USE OF ARCHITECTURE IN DEMONSTRATING POLITICAL POWER IN POST-CONFICT COLOMBO

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Abstract
Architecture and political power have associated each other throughout the history. Architecture has the ability to 'frame' space and thereby structure actions and construct meaning. The study intended to research upon the nexus between architecture and political power by investigating 'how' architecture demonstrate political power and 'what' they intend to mean, thereby influence and frame the usage of space by people. A theoretical framework was established at the beginning. Studying the context and international examples were studied. The case study was is post-conflict Colombo (2009-2015) which was analysed with evidences gathered through interviews, reports, newspapers, magazines and many more. The study was broad and multi-disciplinary by its' nature. Hence, the research was carefully narrowing down without compromising its' very nature. Since the research was investigating into social-physical phenomena, the analysis was conducted in a narrative format, with the intention of describing it in holistic form. The study identifying key factors such as identities, symbolic representation of identities, change of context, projected imagery of public space and political ideology, aspirations were significant factors contributing subconscious of the public. These were achieved by means of building processes and built form either by design or by default are not deterministic or complete.

Keywords: Power, Built form, Representation, Urban meaning, Identity

1. Introduction

The study was on the use of architecture as to demonstrate political power in post-conflict Colombo. Architecture has always associated power and it has been used as tool in many ways to demonstrate political power throughout history in an attempt legitimise.

The research was similar to Interpretive Research where typically evidence is drawn from archival and artifactual sources. This was due to the fact that these types of research are primarily focuses on a setting or circumstance from the past. Imperative Researches are specifically investigating into social-physical phenomena within complex contexts. With a view toward describing and explaining those phenomena in a holistic narrative form (Groat & Wang, 2002).

Under third heading, Architecture and its power relations in the world are discussed first. Under architecture and political power in the world, international examples from different parts of the world representing different political ideologies belonging to different time periods in the recent history.

The data/evidences on case studies was collected, organized, evaluated and narrated in a circular process in the final part. The analysis was done under, Power in building process and Power in built form. It is very important to understand such clear distinction cannot be made between built form and process of building. It was done only with intention to conduct and elaborate the analysis in scientific manner. Data was collected through newspaper articles, journal articles, interviews with scholars, books, exhibition catalogues, photographs, drawings, websites, observations and etc. Interviews were conducted with Architects, Artists, Sociologists, Journalists and other scholars as a part of not only gathering information, yet as form of validating the gathered information. Reports published by Centre for Policy Alternatives and Centre for Poverty Analysis during the post-conflict period, are incorporated since they are published in public, debated publicly and covers a large number of people.

Short Term

(1) To demonstrate political power and what they mean in deeper sense in terms of cultural, psychological, social.
(2) Thereby, create a foundation in understanding nexus between architecture and urban design and

power by analysing a selected case study (Colombo).

Long Term

(1) It is important that as designers have an understanding on these, since it is the architects and urban designers themselves are the ones who has the capacity and academic training in creating the built environment. Therefore, this understanding is vital certain that in order for an architect to fulfil their role and responsibilities in the society.

