

Adaptations and Negotiations of Local People towards 'Development': Case of Hambantota, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

"Planners, designers and architects are not paying attention in knowing how things work in cities. On the contrary, they have gone to great pains to learn how cities have to work and what have to be good for people" (Jacobs, 1961). This has made them create cities in a way which they found 'ideal' to achieve what they (mis)understood as 'development'. Furthermore, the trend of the recent city development in many parts of the world including Sri Lanka has been 'changing the existing according to what power wants'. All of which do not seem appropriate to the socio-cultural spaces that are produced by the local people in their daily life. The local people, therefore, adapt various strategies to transform what is given into how it can be lived. This research examines such adaptation process and the responsive negotiations of local people towards 'development' in the case of Hambantota, Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Adaptation Process; Negotiations; Socio-cultural Spaces; Development*

1. Introduction

Understanding people's way of living and building is increasingly brought to the attention of planners as in many global cities planning is considered as changing the existing according to what the *power* wants. What is resulted is the "externally imposed spaces" on local people (Perera, 2007) which is not appropriate to the spatial practices of locals. The local people, therefore, adapt various strategies to transform spaces to best suit their purpose. This transformative capacity of people to familiarize the strange is viewed by Scott (1985) as "the weapons of the weak". Scott (1985) further argues that the indirect, informal, low-profile techniques of resistance followed by relatively powerless people are often the most significant and the most effective over the long run.

There are considerable amount of researches done emphasizing the importance of understanding people's way of living and investigating how they negotiate and respond towards the authorities' definition of 'development'. The key intention of such researches is to assist planners rethink their role to do what they do better. This research contributes to the same intention shedding light on Hambantota, Sri Lanka where the 'Planned New City Development' of government is presently taking place.

2. Literature Review

The negotiative capacity of local people over how authorities define 'development' is recognized by many scholars as part of their main work. Goh Beng Lan (2002) argues that people are never passive recipients of external initiatives, but rather always struggle within their own immediate contexts of constraints and opportunities to produce a meaningful life with their own particular values and goals (Goh Beng Lan, 2002). As people produce their own living space meaningful for

themselves for their social and cultural activities, the original space tends to transform. This transformation process of local people is observed by Giddens (2002). He highlights the capability of even the most dependent and weak persons to carve out spheres of autonomy of their own. As elaborated by Perera (2007), the local people's process of creating new hybridized cultural practice and spaces opens up possibility of redefining and negotiating the space. Familiarization, including indigenization, localization, and personalization are simultaneously forms of questioning, resistance, and adaptation of extant spaces and spatial structures (Perera, 2007).

Meanwhile, there are large number of studies on how the creation of cities by planners, designers, and architects has led to the struggle of the existence of lives. For example, Kalia (2004) has explored the city of Chandigarh in his book *Chandigarh: In Search of an Identity*. He elaborates that the city of Chandigarh is designed in compliance to a different set of ideals that totally disregarded the social, cultural and economic conditions of the society for which they were built. The design of this city imposed 'new forms of perception, experience and interaction'. Chandigarh had been intended to be a model city in terms of planning. However, it has failed both socially and culturally; it does not provide the economic setup to support all its inhabitants (Kalia, 2004).

Another example is given by Perera (2010) in *Crossing Borders: International Exchange and Planning Practices* in which he examines the planning and development of the Mahaweli towns in Sri Lanka. He argues that the sponsors, funding agencies, consultants, and government largely shared the idea of a 'universal' approach to development. Despite praising ancient Sri Lankan hydraulic schemes, the consultants on the Mahaweli employed Western models such as that of the Tennessee Valley development which had also been followed in the Gal-Oya irrigation project in the Eastern Province. Other Western theories such as Central Place Theory and post-war master planning were applied in conceiving the physical layout of urban centers. He further says that the project leaders viewed locality and inhabitants as the background setting, rather than as the figures animating the scene. The settlers were considered the recipients of better life, the target population, the object of development, with no agency or voice. For the purposes of planning, they were bodies in space that needed to be ordered and organized (Perera, 2010).

