the pursuit of knowledge. Campus architecture is like an open book that speaks to one's mind of long histories of peoples and nations. Walking down a shaded alley leading to the university library, there is sometimes a feeling difficult to describe of elation and hope, of humanism and depth which only someone who has studied at an university can comprehend. In some campuses a walk on graduation day is a reminder that the routes or passages one takes both metaphorically and literally through the campus landscapes can be arranged in recollection and reality as exceptional aesthetic experiences. Princeton College was quite typically described in 1910 as 'half college, half monastery'. In other universities, newer, less entrenched in history, architecture is important in the way it is wedded to its institutionality. While on an older campus a minimal expectation would be a suitable architectural frame for the celebratory rituals of academia on a newer university the architectural expectation is more diffuse. If one adopts a schematic analysis, two styles of

university ensembles are possible: firstly old Oxbridge or Oxbridge styled campuses where there is an apparent seamless unity between architectural image and institutional life; second new university modernism where certain universities try to impress through an institutional/architectural image what they are aiming for. In both cases certain values are conveyed through buildings and architectural forms: the value of beauty as harmony, of gentility and courtesy, of knowledge and tolerance on the one hand; on the other the values of invention and modernity, of equality and freedom, of knowledge as liberation.

Buildings....creating a symbolic/cultural or knowledge community?

Can buildings create among users a sense of belonging to a common group, a sense of community as it were? One can argue that in some universities more than in others there is an apparent concern for the way in which architectural elements work with each other to create cultural bondings. Is the purpose only aesthetic or is it community creation and if so what sort of community? Traditionally in the old universities in the West one simply added ornament to what was perceived as the utilitarian body of a building. This ornament could in addition to its function as 'art' carry symbolic meaning, symbolic of, of instance, religiosity of the Church or the authority of a government or an educational institution. Community could grow out of other factors too. There were certain features that differentiated a university in one particular region from a university in another region. Even today regionalism sometimes affects the planning, styles, methods, and materials that are characteristic of campus buildings. Just as in the past regionalism is determined by some basic influences –historical period, for instance –that encompass both planning and style; local

culture is the second influence; the third regional influence consists of materials and methods.

Is there in our universities a sense of cultural community or multi-cultural community that pervades the buildings in which we teach, learn and study?

Regionalism/Culturalism

Peradeniya University has to some extent attempted to display a culturally specific character through symbolic accretions to otherwise culturally neutral buildings. The most common accretions of culture that symbolically draw a line between the university and the ancient kingdoms of the Rajarata are in the register of stone, columns, engravings and moonstones.

The moon - stone called the *Sandakada Pahana* in Sinhala is a semi circular slab of stone at the foot of a flight of steps to a shrine. In the kingdom of Anuradhapura the moonstone displayed intricate decorative motives arranged in concentric circles around the central lotus. While the initial interpretation of the moonstone as a samsara cakra-wheel of life has been contested, newer interpretations of the lotus flower as the mythical lake Anavatapta do not contest the essentially religious nature of the symbolic. The devotee who enters the Sacred House of the Buddha image, does so 'by purifying himself symbolically with the waters of the Anavatapta lake by stepping on to the lotus of the moonstone'[1]. The cultural symbolism is clearly Buddhist. The university of Peradeniya contains a number of moonstones. The Veterinary Teaching Hospital, for instance, has a moonstone at the entrance flanked by four columns, which have intricate *liyawel* (motifs) engraved. The building walls themselves are engraved with flower designs. Other buildings used as lecture theaters and laboratories do not have any of the architectural features of the older buildings. The main administrative building is the

two-storey Senate building which houses the offices of the Vice Chancellor and the registrar. There is a *Sandakada Pahana* at the foot of the broad stone stairway leading up to the building. Inside of the decor is very ornate with wood lined walls. The extension of the building lacks the elaborate features of the older structure. The new canteen of the Arts Faculty is in keeping with the architectural features of older buildings. There is a *sandakada pahana* at the entrance of the building, *muragal* (guard-stones) on either side of the main door and extensive *punkalas* (decorative pots) carved above the door. The floor however is tiled.

Columns or pillars constitute an important part of Buddhist art. The image house in Anuradhapura was generally adorned with intricately decorated stone pillars. Some of these motifs appear in the architecture of the University of Peradeniya. At the entrance to the Arts Faculty is the D. E. Hettiarachchi Memorial Auditorium. There are five ornate doorways at the outside of which stand columns engraved with elephants, a Buddha statue at the center and flowers. The columns decorated with engraved flowers and adorned with Asoka heads lead inside the main building of the Faculty of Science.

The use of stone reminiscent of the Anuradhapura style attempts to convey the idea of lineages with the past. There is for instance a stone stairway leading along the P.E Pereira auditorium on either side of which stand two *punkalas*. Pathways too are stone-paved. The Arts Faculty buildings housing the Deans' office, lecturers' offices, lecture halls and a senior common room are adorned with flower arches. In the open areas on the ground floor of the building square stone pillars in the Anuradhapura style convey a feeling of timelessness.

In other instances decorative motives that attempt to convey a more simple message can be found. In the Faculty of Agriculture, that has a main building for administrative

and other purposes the entrance opens up with two columns flanked with figures of women engaged in agricultural activities embossed on either side of the doorway. The walls are engraved with flowers. The second building that consists of a lecture hall and laboratories has a passage running by its side with columns which had flowers engraved on them. Three other buildings consisting of a laboratory, a computer unit, a plant nursery and other small buildings do not have any culturally specific features.

The large majority of buildings are purely functional and devoid of any cultural underpinnings. The Main building of the Dental Faculty is for instance a 3 storey building, which looks like Kandy teaching hospital. The Front and the back walls have grills with flower designs. Lecture halls too are conventional. Buildings at the front of the Engineering Faculty were quite ornate compared to those at the back that looked very technical, except for the library which is housed in a seven storey building. There are two security guards at the entrance to the library. The reception area is very ornate. The walls are covered with wood and there are masks exhibited in glass cages and two paintings.