(2) Setting up a foundation for further research on this field of study

(3) Thereby, contributing to the architectural discourse
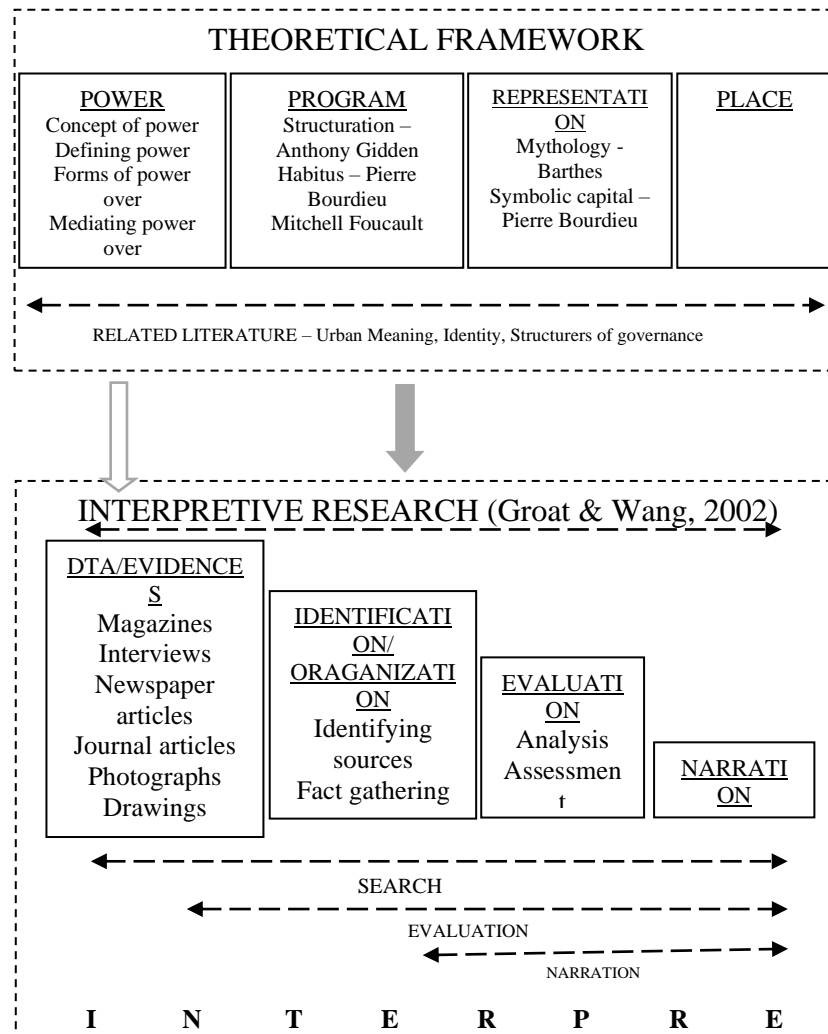
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. POWER

The word power is used and rather misused widely. It refers to a variety of different capacities. The potential danger in using this term word is that it can mean anything therefore nothing. The term 'power' derives from the Latin word potere, which means 'to be able' or the capacity to meet an end. Generally, in human affairs, power is control 'over' others. Isaac (1992) states that the distinction between 'power to' and 'power over' or in other words between power as capacity and as a relationship between people, is fundamental (Dovey, 2008). According to Rorty (as cited in Dovey, 2008, p.11) "Power is the ability...to define and control circumstances and events so that on can influence things to go in the direction of one's interest".

Everyday life experiences have seemingly given awareness of 'power over' while 'power to' is taken to granted. Therefore, this could be identified as an illusion which creates an opposition between power and emancipation.

The distinction between power over and power to is important. Power over is the power of one agent (an individual or a group) has over another. Power to ensure the compliance of the other with one's will. The distinctions between terms such as coercion, manipulation, force, authority and seduction are important. These forms rarely appear in isolation. In fact, often in a complex mix of them in architecture and urban design (Dovey, 2008).

There is a question whether exercise of power over is mostly transparent to its agent. Nietzsche says that civilized life is really a cover for an all-consuming 'will to power'. Machiavelli had said that all forms of legitimation are masks for the individual 'will'. Either self-deceit or hypocrisy is necessary to the effective pursuit of power, since naked 'will to power' cannot be legitimized as an end itself. Self-deceit is what Orwell terms as 'double think', where two contradictory beliefs are held within and thereby deliberately service one agenda while justifying it with the use of another. Self-deceit is important to the discourse of aesthetics (Dovey, 2008).

Powerful symbolic use of physical environment which is a form of political power (Vale, 1992) has a strong say in the political space. This is due to the capacity it poses to stabilize identity and symbolize a 'grounding' of authority in the landscape, nature and 'timeless' imagery. It is clear that architecture is called regularly to legitimate power in a crisis (Dovey, 2008).