Therefore, it is important for the authorities and power bodies to develop cities recognizing the ability of people to control their own lives. City planning and development should acknowledge the desires and aspirations of the people and value their own efforts to achieve what they understand as development.

3. Methodology

The preliminary stage was a detail literature review which helped develop a theoretical framework. This was followed by a review of archival records in order to understand the historical context and the evolution of socio-spatial setting of the city of Hambantota. Further, interviews with selected officials and review of reports were carried out to understand the power bodies' way of development in the city. Finally, informal discussions with the local residents were conducted to get to know their perceptions on the present 'development' in their city. In understanding the responsive adaptations and negotiations of people of Hambantota, the informal conversations with local people were tremendously helpful than any other sophisticated data collection tools and techniques.

4. The Case Study: Hambantota, Sri Lanka

4.1 The Setting

Hambantota town is the major service center in the Hambantota District, Southern Province, Sri Lanka. It is located 241km south of Colombo (along the Colombo-Galle-Matara-Tissamaharama Highway). According to year 2001 census, Greater Hambantota Area has the total population of

206,588 within the total land extent of 113,200 Ha. Meanwhile, the total population of Hambantota Municipal Council area is 11,200. Greater Hambantota Area includes seven District Secretariat Divisions (DSDs) such as Ambalantota, Hambantota, Sooriyawewa, Tissamaharama, Lunugamwehera, Thanamalwila and Sewanagala.

The basic economic sectors of the town of Hambantota are fishing, agriculture, salt production and services. Other popular domestic small scale industries are *Kalu Dodol* (a native festive food), sweets making, pottery making, and brick making. The town and its surrounding region possess many environmentally sensitive land covers which include dry zone forests, tanks, ponds, and salt pans. Another main character of Hambantota town is that it accommodates all different ethnic communities (Sinhalese and Muslims, in particular). These different ethnic communities live together in harmony exchanging their cultural values in the same living environment.

4.2 The History of Hambantota

The historical records say that the kingdom of Ruhuna was established by King Devanampiyathissa of Anuradhapura in the southern region of the island. This region played a vital role in building the country and nurturing the Buddhist culture. Meanwhile, the natural harbor setting that was found in the south coast attracted travelers and traders from the Far East, Siam, China and Indonesia.

According to the narration of Charitha Ratwatta (2013) in *Colombo Telegraph*, human settlements originated around the port of Hambantota from the earliest times when it established itself as an important port. The Dutch, who wrestled the Maritime Provinces from the Portuguese, stationed a regiment at Hambantota. At this time the Kandyan Kingdom gained its supplies of salt from Hambantota. The Dutch who realized the importance of the salt pans as weapons in their attempt to bring the king under their power stationed a battalion in Hambantota. During the British period Hambantota developed further not only as a port, but as an urban center. During that period (until 1928) Hambantota port developed as a navel center. Messars Walker & Sons Ltd were entrusted with the maintenance of the port of Hambantota and according to the British administrative reports a number of ships called at this port each month. The British built Kachcheri regional offices, schools, a police station, a hospital and a court complex in Hambantota (Ratwatta, 2013).

There are many different stories said in various records for how Hambantota got its name. However, most commonly known story is, according to what the web source of the University of Ruhuna says, the vessels the traders traveled in were called 'SAMPANS' and their anchorage came to be known as 'SAMPANTOTA'. By and by, the area came to be called 'HAMBANTOTA'. Thus, 'Hambantota' refers 'the port for Hambans'. The town associated with this port as well as the administrative region around it came to be known by this name (University of Ruhuna, Southern History, 2013).

From its historical period, Hambantota was known for its extraction and distribution of salt to the rest of the country. The dry climate was ideal for salt production. The salt distribution was the monopoly of Muslim traders who took salt to the interior hills and bartered it for spices which they brought back to Magampura and exported. Certain researchers have shown that the development of Muslim communities in the interior of the island have been on this salt route. And, before the advent of the Europeans, the Muslims held the monopoly of the internal trade in salt and the external trade in spices.