Other universities are much less grounded in the Sinhala and Buddhist culture. The University of Kelaniya buildings do not display a specific style and differ possibly according to the time in which they were built. At the University of Colombo apart from the colonial style Science Faculty and the administrative building located in Thurstan Road which was originally a Walauwe buildings display not particular cultural features. Thus if a cultural community is to blossom on the premises of the university whether this community be multicultural or mono - cultural neither does the layout of the universities nor the style of building foster an environment which people can relate to or feel less alien. While none of the universities seem to send messages of cultural exclusivism, the functional/modernist style of most

buildings and the lack of communal spaces tend to encourage individualism and self-help as values.

Geoffrey Bawa argues that good building in Sri Lanka has always taken into account the beauty of past building and landscapes, from temples and monasteries to palaces and water gardens. Buildings of the past met the essentials of life in Sri Lanka. From the past to the present the constant of the climate favours a particular type of building. Apart from the buildings in the University of Peradeniya and part of the Ruhuna Campus university most campus buildings have no cultural specificity. This feature may explain the lack of respect and affection for these buildings manifested in the behaviour of students who desacrate them in many different ways. It may also explain the feeling of alienness or otherness among many students who hail from different parts of the country and do not feel at home in this setting. Students have developed their own rituals of community formation by which new students (Freshers) are inducted through ragging into the wider community of students. These rituals are most often carried out in spaces of leisure restricted to the student community.

In the Sri Lankan university system there seems to have been a clear move away from the old high rhetoric of 'beauty'. Decades ago, the University of Peradeniya was built with a higher purpose in mind. It was planned, devised and dreamt of as as something more than functional structures. The assumption was that the beauty of some of its buildings, gardens and landscapes would not only leave a residue of subconscious understanding in the mind it would also help create a community of scholars.

Buildings

The campus space has been a flexible one in Sri Lanka where existing spaces outlive their original purpose and raison d'être that determine forms, functions and structures: classrooms have been turned into administration buildings, libraries into classrooms and offices, without much concern of any sort. Universities or university buildings have also been taken over by the Government in times of crisis. Such was the case when the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara university buildings were used as detention centres after the JVP insurrection of 1971 and the take over of College House, Colombo Campus for the sittings of the Criminal Justice Commission 2.

Constructions have varied in type and one generally highlights two models : for some campuses construction has been gradual, one building added to another over time, in the case of others, construction has taken the shape of a 'whole-cloth campus' as in Peradeniya or Ruhuna. This second type normally provides a rare opportunity for architects to practice advanced theories of planning and design. A third type of campus rarely mentioned in architectural manuals is the 'ready made campus' where a building site conceived for another purpose is taken over as a campus. This is the case of the University of Sabaragamuwa that was initially the 'village' for engineers and staff working on the construction of the Samanalaweva dam project.

It is generally believed that a good campus consists of a group of harmonious buildings related by various means. What seems important is to place structures, whether ancient or modern, so that they relate to one another in a spatially pleasing manner. At Ruhuna University covered links were built to give passage and space for pause and the meeting of minds, whether contemplative or active, thus gazebos, pavilions and verandas were part of the essential concept. Another important factor is the suitability of the building to

the climate. The New Arts building at Colombo University is a celebration of concrete. Unfortunately the roofs do no withstand even the pre-monsoon showers and entire classrooms are flooded every year. Furthermore in a country plagued by electricity cuts and breakdowns, rooms and classrooms have been conceived so as to preclude air circulation. Planners and architects could easily have taken a cue from the similarly ill-conceived Law Faculty building that the afternoon sun transforms into a 'bake-house' as it is commonly referred to.

Among the buildings that constitute the campus, the library occupies a place apart. The function of the university library is to obtain, catalogue, and shelve printed matter, and through architecture, among other means – to suggest the importance of the printed word and the quest for knowledge. Libraries are at the heart of the meaning of academia. They summarise the purpose and aim of education. Their appearance and location is in many ways symptomatic of society's understanding of the centrality or peripherality of the acquisition and production of knowledge and of the self-perception of the academic community. Some libraries symbolize in an explicit and sometimes rather unsubtle manner: for example the library at San Diego, University of California has a multisided upside down wedding cake form. In the words of the architect: 'The building conveys the idea that powerful and permanent hands are holding aloft knowledge itself' 3.

The location of the library is also important. At the University of Moratuwa for example students from the civil engineering departments or the textile departments situated at the other extreme of the university have to walk a long distance to reach the library. In the same way the library at the Open University is located close to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences but far from the Faculties of Natural Science and Engineering Technology. The library of

the University of Kelaniya, located close to the administrative building faces an open grassy area where students sit around to relax and study. The new library building of the University of Colombo is in a central spot, located between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Law and within easy walking distance from the Management Faculty and the Education Faculty. At the University of Ruhuna, the library is centrally located between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science. The old truism that aesthetics have nothing to do with budgets comes to mind. In the case of Peradeniya University Library, seven floors high, and blessed with ornemental pillars, doorways, sculptures, masks and carvings this is doubtful. This library is perhaps the only one that gives the visitor a feeling of timelessness associated with knowledge and research.

A little imagination would help to begin to transform ugly structures into aesthetically pleasing and community friendly ones: wall hangings, masks and paintings can adorn grey walls, wooden chairs and desks can be replaced by sofas in the periodical reading rooms, carpets or mats can give a feeling of comfort. Posters and advertisements of events, books and films can give a younger and more lively approach to premises.

Spaces of leisure:

Universities are constructed with particular consideration of a space to provide an on-campus place for students to relieve tensions and engage in non - academic activities. In most American universities the computer center is where students work, live and socialize. Student centers are extremely versatile in large campuses: they contain eateries, bookstores, banks, galleries, bowling alleys, poolrooms, music listening rooms, meeting rooms, space for dances, student organization offices, theaters and video games. The other

gathering places are large performing centers, auditoriums, and stadiums.

In the Sri Lankan university, the most important elements in the reserved space for students are the canteen or cafeteria, the students center and the gymnasium. Student centers are nothing like as sophisticated as in an American university and most often are the rallying point of particular political groups in the university. The canteen is the favourite meeting place for students. There is often more than one canteen and each one has its speciality. The Kelaniya campus has four canteens among them one is equipped with a hairdressing salon. Some canteens are closely linked to political parties. If one is not a supporter of a particular political group one will not venture into a particular canteen. At Ruhuna the canteen situated at the highest level is the domaine of the JVP linked student union. A canteen situated inside a building taken over by the senior staff as a senior common room became a source of conflict.