2.2. PROGRAMME

There are three main social theories which would help to understand how the power is mediated through spatial planning and spatial practices. They are Theory of Structuration by Anthony Gidden, Habitus by Pierre Bourdieu and literature by Mitchell Foucault. Yet, at this point, the study will only touch upon only on certain parts which can be related to understand this nexus between architecture and political power, since these theories are vast bodies of knowledge which addresses a broad range of social phenomenon.

2.3. REPRESENTATION

This part of theoretical study is on representation will help to understand the ways in which ways the meanings of places are constructed in text. These theory systems are largely from social theory. The language is not a transparent medium and it is through the language that we view the world, rather the language is what construct the experiences (Dovey, 2008). The city is a discourse which is a language. The city would speaks to its citizens, we peak our city simply by living in it (Barthes, 1997). Concepts such as culture, identity, nature and community are social constructions. Therefore, the central role of agency is questioned. Human being as an agent is replaced by the 'subject' who is constructed and enmeshed in the discourse, through which meanings are communicated. The built environment is a major form of discourse just as speech, food or fashion. In this sense, power relations are naturally entangled with the discourse since the subjects are constructed with certain interests. It includes the interest of the state in maintaining social order and power; private interests in stimulating consumption; and dominant cultures, classes and groups interests in maintaining privileges. Desire, identity, fear and joy are created from representation and discourse., which would create oppositions between the normal and the deviant (Dovey, 2008). As Dovey (2008) say, the real becomes a social construction.

2.4. PLACE

'Place' can be viewed as an experiential phenomenon as opposed to 'space'. It is a location which is experienced as meaningful in a larger spatial context. The concept of 'place' is linked with terms such as identity, community, character, home which play major roles in everyday life. However, these are the terms which resonate in different scales from local to global; neighbourhood, city, region, nation and

global. Places construct and frame programs and representational narratives (Dovey, 2008).

3. Architecture and Political Power in The World

Architecture can be understood in different ways. When trying to understand transformation of cities and particular work of architecture created by the direct and indirect involvement of the state, it is vital to understand them in different dimensions of political point of views. One needs to understand them in terms of the political and cultural context that helped to bring these factions into power. Transformation of built environment needs to be studied and analysed parallel to the political structure of the state and its' evolution.

The built space is what we perceive, conceive and live (Lefebvre, 2003). Aristotle once said that man is a political creature. Therefore, the built environment or space is created and lived by the man is essentially political. The buildings and their contexts are symbols of political presence and economic power.

Having stated that, it is clear why political idols have closely associated architects and have been conscious on built environment throughout the history across the globe. Unlike any other forms of art Architecture is can be identified as the single most dominant instrument of demonstrating political power (Jameson, 1997)

The study of political power and architecture, there are quite a number of cities, monuments and contexts. The City Beautification Movement in Chicago, New Delhi, Berlin and Moscow during 1900-1945, is one such. The City Beautification movement had its origins in the nineteenth century which was on the promenades and boulevards in Europe. The two classic examples were the construction of Paris by Haussmann under Napoleon III and the construction of Vienna Ring Strasse. However, the twentieth century manifestation were seen in other parts of the world and cultures. One such was in western and middle America, where civic leaders wanted to overcome collective inferiority complex and boost business by building (verb). The other fine example was in British colonies, where British civil servants were commissioned to plan the newly designated capitals of the Empire, which were meant to express and showcase the imperial dominance and racial exclusiveness. Then again in 1930s, the city beautification came to its spiritual and geographic location; Europe. The totalitarian dictators who were largely interested in the powerful use symbolic use of physical environment (Vale, 1992), wanted to impose their megalomaniac vision of glory on their capital cities (Hall, 2001). As Hall (2001) suggests, there are strange similarities in the outcomes with disquieting implication, despite the superficially different contexts.