Certain other sources mention that due to the proximity of Galle harbor, Hambantota was not a popular attraction for Dutch and Portuguese. Their interest was mainly due to the salt pans which had a wide distribution around the country from Hambantota. However, the prominence came to Hambantota during the British. The British moved the garrison to Hambantota and built their own city around the harbor. Even with all the attempts of Colonialists to make Hambantota a

better city to live, the district experienced a gradual decline during and after the colonial era. The only industries of any capacity were salt extraction and the dairy industry (Ratwatta, 2013).

4.3 Hambantota: What it was?

During the period from 1980 to 1995, Hambantota was considered as the country's most remote and poorest region. The majority of population led an existence surviving through fishing, small-scale agriculture and salt farming. Hambantota was a poor district with social indicators well below the national level at the height of the 1989-1995. In year 2000, 31% out of the total population lived below poverty line. Various poverty alleviation programs were introduced by the government and non-governmental organizations to uplift the quality of life of people of Hambantota. Further, Hambantota District is one of the worst affected areas by tsunami that hit Sri Lanka on December 26, 2004. The official death toll claim in Hambantota was approximately 4,500. In year 2008, it was announced by the government that the poverty level has been reduced up to 12.7% due to the various poverty alleviation and quality of life improvement projects and programs of the government (News Line, 2008).

However, the most crucial turn to the town was the year 2010 which rewrote the destiny of the town. This is due to the special political interests of the elected government on Hambantota, Mahinda Chintana political doctrine of the government and the resulted National Physical Plan 2030 of the National Physical Planning Department. Hambantota gained a huge importance nationally and internationally afterwards.

4.4 Hambantota: What it is going to be?

The vision of the Mahinda Chintana political doctrine of the present government is to make Sri Lanka an Emerging Wonder of Asia. This vision will be achieved through the proposed five hubs such as Navigation Hub, Aviation Hub, Knowledge Hub, Energy Hub, and Commercial Hub. The National Physical Plan 2030 which was prepared by the National Physical Planning Department in year 2011 is the national level development plan that implements the goals of Mahinda Chintana political doctrine. The key proposals of the National Physical Plan 2030 are conservation of the central fragile region of the country and creation of five metro regions each with metro cities. The major goal behind the metro regions is to reduce regional disparities and to distribute population growth in a planned manner.



Figure 1: Major Projects of the Greater Hambantota Development Plan of Urban Development Authority.

Source: Urban Development Authority

One of the five metro regions is Hambantota Metro Region which is comprised of entire Greater Hambantota Metro

Area. The proposed Metro City within the Hambantota Metro Region is Hambantota town. This is how Hambantota town got into the power bodies version of 'development'. When the development of Hambantota Metro City became the priority of the present government, the Greater Hambantota Development Plan was prepared by the Urban Development Authority proposing many mega scale development projects to achieve the goals of the government (Figure 1).

The vision of the Greater Hambantota Development Plan is *A Gateway to Asia*. In order to achieve the said vision, the development plan adopted the approach of Mahinda Chintana political doctrine. Accordingly, the five hubs such as navigation hub, aviation hub, knowledge hub, energy hub, and commercial hub will be established within the town. Thus, the mega scale projects such as Magampura International Harbour, Mattala International Airport, Commonwealth Games Village in Sooriyawewa, Botanical Garden in Mirijjiewella, Hambantota City Center (with all kinds of high-end facilities) in Siribopura with administrative complex, international convention center, banking square, city hotels, tourism development along coastal belt, extension of Southern Highway up to Kataragama, Extension of Southern Railway up to Kataragama, and industrial areas were proposed. Some of the above mentioned projects are now completed, but all of them are scheduled to be completed in 2030.

It is noted that these development projects are not merely the outcomes of the Greater Hambantota Development Plan but resulted due to the present government's political interest on Hambantota.