At the University of Peradeniya The New Canteen (Arts Faculty) is a two storey building with ornate doorway, a stone paved door in keeping with the old Arts Faculty building, and columns with engraved flowers. The doors have *liyawel* embossed on them and brass knockers. The inside floor is tiled. Upstairs is a common room with reclining chairs. The Gymnasium is a Rectangular, modern gym. It is lined with columns with flowers embossed on them on one side, on the other side engravings of *punkalas*. The WUS is a single storied low spread out building which consists of a canteen, barber, tailor, book shops, photocopiers, student counselor's office and student union office. There are square columns without engravings and wire meshed windows. An informal theater space at the back of the WUS has a raised platform for a stage and cement steps for chairs.

On the whole the importance of canteens as spaces for student meeting and recreation has been recognized. At

Moratuwa University there are about five canteens located throughout the campus. One next to the student center in the Sumanadasa building, another known as the 'wala cantima' close to the entrance to the Sumanadasa building, one in the Engineering Faculty, a fourth in the Department of civil engineering and a fifth close to the health center. There is a student center located in the Sumanadasa building, a gymnasium (for indoor games) cum auditorium with stage. The playing fields are located behind the Sumanadasa building. But numbers mask the rather pitiful condition of the canteens on many campuses.

Canteens are often makeshift arrangements. At the Kelaniya University the Polwatte canteen, one of the oldest buildings, dark and dingy was clearly not meant to be a canteen. At the University of Sabaragamuwa the student canteen is situated under the auditorium, below ground level and comes out as grimy and unpleasant.

Spaces of student-staff interaction

For an agreeable learning atmosphere to thrive all members of the university community must be able to meet in common spaces or spaces where members of one community can interact comfortably with members of another.

At Moratuwa University the situation varies from one faculty to another and even one department to another. In the faculty of architecture the lecturers do not have individual offices, only a common staff room. The location of staff rooms too is important. In this case it is situated in the same floor as the lecture halls and the Faculty of Architecture office. Most interaction between lecturers and students takes place in the classrooms and in the work rooms where practicals are undertaken. In the civil engineering department there were separate rooms for lecturers and in some sections chairs

placed for students who may want to meet a lecturer as in a hospital waiting room. At the University of Sabaragamuwa, there is a lack of suitable places for academic staff and students to interact since lecturers offices and lecture halls are housed in separate buildings.

Lecturers' offices are built by partitioning rectangular halls. The original plan appeared to have had only four lecturers' offices. The Ruhuna Senior Student Counsellor suggested that students were closer to senior students than to the staff, as there was little room for them to mingle. Few lecturers would go to canteens used by students. The proximity of the different halls can help remedy the situation. In the Department of History for instance, the lecture halls, the Department office and the lecturers' offices are located close to each other, as it is a small department. The bigger, main lecture halls of the faculty are situated separately. An administrator asserted that students aggressive behavior hinders student-staff interaction and cited a number of incidents as examples. At Peradeniya too physical distances emphasize the gap between staff and students. The dean's office in all the faculties is situated in a separate building or wing that is allocated to the administration. Lecturers' offices are situated on a separate floor in the Faculty of Medicine (new building), in the Dental Faculty and the Faculty of Science, in a separate building in the Faculty of Agriculture, between lecture halls in the Faculty of veterinary medicine & Animal Science.   In the New Arts Building of the University of Colombo lecturers' rooms form a large part of the floor area. They are interspaced with the smaller lecture rooms while the larger ones are situated at the extreme corners of the building. While the often badly lit corridors may put off students the proximity of the offices to the department office and the lecture halls have facilitated better relations between staff and students. Students are often seen crowding the corridors waiting to meet their lecturers. The

offices are equipped with a ceiling fan, sufficient plug-points to plug in a PC and a wash-basin. This last item reflects the understanding of the planners of the 'office as the main area of work for the lecturer since she does not have to leave the premises even to eat!

The teaching staff of other universities often marvel at the fact that each lecturer has an individual room. Indeed most universities do not provide their staff with such facilities. At the University of Kelaniya most lecturers' offices are partitioned cubicles in the building that houses the faculty –either Social Science, Humanities and the department of Mass Communication. Students meet their lecturers in the lecture rooms as there are no other common areas.

Thus looking at these different universities it appears quite clearly that little interest was put into conceiving spaces of interaction for staff and student. Except for a few universities, offices are conceived as workplaces (and even eating places) for staff. A possible alternative would have been a joint Junior and Senior Common Room for Faculty and perhaps 3d and 4th year student where discussions and debates could take place while sipping a cup of tea, and where newspapers, and magazines could be made available.

Landscape and Gardens

Lawns, trees and walks form the traditional exterior image of a campus as a landscape setting, long associated with colleges and universities. Most of the older campuses in Sri Lanka have tremendous potential in terms of landscape and green environment. The setting of the campus has much to do with the quality of the gardens. But there are differences between city universities such as the Open University and Colombo University where there is little interest in creating a landscape and universities such as Sri

Jayawardenapura, Moratuwa and Kelaniya where some effort has been made to create a greener environment.

At Peradeniya University maintaining and designing the landscape is the responsibility of the curator's office. The space between the Faculty of veterinary medicine & Animal Science and the Faculty of Agriculture consists of a few very small lawns on either side of the internal road dividing the two faculties. A round - about with flowers and a name board leads to the entrance of the Faculty of veterinary medicine & Animal Science. A few shade-giving trees with benches underneath them are located in the small un-kept lawn areas. The Faculty of Science has a central lawn in the main building (inner court yard) with a pond in the center. The path leading to the Faculty has extensive lawns and flowerbeds on either side, benches line the road side and are dotted around the lawn. The entrance to the Faculty of Medicine has a triangular shaped flowerbed. The new building has a small central lawn with palm trees and shade trees in the rest of the compound.