Figure 1, From L to R – Model of Germania, Cathedral of Light, Painting of Palace of Soviets, Painting of Chicago Center *(Sources: http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org , https://rarehistoricalphotos.com https://www.heritage-images.com, www.architecture.org)*

4. Conflict

The conflict had its' roots since the beginning of independence in 1948. The Ceylonese nationalism which led towards gaining independence from the colonial rule, took a form of ethno-nationalism especially after independence (it was evident from colonial rule). The three major ethnicities, the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims clinched on to their ethnic identities in the attempt build a national identity. Ethnic conflicts are much more powerful than other social conflicts such as on class and elite.

The ethnicity in the modern world is therefore a powerful source of conflict. Therefore, all communities are prone to social conflict. The political authority finds its legitimacy by the inherent ethnic composition of the country (Balasuriya, 2011).

The successive governments continue the British policy of divide and rule and the political leaderships on both ends kept on acting on ethnic lines since it was an effective method to win votes. Tamil politicians campaigned to racially unite their people while the Sinhalese politicians nursed the grievance bared by their people against the Tamils. The quest for national identity further deteriorated the relationship between the two ethnicities. Subsequently ethnic riots clashes and riots took place in 1956, 1961, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983. Constitution reformations too had a major impact to the conflict (Balasuriya, 2011). The conflict turned to an armed struggle between the state forces and the Tamil militant group, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) for three decades and was finally over in 2009 after the LTTE was militarily defeated.

5. Demonstration of Political Power in Post-Conflict Colombo-Case Study Analysis

"City is really about consolidation of power (Kostov, 1991), by a ruler, a political regime or the expression of economic power." (Powell, 2016, p.95)

Architecture has long roots in the broader quest for identity, power and legitimacy. Therefore, as Dovey (2008) writes, the question is never about whether these particular works of architecture and urban design partook symbolism, but the scale at which they did. Yet to determine that it is important to investigate on how it was done and what they intended to mean/ signify.

According to Lawrence Vale (1992), there forms of power by which power is evinced. They are a charismatic leadership, an indomitable military presence, and entrenched bureaucracy, imposing network of laws and status and the powerful symbolic use physical environment. The analysis will elaborate on the powerful symbolic use of the physical environment in post-conflict Colombo. In fact, it will make you aware that, these forms are intertwined.

5.1 CASE STUDY SELECTION
Key reasons to select post-conflict Colombo as the case study are,

1. Colombo has been the capital city Commercial Capital at present) since British Imperial Rule and post-independence Ceylon and it continues to be the center of attraction.
2. Governments over the years have shown keen interest in developing Colombo.
3. Post-conflict Colombo development was the most recently witnessed out of the different eras in Colombo development such as immediate post-independence (1948) phase, introduction of Republican constitution (1972) and the phase after the introduction of Executive Presidency and open economy (1978).

It is an extension of the post-conflict Colombo is still what we perceive, conceive and continue to live in this very instant.

According to the UDA, the transformation of Colombo had few phases under the Urban Regeneration Project (UPR), which accelerated both beautification and regeneration of the city (Rodrigo, 2014).

1. Waste management.
2. Beautifying Colombo, which in fact is kind of the larger picture behind all other phases.
3. Urban parks such as Viharamahadevi Park, Diyatha Uyana, Independence Square and Fort and roadside development (paving).
4. Renovation projects noticeably focused only on colonial architecture. The three main renovation projects were Dutch Hospital, Racecourse and Arcade-Independence Square.

5. Turning markets into an eye-candy state.
6. Relocation of informal settlements in the city (slums and shanties according them) which according to the UDA were on illegal and unauthorized land.

This research was mainly focused on (2) Beautifying Colombo, which was focused on public spaces. Yet, it touched upon other phases as well as mentioned before, since they are essential to understand this transformation as whole rather than picking individual works of architecture (buildings), or else if not the study will not reach the intended depth. As Jameson (1997) notes, "None of the individual projects that makes up politics has the supreme value of the whole collective activity".