4.5 Hambantota: What it is today?

Today the town looks different. The change is what is expected by the power bodies. It has both good and bad faces. There are newly built up areas which give a new look to the entire town. Meanwhile, there are empty neighborhoods and shopping streets which are also the outcomes of *development*. The progress of major constructions is visible. National and international tourists and visitors are coming in. There is a high migration of people into the town looking for jobs and opportunities.

The question that this research places at this juncture is, in the midst of such mega 'development' projects in and around the city, where have the local people gone? What happened to them? How did all these physical development projects find space to put up? Whose spaces (lands) are they? How local people view the development around them? How are they treated by the authorities during the development? How and what the people have transformed? All these questions can be viewed within the area of "the process of adaptations and negotiations of the local people" towards how the power has defined development.

5. Adaptations and Negotiations of Local People towards the *Development* of Hambantota

Flyvbjerg (1998) states in his most influential *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice* which traces the attempt of city of Aalborg to create a master plan for urban development, "...the basic idea of the [plan] was comprehensive, coherent, and innovative, and it was based on rational and democratic argument. However, during implementation, when idea met reality...". The Hambantota development plan and its projects are also highly similar to how Flyvbjerg interprets the city of Aalborg projects. When Hambantota development plan came out with projects for economic and infrastructure related developments they were viewed as the steps towards a golden future for the town and its people. However, when the ideas met the ground realities, private (power) demands won against public needs and aspirations.

This created ground for the local people to adapt and negotiate to win their desires and dreams. The intention of this research is to shed light on them. However, the underlying adaptation processes of locals towards the *development* of Hambantota are very complex and indefinable.

Therefore, in order to noticeably present the authors' observations within the scope of this paper, local's adaptation and negotiations are examined in light of the below key projects:

1. The proposed tourism development project in the old town
2. The proposed new city center in Siribopura
3. Hambantota port development project (the resulted road closure and the frozen village Mirijjawila)

1. The proposed tourism development project in the old town

"Decision First; Rationalization Later" (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p20)

The local residents who live and work in the present (old) town center were informed about the upcoming tourism development projects in their locality at the public meetings that were conducted by local politicians and authorities. Although the authorities viewed the coastal belt and the scenic beauty of the old town as tourism potentials, for the locals it is their own spaces of life, work, joy, feelings, and memories. There are Sinhala and Muslim communities who live in harmony sharing social values and norms over a period of time. They engage in businesses, their kids go to schools, they relax on the beach, they walk along the sea shore and remember their loved ones who got washed off during the massive tsunami attack in 2004. Fishermen fight with the tidal waves day and night to catch fish. The fish market near the fishery harbor is the busiest place at any time of the day. Vegetable and fruit sellers bring their fruits and vegetables close to fish market to find more buyers. "...[This] is the emergence. Planners should create conditions for the emergence to take place" (Hamdi, 2004). However, today it is a declared tourism development zone.

According to the Zoning Plan of the Greater Hambantota Development Plan of Urban Development Authority the coastal zone of the present town center is proposed to be coastal tourism zone (Figure 2).