At Ruhuna the landscaping was taken care of by a private company, Abans that was in charge of the cleaning of the campus but a curator was appointed very recently. The buildings at the Faculty of Agriculture are wire-cut red brick walls. There are a many trees and broad roads lined with short stonewalls and stairs. Buildings are not built along the landscape but on flattened land. All the buildings are at the centre of the block surrounded by farms and paddy land. The University of Moratuwa premises lead down to the Bolgoda lake, mainly frequented by members of the rowing team and couples. In these two cases the setting is itself an invitation for environmental concerns to be respected.

At the other end of the spectrum the Open University has few landscaped areas. A paved road running alongside the canal has been lined with trees on one side and small shelters have been constructed for students to use. But this is mainly in the older part of the university. In the area where the new buildings have come up there have been some attempts at landscaping. The space between the administrative buildings and the canal has been laid out with a lawn, trees and flowering plants. There are sections however at the approach from the Narahenpita entrance that are overgrown with grass. There are tarred roadways so that vehicles can move about easily, but little thought has been given to those who are forced to walk in the hot sun to get from one building to another, due to the absence of any pathways and shaded areas for pedestrians.

At Colombo University, there has been an attempt to landscape the entrance to the Arts Faculty but maintainance remains a problem. The entrance to College House, the administrative center of the university has a well-maintained garden. There are spaces with trees and benches, in most faculties but compared to other universities like Moratuwa, Kelaniya and Sri Jayawardenapura, at Colombo they are limited. The more popular place for relaxing seems to be the New Arts Building where the ground floor of the building has open areas with pillars and where tables and chairs are placed for students to work or sit around. The spaces in between these areas have trees and plants, although most are not maintained.

Trees

At Peradeniya when designing landscape, the office makes an effort to remain with the former practices of the campus such as growing royal palms which are a feature of the university and giving priority to plants with red and yellow flowers which are university colors. There is a future plan to number the trees. Every plant has its own individual form, profile, color, and texture. The campus landscape has an iconic aspect and the campus shield will often display landscape related institutional values. Trees and lawns are standard

campus landscape. Trees lend charm, provide shade: perhaps also they provide inspiration and mental relief. Single trees may occupy a campus open space as a green sculpture. More practically trees can act as visual screens to reduce noise and to raise air quality by acting as a filter for airborne particles. Campus trees are major elements in a well composed landscape, traditional or modern. Students are helpful in maintaining the lawns, especially societies such as the Hantana Conservation Society. They plant trees as well carry out projects to maintain cleanliness. The waste of the university is managed by the PHI, Health Center. Dr. B. Basnayake is also carrying out a recycling project which attempts to convert waste into compost.

At Kelaniya there are a number of places that are not exactly landscaped but with grass and trees with benches. There is such a spot close to the library and administrative building, and also a stretch near the Social Science and Humanities Faculty that have been laid out to enable students to relax. The garden at the student center is well maintained: there are flowerbeds, shady trees and benches for students to relax. Another popular spot for relaxing is the drive lined with palmyra trees leading to the Science Faculty. This drive overlooks the sports ground and in the evenings students come there to watch games or sit and relax. In the afternoons however it is very hot with little shade.

At Peradeniya a deliberate attempt was made by the campus management to limit the number of benches at the campus. Students have converted the stone blocks into benches where they hold meetings around the Arts Faculty. At the Moratuwa university for instance, there are a number of grassy areas shaded with trees but no benches for students to use as recreational spots.

The only statues are that of a Buddha a short way past the library building. There is a monument of two hands near

the fence at the entrance that is visible from inside the university but not from outside though it is placed close to the road. At Colombo there are no fountains and ponds (except for a small one near the Arts Faculty entrance that is noticeable. There are two statues near the path leading from the Arts Faculty to the Management Faculty, opposite the Old Library building (where examinations are now held) and the cultural center. One statue represents a lion and the other a man in a cloak presumably a student leader who died fighting for student rights.

Why does campus landscape require a fresh look?

A better landscape will strengthen the image and substance of higher education venues. Universities will then be in a better position to attract and retain the better faculty and students, advance educational and research programs, energize fund-raising appeals to alumni and friends, demonstrate environmental design concepts and ethics, enlarge the presence of art, and strengthen the campus as a community design asset.

Interiors

In the twentieth century architects developed new concepts of 'form' and space and set these apart from the older methods of adding ornament. It was partly shaped by the idea that the useful must be identical with the aesthetically valuable. To put the modernist credo in its most banal formulation, 'architecture' should not entail additional cost. There should no longer be a difference, 'architecturally' between a mass and an elite institution. Ornaments are definitely rare in Sri Lankan universities, unfortunately this lack is not compensated by new forms and aesthetics.

At the Moratuwa university there are practically no paintings and sculptures inside the buildings. A few notice boards occupy the bare spaces. At the University of Kelanya

the only painting is in the student center facing the entrance doorway. Posters and notices are the only adornments of the buildings. The Open University has no works of Art either and very few notice boards. Colombo University is no different from recent universities such as Sabaragamuwa except for the Colombo University student centre that has a woodcarving done by a student. At the University of Peradeniya both the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science and the Faculty of Agriculture have pictures of Alumni lining the walls of the administrative buildings. At the University of Ruhuna at the Faculty of Agriculture, there were paintings, currency exchange rates and graphs with projections of agricultural produce on the walls. The buildings of other faculties remain bare and basic.

The interiors of classrooms is also interesting in its lack of innovation and strengthening of relations of power between lecturer and students. In most universities the classrooms have chairs facing black or white boards and the lecturers table. In some classrooms (Kelaniya) the lecturer's table is placed on an elevated platform. Chairs are generally placed close together thus cementing the divides between the space for the lecturer and that of the student. Arrangements are more informal in the studios in for instance the Architecture Faculty of Moratuwa University. Classrooms are often makeshift arrangements. On entering the Humanities building for instance the first sight that meets the eye are chairs stacked up in a corner. Clearly the space at the entrance was used as a classroom with temporary partitions.

At the University of Kelaniya the Polwatte classrooms where English language classes are conducted are makeshift buildings with asbestos sheets for the roof. They are definitely not appealing to students: these seven or eight classrooms with a small corridor running in front have windows only on one side, near the entrance doorway. The ventilation and lighting is poor and there are no fans.