5.2. MODES OF VALIDATION
The validation was based on three factors;

1. The theoretical framework and other literature
2. International case studies discussed in heading 3 (Architecture and political power in the world).
3. Evidences – interviews, magazine articles, newspaper articles, video documentaries, web articles, public surveys and reports, photographs, advertisements, research papers etc.

5.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS
There is no denial on the fact that architecture and political power has been closely related throughout the globe ever since human society was formed. Political leaders and architects have always been keen on this nexus. Hence, the study was not trying to raise the question whether architectural space is political or not, or should it be political or not, but how and what architectural spaces have become political. When posing such questions, one needs to be clear that the study itself is multi-disciplinary, therefore can be interpreted in multiple ways which might even contradict each other. The study was very much qualitative and is based on different social and political theoretical interpretations. Therefore, it is open for debate, by all means.

Post-conflict Colombo as public space witnessed a variety of architectural and urban design projects. Having stated that, the study was focused only on projects initiated by the state and its' institutions, in this instance mostly by the UDA. Especially public spaces, while not degrading the other projects such as social housing projects.

One of the first things to be noted is that, the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009, after three decades of conflict has naturally created new social and economic aspiration. Moreover, it became a milestone demanding interpretation for long standing issues, some which had been the root causes for the armed conflict, such as national identity. Hence, it can be said that there was a strong incident or a context which has given and raised a great deal of significance to the nexus between political power and architecture.

When trying to understand 'how' political power has been demonstrated by the use of architecture and urban design, or the powerful symbolic use of physical environment suggested by Vale (1992) to be precise, which would evince power. It is evident that itis achieved by means of architecture/ building as an object and then building as a process. When by means of an object, or in other words through the built form, power is demonstrated either by design or by default. Nevertheless, they can be attributed to the location, architectural language, architectural semiotics, orientation, access (physical or psychological), scale, geometry, aesthetics and so forth as seen in places such as Arcade-Independence Square, Racecourse and even in and parks such as Diyatha Uyana. It is vital to understand that they are not only determining ways of expression and that they used and operated in collectively. Hence, it proves the fact suggested by Krier (as cited in Dovey, 2008, p.74), "that architecture is not political; it is only an instrument of politics".

Next to touch upon the process of building expressing political power. This is evident by means of militarization (force and authority), forced evictions as witnessed in incidents such as Mews Street and ceremonies and parades (seduction) in Colombo public spaces. These processes create a 'spectacle' in the eye of the society and moreover acts as a symbol of different forms of power as well.

Figure 2, Cultural shows and light shows at Arcade-Independence Square *(Source: http://www.colombopage.com/archive)*

Figure 3, Arcade Independence Square illuminated at night *(Source :http://www.sundaytimes.lk)*

Figure 4, Forced eviction at Mews street *(Source: https://mffcoexist.wordpress.com)*

Irrespective of whether power was demonstrated by built form or by process, one could say that both these create a spectacle or an image, by which the political power is legitimized. At the same time, they become important parts of the day to day space we dwell in; space is in this case is not only physical yet a complex mixture of social, cultural, political and psychological dimensions.

Hence, the powerful symbolic use of physical environment both as objects and as processes, in fact contribute to a greater extend to the other forms which Vale (1992) had suggested, from which power is evinced.

In attempt to state 'what' they mean, it yet again a complex mixture of identities; individual identity, national identity, class identity and ethnic identity, political ideologies and cultural and economic phenomena. Yet, by all means they undoubtedly establish power and help those in power to locate them in time and space.

The very nature of the study enables many other interpretations to be brought into the discourse, while raising questions such what degree these architectural spaces are political and how effective they were in demonstrating political power than to another.

It is understood that there is nothing wrong in the nexus between political power and architecture (place) or that there is an ideal way to design. In fact, place and power are strongly linked to each other, which suggest that designers should not design with a blind eye towards this nexus.

This study touched upon some of the practices of political power in the built form. But they are not complete nor discrete. Power has many faces. The its' practice and mediation are slippery and hidden. These cannot be severed completely, since "we are always already engaged in its practice" (as cited in Dovey, 2008, 18).

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