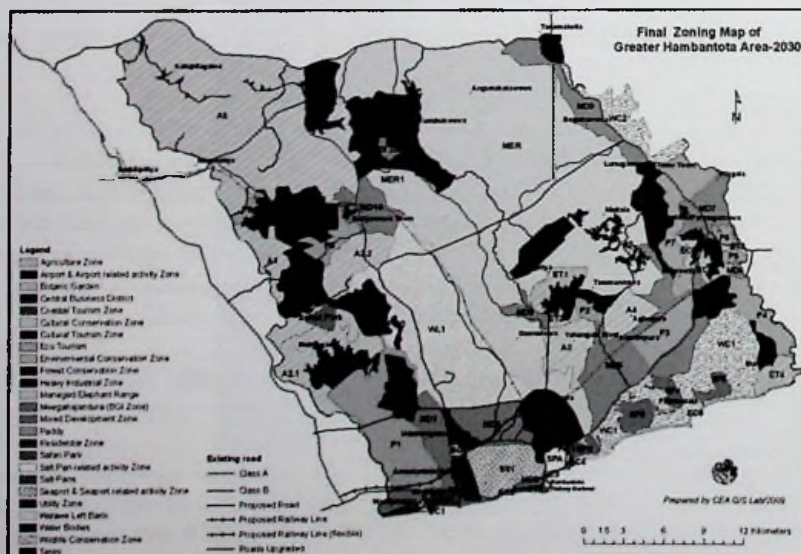


Figure 2: Zoning Map of Greater Hambantota Area 2030
(Source: Urban Development Authority)

People of this area were told that their lands will be acquired by the authorities for the tourism related projects and they will be given new lands in the new town center area. Their lives all of a sudden became uncertain. In everybody's mind there is one certain question which is due to the uncertainty and threat of land acquisition. They hesitate to tile their roofs or repair their houses. They do not know when they will be asked to leave. Nazeer, a business man who lives in the

Murray Street recounts, *'They told us that they will buy our lands. We don't know where to go. I am guessing where I will be given a place. But those places are economically not profitable for me'*.

What is happening around them is more real than how it sounds in this write up. They are put in a situation where they immediately have to respond and make decisions. There are many ways of negotiations, adaptations and responses which are invisible. However, two kinds of responses are highly visible. One is towards opportunities and possibilities. Other is towards threats and uncertainties. Although majority of the community feel the threat, certain section of the community is anticipating more livelihood opportunities. Few businessmen in the town mentioned that when the tourists and visitors arrive in the city there will be more demand for goods and services. Even today certain shops in the town center display sign boards in Chinese. The large number of Chinese workers who work in the construction projects in Hambantota are target of these businessmen.

Meanwhile, another segment of the community feels threatened due to the fact that their lands and livelihoods will be taken away. There are actions by the authorities to prepare people to serve the tourism. Kamala who lives with her family in the Target Road states, *'We have been sent letters by the government asking us if we would like to convert our home into a guest house for foreigners'*. Local people are scared to imagine how the tourism would impact their lives. They have to transform themselves and become new as how they imagine their future. It is, even for the locals, *"decision first; rationalization later"*.

2. The proposed new city center in Siribopura

"Places that happen, happen to work; places that are made, don't work" (Hamdi, 2004, p58)

According to the Greater Hambantota Development Plan, the new city center is proposed in Siribopura which is located 5km from the present (old) town center. This particular city center is

planned accommodating facilities such as high and middle income housing, city hotels, urban blocks, theaters, banking square, golf course, urban parks, diplomatic enclave, city square, civic square, transit hub, etc (Figure 3). According to the official's plan, the businesses, administrative, civic functions, and certain settlements of the old town will be shifted to the new city center. Administrative functions are already shifted to the new administrative complex. The local businessmen were told that



Figure 3: Development Proposals for the New City Center in Siribopura (Source: Urban Development Authority)

they will be given lands and more opportunities to do their businesses in the new city center. However, what people see is a huge distance and difference between what is made and what they want. For them, the proposed city center and its activities do not seem to be fitting for how they live their lives. City hotels, urban square, night market, golf course, and city square proposals of the new city do not give any meaning to local people. Further, they understand that the target of the entire *development* is towards an alien community which will be imported to their town in the near future.

Tharanga, a salesman who lives in the old town said, *'I was told that I will be given a space for shop in Siribopura. But I don't understand why I should go there. I have enough business here. My customers live here. They are coming to my shop every day. I am happy here'*.