There is a need for an imaginative design response in the entire university system. The lack of imagination in the arrangement of classrooms is coupled with a general neglect. Cleanliness is wanting and students have to dust their seats before sitting down. This does not help to create a sense of belonging and attachment to the university.

Sculpture and art have formative influences on students that other universities across the globe have recognized; Stanford for instance has a few large sculptures by Henry Moore, Alexander Calder and Gaston Lachaise that are used effectively to focus and delineate. The university furthermore owns one of the most important Rodin collection in the world. Princeton has placed throughout its campus a fine collection of heroic size modern sculpture including works by Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson, Isamu Noguchi, Jacques Lipchitz, Pablo Picasso, Naum Gabo, Alexander Calder, Antoine Pevsner and Gaston Lachaise[4]. These examples are from extremely well endowed universities in the richest country on earth. There is however much we can learn. The idea that the entire university space is a field of learning, that while walking down a pathway you can be touched by an aesthetic experience is one that must be emulated. Except for George Keyts 's paintings in the Peradeniya university library and the museum that is being created there, there is little recognition of the importance of art in the formation of students.

Spaces of conflict

The high level of politicization in the university community and its involvement in partisan politics have tended to make these institutions centers of political activity and conflict during the past four decades. The university space becomes

a base for student politics and conflicts[5]. Conflict situations have led on occasions to the closure of the university and even suspension of academic activities[6].

Different explanations are provided for the growth of student unrest *'sisya asahanaya'*, from lack of close relations between academic staff and students, to lack of opportunities for employment of students in the field of social sciences[7]. The basic issues that come to the forefront often relates to the provision of adequate facilities for higher education. The social segregation incorporated in the university layout is also an area of resentment: the housing made available to the majority of low-salaried employees of the university has been confined to a small and unattractive locality where the facilities, in contrast to those provided to other categories of employees, are modest. In the early stages of the university, given the small size of the workforce and the prevailing social ethos, this was an acceptable arrangement. However, as the number of workers in this category increased, the locality bearing the name *Rajawatta* through overcrowding has become a congested ghetto. Further it has become common for students to find accommodation as 'paying guests' at *Rajawatta*, this is also a place where many find refuge when suspended from the university [8].

Between 1960 and 1991, the number of undergraduates registered at Peradeniya increased from 1756 to 6,569, the only additions to the facilities for student residences were two halls with an aggregate of about 500 rooms, (both opened between 1960 and 1966), a small building purchased from a private trader, and residential space derived, through the release of a few houses from the staff housing pool. By the eighties, with the abandonment of the earlier practice of feeding the students at their halls, with the halls themselves bursting at their seams, and with the attendant problems of pollution and waste disposal. At any given point of time only two-thirds of the undergraduates are provided with lodging on the campus. This lodging is in effect small inadequately furnished rooms, usually shared by several students who study, cook, eat and sleep in this restricted space. In addition there are at least several hundred students, not officially assigned to the halls, living in these halls, a practice popularly known as *gajay* [9] *(gajay mitraya* means best friend). G.H.Peiris notes,

> the psychological effects of the hardships which the students undergo are also probably very important. ...many students develop attitudes of resentment and feeling of antipathy towards those in authority. Even the architectural refinements in the university can be seen by them as extravagance and waste. 'For what use are the ornate dining halls if no dinner is served? And why the wall-tiles and the marble flooring, if the lavatories stink to high heaven? [10].

In 1995 when the University of Peradeniya was in session, about 7,000 persons reside on the square mile of the campus. This figure includes about 4,500 students living in halls of residence, and about 2,500 persons (employees and their dependents) occupying staff quarters. With the commuting employees and students, the daytime population on the campus probably reaches 12,000-14,000 [11].

In Sri Lanka the introduction of the scheme of free education in 1945 and the adoption of the national languages as media of instruction had the effect of providing educational facilities to a large proportion of children of school-going age. For promising students in secondary schools a university education held the promise of remunerative employment and entry into the professions. ADVS Indraratne makes the important point that until 1965 all those who qualified for admission at competitive examinations were admitted to the university. Since 1966, however, the Government has been constrained to limit University admissions to more reasonable numbers. In that year only one third of the total number of those qualified for admission were admitted to

the Universities. This proportion remained at the same level until the mid -1980s in spite of the number of universities increasing to nine. A majority of those eligible were shut out 12.

Successive governments took no decisive steps to develop and expand the facilities in the Universities which had been designed for much smaller numbers. Furthermore the universities lost much of their autonomy when the Ministry of Higher Education was placed in charge of higher education in 1966. Admission requirements were determined not by universities but by the organs of the Ministry. 1966 represents the end of an era and the beginning of another wrought by tension and confrontations in the campus space.

The idea that the university premises are inviolable (the sanctuary concept) in relation to the security forces of the country is prevalent among most undergraduates. From the very early days of the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya, students claimed for it the status of a sacrosanct asylum which the security forces must not enter . Where the security forces have been called in to the university premises, a number of clashes between undergraduates and the security personnel have occurred at various times. Although many students hail from similar social backgrounds as the rank and file of the security forces there is a perception that the forces are not welcome as they represent and protect the status quo – what is referred to as the *pavathina kremaya* (the existing system).

On February 1st 1969 one such incident took place at Peradeniya between the undergraduates and a contingent of soldiers of the Sri Lanka army sent to Peradeniya for the 'Independence Day' parade scheduled to be held in Kandy three days later. The army contingent was to be accommodated temporarily at the university gymnasium. The works of scholars on violence at the universities have described the students as culprits or victims according to the leanings of the writer. According to the account written by G.H. Peiris the Vice-Chancellor at the time M.J. Perera, in response to a request by the army commander had agreed to accommodate the soldiers in the gymnasium. The students on the other hand opposed the Vice-chancellor's decision on the grounds that the army was the instrument of oppression of the capitalist class and that uneducated riff - raff should not be allowed to enter the sacred territory of the campus. The result was that a few hours after the army had come in to occupy the gymnasium a number of soldiers strolling around the campus were attacked by students. Some of the soldiers retaliated by attacking two Halls of Residence. On the following day the army was forced to leave the university premises[13] .