The region that is identified for the development of new city center includes many neighborhoods which are new and old. Particularly, one community that feels threatened due to the high-end development in the new city area is the tsunami resettlements. When the tsunami attacked Hambantota in 2004, the tsunami resettlement housing projects were placed in the region that is new city center today. Further, the port project resettled many families to this area. Today one can see settlements with name boards such as Canberra Houses, John Keels Village, Care International Village, Waraya Gama, etc. The region was not demanded by the state or investors during the resettlements were taking place. However, as of today, all these resettled communities are falling within the region of new city center. As the people of the region experience the changes that are happening around them, they understand that their lands have become more expensive. Their situation is even worse since the people in the region do not have legal land rights. They understand that they might need to give away their lands and houses anytime if the luxurious city center development needs them.

The truth is that the people of Hambantota fit in nowhere in the development. However, they have been prepared to not to think in that way. Their thinking is shaped, modified, and thus, highly influenced by political influences. They have been told how to feel about the development. This has also led raised expectations in certain communities. They are *thinking* of establishing businesses, home gardens, tailoring services, sweet shops expecting that the new city center will provide them opportunities. Just like Hamdi (2004) states in his *Small Change: about the Art of Practice and the Limits of Planning in Cities*, "...they are trying to create a new meaning for their lives. This is their imagined future. This imagined future is good. Because they could be what the imagination conspires them to be rather than what the [authorities] say they have to be".

3. Hambantota port development project (the resulted road closure and the frozen village Mirijawila)

"Whatever exists, it is again and again transformed and redirected by some power superior to it..."
(Friedrich Nietzsche)

The port of Hambantota is planned to develop as a services and industrial related harbour. The government's objectives towards the construction of the port are to create a catalyst for major economic development in Sri Lanka and to reduce prevailing unemployment issue of the Hambantota region. Phase one of the port project commenced in 2008 and opened in 2010. The second phase is started in 2012. According to the port master plan, 33 vessels can be accommodated at the port at any given time. It has been positioned as an industrial port with facilities to transship vehicles and also provide bunkering services. The Hambantota Port is said to be Sri Lanka's biggest port and will give access to traffic on one of the world's biggest East-West shipping lanes.

According to the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, presently investment proposals from local and foreign investors are called to establish businesses within the port premises. The proposals include cement grinding plant, cement storage and bagging plant, fertilizer storage/processing bagging plant, LP gas distribution facility, warehousing complex, vehicle assembling plant, flour mills, food processing & packaging and any other business related to import and export sector. Investment proposals have been received from the investors of India, Pakistan, and Hong Kong. The needed land area for port premises has not been clearly informed by the government or the authorities. However, there are so many proposals and projects for expansion of port. There are new projects emerging every day. These projects should find land to be executed. The residents of Mirijawila, Sippakulama and Target Road (west side of old town center) who heard the stories of port expansion have made up their minds by now. They felt the news as a big shock many months ago. Now they spend every day expecting a letter from the authorities that would ask

them to give away their lands. "...They did not ask *why*. They needed to know *where* [to go]. The *where* is nowhere recognizable for them" (Verma, 2003). The result for today is the constant stress of uncertainty and instability. The town which was once owned by locals is now in the hands of power elite. The locals' mindset about this can be best described by the quote of Hamdi (2010): "These shoes are made for walking – AWAY"

Another huge impact of the port project is the closure of Colombo-Galle-Matara-Tissamaharama Highway. This particular road was the major access point to Hambantota town for those who visit Hambantota, Tissamaharama and Kataragama. During Kataragama festival season, the businesses (mainly *dodol* and sweets business) of the town and beach areas were very busy as Hambantota town center and beach were the stopovers of pilgrims and visitors. Presently this particular road closure has cut down the connections and it is the major reason for why the town lost its functions and activities. It is reported that 75% of the businesses of old town center is closed down due to the road closure.



Figure 4: The Location of Mirijjawila Village, the Port Project and the Closure of CGMT Highway

However, the most significant impact has been on the Mirijjawila village. Mirijjawila is located on the coastal belt, on the west side of the port and is situated along the Colombo-Galle-Matara-Tissamaharama Highway (Figure 4). This particular village is completely frozen due to the road closure. Mirijjawila was well known and well served for the pilgrims and visitors of Kataragama. Also, the local stories say that Mirijjawila got its name due to the fresh water pool which was used by pilgrims heading to Kataragama. There are 526 families in the village, many of them are engaging in fishing and salt production. It was an active vibrant village mainly due to its location close to Hambantota town center.

Today, due to the land acquisition for port construction, Mirijjawila has lost its 60% of land. Due to the loss of connection to Hambantota town it also lost its functions and activities. By and large, presently it is with no life. The villagers have lost their livelihood. In addition, the unplanned land filling of port development has caused flash floods in the settlements. The life has been turned out nothing but a struggle for them in every way.

For the locals, Hambantota development is simply "building big; building more; and building faster". Everything is built according to the ideals set by the power. All are in the interests of ensuring national development and economic growth. That is in another words, 'If it were possible for bacteria to argue with each other, they would be able to say that of course their chief justification was the advancement of medical science!' (Hamdi, 2010, p143).

The mindset of the locals of Mirijewila can be best expressed through their following recounting:

- Thilakaratne, a resident of Mirijawila and a brick maker (Age 50):
‘We were the ones who sacrificed everything for the port development, but most of the jobs inside the port were given to outsiders (people from Weeraketiya, Sooriyawewa, etc). Also, there are conflicts between villagers and Chinese supervisors during this port construction. So, none of us are going to work there’.
- A fisherman who lives in Mirrijawila:
‘They took our Ma del wadiya (fishing spots) to build the harbour. Now we don't have a place to fish or to keep our boats. Even if we catch some fish, we struggle to sell it with the people in the new market. We go to Sooriyawewa junction and get hold of people to sell our fish, before they reach the new market’.
- Tharuka, a resident of Hambantota and an undergraduate student at Ruhuna University (age 24):
‘Nowadays most youngsters leave school at the early stage to get odd jobs in the projects. With these developments, they choose money over going to school. What we are losing is educated and skilled younger generation that is supposed to operate these developments in future’.
- Sanjeewani, a housewife (age 41),
‘The foreign workers who have been working in the port construction have become part of our village now. Most of the villagers have rent their own houses for these workers and staying in a small room. However, we are afraid to stay in our own village having foreigners in the village. There are illicit activities and other social issues spreading around’.

Conclusions

The way Hambantota is getting developed is similar to what the world’s planners, politicians, decision makers and professionals speak about development everywhere. In case of Hambantota, the decisions and the objectives behind the decisions are repeatedly justified and rationalized by the *power*. What is not there is an open evaluation of how well the development is succeeded meeting the needs of people of the town, in another words, in actually achieving the objectives. Therefore, as a conclusion, the authors’ own evaluations are presented.

First, the local people of Hambantota realize that they fit in nowhere in the ‘mega development’ that is happening in their town. The life that people had was taken away from them and the new life that is promised by the ‘development’ does not even seem appropriate to how they want to live their lives. Thus, as Hamdi (2010) states “It all belongs to someone other than the people who live there...” (p44). Second, there is no one development path for Hambantota in the hands of authorities. According to an official who works for one of the project implementation agencies in Hambantota, new projects emerge everyday without any relevance and *rationale*. Politicians play huge role in finding investors for their projects. This makes the authorized development plan ineffective. The Greater Hambantota Development Plan is no longer active due to the development projects which emerge then and there from nowhere. Third, despite the incompleteness of the development in terms of its meaning and direction, any decision that the authorities make has succeeded as the space and territory are majorly controlled by the government. The locals of Hambantota do not have the power to oppose any authority in their own town.

However, the local people uphold their own values by negotiating and adapting to the changes of their environment. When their needs and aspirations are not taken into account in building their city, they fit their needs to what is decided and given. This happens in various ways as elaborated in the previous sections. "Another way of achieving development is...through translating locals' knowledge and aspirations into plans and projects" (Hamdi, 2004). In another words, this is *planning for real*.

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