Many are the instances where security forces have been called to intervene in the universities to settle student unrest; this has included strikes as well as more violent incidents such as holding university staff or administrators hostage. In 1976, a student at Peradeniya was killed when police opened fire on students holding university administrators hostage. In July 1983 the Dean of the Science Faculty, Professor H.W. Dias was seized in his office by a group of radical students. Following the incident the security forces were deployed when a decision to close the university was taken [14].

At Peradeniya, a police post was set up within the campus premises to ensure security at times of unrest. This occurred in 1971 after the April insurrection and again in 1983 following the riots (though the university itself was not affected by the riot). In both instance the security post became a point of contention between the authorities and students and in 1984 the security post was removed following an altercation between the police at the post and a group of students where one student was killed 15.

During periods of political turmoil i.e. the JVP insurrections of 1971 and 1987/1989 Universities became the

centres of radical political activity. While all the universities in the south were involved Peradeniya in the view of some authors, was the worst affected partly due to its physical layout and the organization of its space. Samaranayake suggests that the geographic location of the University of Peradeniya, enclosed on one side by the Hantana mountain range, while the Mahaweli River encircles it on the other side provides 'advantages' for revolutionary activities by students [16] The universities became hide - aways for JVP activists and storehouses for weapons, bombs and revolutionary literature. In Peradeniya especially clandestine political activities could be carried out easily due to the large halls of residence and vastness of the university.

G.H. Peiris while admitting that the university layout is aesthetically appealing considers it to be defective from a functional/disciplinary point of view. As the university space was conceived the maintenance of order was not prioritized. The first shortcoming being that two public highways traverse through the university campus, making access to any part of the university from outside more open than is usual in most university sites elsewhere. Secondly the physical boundaries of the campus are ill-defined. Towards the north and the northeast, the campus extends into the suburbs of Kandy; and in most other directions, it mergers almost imperceptibly with the adjacent villages. This ease of access and openness has it attendant problems namely that of security and protection of university property and the effective implementation of decisions concerning trespass or closure of the university [17].

Peiris observes that the campus planner with plenty of room to spread things out did so with 'gay abandon'. Thus the users of the campus many of whom are pedestrians have to cover fairly long distances to reach their places of work. Given the university's adherence to the policy of avoiding residential segregation on the basis of faculty affiliations,

the faculties too have been sited at fair distances from one another, enhancing the enclave nature of each faculty. The consequence of these arrangements is more than inconvenience. During times of unrest internal security arrangements of the university were seen to be spread out far too thinly over the campus to be effective. This arrangement has also curtailed cross-faculty interaction between staff and students, enhancing their mutual anonymity, and creating a situation where a teacher from one faculty would seldom venture into the precincts of another over matters concerning disorder and indiscipline 18. Thus from a disciplinary point of view university space differed from other forms of educational space: modern schools since the end of the 19th century had been conceived as institutions under a complete regime of discipline. A time table, a series of exercises, regular group activities and uniforms were significant components of this disciplinary regime 19.

The intervention of security forces within universities has not been limited to the police but has included military intervention as well. This has happened mainly during times of political unrest for instance in July 1989 the army occupied the Peradeniya campus and ordered its immediate closure. While many undergraduates were taken into custody the army mounted a 'clean up and search operation' and manned check - points were established within the campus. Peiris notes that university officialdom was more or less ignored for nearly two months [20].

Apart from being centres of JVP activities the universities themselves were sites of violent incidents in the late nineteen eighties. The university administration was targeted. On 3 March 1989, Professor Stanley Wijesundara, who had been the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo and had retired from office in the last quarter of

1988, but was serving the university on an advisory capacity, was shot dead in his office in the administrative building of the university

In June the same year at Peradeniya students seized, what they believed was a group of agents provocateurs, four men in a jeep. One of the men escaped but the other three were battered to the point of death 21 . According to de Silva students, members of the auxiliary staff and the Vice-Chancellor, A.R.P. Aluvihara witnessed the incident. Though Aluvihara tried to intercede it was to no avail and the students turned back the ambulance sent by the university hospital. The men were taken away by JVP adherents from outside of the university, out of the campus to a village close by and their bodies were found a day or two later.

In September of the same year Professor C. Patuwathavithane, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa was shot dead in his office, and the chief security officer of the university was killed with him. 'The weakness of the university security system was demonstrated afresh by the ease with which the murderers had gained entry to the university and access to the Vice-Chancellors office', de Siva writes[22]. In October a senior administrative officer at the University of Peradeniya was killed by the JVP. A day later a vigilante group entered the campus at night ...and killed more than 15 men, their decapitated heads were placed around a decorative pond that serves as a roundabout at the center of the campus[23]. This gruesome spectacle in one of the scenic spots of the university was a clear message of the irrelevance of aesthetic values in an age of violence and social conflict. These incidents within the universities however were not segregated events but reflected a time when law and order throughout the country had ceased to function.

Conclusion

In Sri Lanka how can the relationship between ideal and instrumentality be solved? How can the security of students and staff be ensured without the university campus becoming a policed and closed environment. A campus should ideally be the collaborative product of social scientists, planners, architects, landscape designers, scholars and environmentalists. In Sri Lanka the campus's aesthetic development has had more to do with immediate needs, the college administration's artistic sense (if any), politically motivated tender procedures and corruption laden building plans and generally chance. Can architecture resolve social problems? Foucault has answered this question on the liberating intention of architecture in a nuanced manner:
'If one were to find a place and perhaps there are some where liberty is effectively exercised, one would find that this is not owing to the order of objects, but once again owing to the practice of liberty'[24].

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Sri Lanka, University of Sri Lanka (Ceylon)
Peradeniya Academic Community

1972   *Memorandum on university re-organisation from the
academic community of Peradeniya Campus*; 11 October
1972. Peradeniya. Sri Lanka, University Grants
Commission

1984   *Corporate Plan for University Education 1984-1988.*
University Grants Commission.
(Student intake and graduate output are discussed
with the plan providing for a reduction in the intake
of students for arts courses and an increase in others.
Proposed new faculties, departments and courses to
be instituted in the period 1984-88 are outlined, also
staff norms, needs and finances.)

B) Educational Legislation

Bills

Ceylon, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs

1966   *A Bill to provide for the establishment of a National Council
of Higher Education, for the establishment, maintenance and
administration of Higher Institutes and for matters connected
therewith or incidental thereto*. Colombo: Government
Press, Ceylon.

Ceylon, Ministry of Education

1970   *A Bill to provide for establishment of a University Grants
Commission, for the establishment, maintenance and
administration of Universities and for matters connected
therewith or incidental thereto*. Colombo: Department of
Government Printing. (Bill No. 11).
(This Bill was hurriedly withdrawn due to the
insurrection which broke out the next day in the
country, and replaced by a very different Bill No. 51
of 1971.)

Ceylon, Ministry of Education

1972   *Bill to provide for the establishment of a University of Ceylon,
for the establishment, maintenance and administration of
that University, its Campuses, Faculties and Institutions
and for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto*.
Colombo: Department of Government Printing,
Ceylon.
(This Bill was later enacted as the University of Ceylon
Act, No. 1 of 1972.)

Sri Lanka, National State Assembly

1976   *University of Ceylon (Amendment). A Bill to attend the
University of Ceylon Act No. 1 of 1972*. Colombo:
Department of Government Printing.

Sri Lanka. Parliament of the Democratic Socialist
Republic of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Higher Education

1978   *Universities. A Bill to establish a University Grants
        Commission and a University Service Appeals Board to
        provide for the establishment, maintenance and
        administration of universities with their campuses and
        faculties and other higher educational institutions for matters
        connected therewith or incidental hereto.* Colombo:
        Department of Government Printing, Sri Lanka.

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20 – 1942 Ceylon University.
26 – 1943 Ceylon University (Amendment).

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Ceylon Parliament
1956   *Ceylon University (Amendment) Act No. 36 of 1956.*

Ceylon Parliament
1958   *Vidyodaya University and Vidyalankara University Act.
        No.45 of 1958,* Colombo Government Press.

Ceylon Parliament
1960   *Higher Education Act No.20 of 1960.*

Ceylon Parliament
1961   *Ceylon University (Amendment) Act No. 12 of 1968.*

Ceylon Parliament
1966   *Higher Education Act No. 20 of 1966.* Colombo:
        Government Press, Ceylon.

Ceylon Parliament
1968   *Higher Education (Amendment) Act. No. 5 of 1969.*
        Colombo: Government Press of Ceylon. (This Act
        provided for the use of the name University of Ceylon,

Colombo in grant of degrees for the period, 9 June
1967 to 18 June 1968)

Ceylon Parliament
1972   *University of Ceylon Act No.1 of 1972.* Colombo:
        Department of Government Printing, Ceylon.
        Sri Lanka. Parliament of the Democratic Socialist
        Republic of Sri Lanka

1978   *Universities Act No. 16 of 1978.* Colombo, Department
        of Government Printing Sri Lanka.
        (This Act established a University Grants Commission
        and a University Service Appeals Board and provided
        for the administration of universities with their
        campuses and other higher educational institutions.
        At the outset the six campuses of the single University
        of Sri Lanka, set up under the previous Act No.1 of
        1972, were converted to six independent universities
        on January 1st 1979.)

C) Reports

Ceylon, Ministry of Education
1956   *Final Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the
        national languages* (Sinhalese and Tamil). Colombo:
        Ceylon Government Press.
        (The Commission report makes detailed
        recommendations on the change-over in the medium
        of instructions in technical colleges, teacher colleges,
        senior secondary school and University. It
        recommends the establishment of new Universities.)

Ceylon, Ministry of Education
1971   *The report of the committee appointed by the Hon. Minister
        of Education to report on the reorganization of Higher
        Education.* Colombo: June.

(This report submitted just six weeks after the appointment of the Committee led to the University of Ceylon Act No. 1 of 1972. The report was bitterly criticized by many academic and students bodies chiefly for its recommendations relating to the establishment of a single university in Sri Lanka and the 'rationalization' of courses taught in different campuses.)

Ceylon, National Council for Higher Education
1969   *The framework of a plan for the development of Universities in Ceylon, (1969-78).* Draft Report submitted to the NCHE.
(Mimeographed copy available at the Curriculum Development Centre Library and the National Institute of Education. The Chairman, G.P. Malalasekera states that this is a plan-frame for the University development. It contains the University scene as it existed in the late sixties, student demand for University education, manpower requirements and academic development and research.)

Ceylon, National Council for Higher Education
1968-1973 *Reports of the National Council for Higher Education, 1966-67 1970-71.* Colombo: Ceylon Government Press.
(This report covers the entire period of the existence of the NCHE.)

Ceylon, Parliament
1966   *Report of Standing Committee B on Higher Education Bill, together with the Minutes of Proceedings and Notes of Evidence.* Ceylon Government Press. (The verbatim publication of the proceedings of the Committee is prefaced by a copy of the Higher Education Bill.)

Ceylon, University of Ceylon. Peradeniya, Board of Regents
1969   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry of the Board of Regents into the events on the Peradeniya Campus. Colombo.*
(Chairman – C.X. Martin. The report investigates clashes between the students and the army after the latter were permitted to occupy the Gymnasium of the University in connection with Independence day celebrations in Kandy on 4 February 1969.)

Ceylon, University of Ceylon, Colombo
1971   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry,* Part I: Student grievances – dilemma *of* higher education. Colombo: University of Ceylon.
(Chairman – Nath Amarakone. This report covers a broad area of higher education. The report recommends the provision of residential facilities for students in Colombo and the encouragement of publications in Sinhala and Tamil. It proposes that the university staff should be induced to conduct research for their postgraduate degrees while in service that the money spent for their travel abroad should be therefore used to strengthen research facilities in the University.)

Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka
1974   *Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the University of Ceylon,* Peradeniya, Katubedda: Sri Lanka University Press.
(Chairman: Walter Wimalachandra. This Commission appointed on the basis of a number of allegations made by a former Competent Authority of the University Council of Ceylon, Peradeniya faced suspicion and hostility from the academic community. However it made extensive investigations largely into the administrative side of the University and made

detailed recommendations. The report also deals with the conditions relating to the introduction of arms to the University prior to the youth insurrection in 1971) Sri Lanka, Ministry of Education

1976   *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the circumstances that led to the closure of the Peradeniya Campus of the University of Sri Lanka in September 1976.* Colombo.

Sri Lanka, National Council for Higher Education

1969   *The framework of a plan for the development of universities in Ceylon (1969-78).* Draft report submitted by the Working Group to the NCHE Colombo.
(The document makes an effort to plan for the next decade in terms of students enrolment, expenditure, academic development and research.)

Sri Lanka, Parliament

1977   *Report of the Presidential Commission appointed to inquire into irregularities in the University of Sri Lanka during the period 28 May 1970 to 23 July 1977,* Colombo: Department of Government Printing.

D) Sessional Papers

Sessional Paper XVI

1915   *Establishment of a University College in Ceylon –* Dispatches .

Sessional Paper XIV

1916   *Proposed Ceylon University College –* Conference Report

Sessional Paper IX

1920   Establishment of a university college in Ceylon – Correspondence.

Sessional Paper III

1925   Hostels for University undergraduates.

Sessional Paper X

1925   University buildings.

Sessional Paper V

1927   *University Site Commission Report.*
(Discusses three questions, 1) Whether it is desirable to establish a university in Ceylon, 2) if so, the type of university most suitable to the conditions prevailing in Ceylon and 3) the most suitable site for the proposed university.)

Sessional Paper IX

1927   *The University Site Committee's Report –* Comments of the Principal, University College.
(source: National Museum. Gives the comments of Marrs, Principal University College, to the Colonial Secretary.)

Sessional Paper XXVIII

1927   *Proposed university for Ceylon –* Reports on alternative sites in the Dumbara valley.
(source: National Museum.)

Sessional Paper IV (or VI)

1929   *University Commission Report.*
(source: University Library Peradeniya.)

Sessional Paper XXVIII

1929   *Present system of education in Ceylon –* Commission Report.

Sessional Paper XXIII

1959   *University Commission Report.*

(source: University Library Peradeniya. Chaired by Prof. Joseph Needham. Analyses the operations of the University of Ceylon mainly in the light of eight allegations made against it. Absence of research and research traditions, isolation of teaching from research and the consequent reduction in academic standards.)

Sessional Paper XVI

1963   *Report of the Universities Commission 1962.*
(Chairman – D.C.R. Gunawardena. A comprehensive survey o the three existing Universities which concludes with a recommendation for the closure of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara and the integration of the students of those universities to the Colombo Campus. Suggests a reorganization of the sources and the establishment of a new University in Jaffna. Other recommendations cover the whole field of University administration, finances and courses of study. A mimeographed response to the Commission report by the incumbent Vice-Chancellor, Sir Nicholas Attygalle is available in the Peradeniya University library.)

Sessional Paper III

1966   *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Peradeniya University Students Strike* (of December 1965). Colombo: Ceylon Government Press.
(The report makes strictures not only on the university administration but on certain individual teachers and students.)

Sessional Paper XXVI

1967   *Establishment of the University of Colombo* – Report by Frank Thistlethwaite.

(source: University Library Peradeniya. This report makes recommendations on the basis of which the Colombo Campus of he University of Ceylon was to be made a separate university. The major foci of the report are academic administration, the course structure, research and student affairs.)

Sessional Paper VIII

1968   *University of Colombo. Report of the Committee of Inquiry University of Colombo,* ʻMarch 1968. Colombo: Government Press, Ceylon.
(Chairman – S.F. Amerasinghe. The Committee investigated the unrest and disquiet that had arisen due to the decision to name the University at Colombo as the University of Colombo and recommended that it be called the University of Ceylon, Colombo.)

Sessional Paper XXIII (vol. II)

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(Chairman – V.C. Jayasuriya. The appointment of the Commission was triggered by student unrest and the report investigated its causes. The report also deals with instances of mal-administration and financial irregularity and makes a series of recommendations. A detailed response by Ven. Yakkaduwe Sri Pragnarama, Acting Vice-Chancellor of he University is available in mimeographed form as *Vishva Vidyalaye Commission Sabhave Varthava pilibanda Vidyalankara Vishva Vidyalaye vivechanaya.*)

Sessional Paper XI

1975   *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into "ragging" at Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka.*

Sessional Paper I
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        (R.G. 108.8) 1967-68.

Commission of Inquiry, University of Peradeniya.
        (R.G. 129) 1976.

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        Peradeniya.
        (R.G. 169) 1976-1977 (closed).
        (R.G. 231) 1961-1980.

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        (R.G. 263) 1981-1987.

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        (R.G. 89.2) 1967-1982.

Colombo Campus
        (R.G. 89.3) 1974-1996.

Vidyalankara Campus
        (R.G. 89.4) 1984.

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        (R.G. 89.5) 1969-1982.

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        (R.G. 89.8) 1974-1986.

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and suggests that it should be abandoned and better
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for University employees. Lankasia is taken to mean Asia with special reference to Sri Lanka.)

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1957   "University Freedom: End of the Road", *Nation*, 12 (43), 28 November, pp. 1, 4.
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(source: National Museum. The author emphasizes that the University should   participate   in   the construction of human life in agreement with human dignity, not merely to accumulate knowledge of

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Nira Wickramasinghe is a Professor in the Department of History and International Relations, University of Colombo. She studied at the Université de Paris IV - Sorbonne and at St. Antony's College, Oxford, where she obtained a D. Phil. in History.

She has been Visiting Professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, World Bank Robert McNamara Fellow and recently Fulbright Senior Scholar at New York University. Her recent publications include, *Civil Society in Sri Lanka, New Circles of Power* (New Delhi, London, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publishers 2001)*, Dressing the Colonised Body* (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2003) and *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age, A History of Contested Identities* (C. Hurst, London; University of Hawaii Press, Jan. 2006 forthcoming)

She is presently researching rebellions in the early years of British rule.