

A PROPOSED INTENSIVE 'URBAN DESIGN' WORKSHOP/TRAINING FOR ARCASIA: Colombo, Sri Lanka

**A 5-day Enquiry on Aspects of City Design: Theory and Practice, February 2018
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Significant migration from rural areas to urban centres, as well as natural urban demographic growth, is truly striking and is rapidly changing many regions of the world. Yet, the art and science of settlement planning and design is ancient and has many traditions, including ones developed many centuries ago in Asia.

Contemporary settlement planning and design has tended towards a very technical formulation and conception largely emanating from the so-called developed world of the West: North America and Europe, a few decades before World War II. Many of the modernist characteristics that exemplify it emerged and were put in place by discourses amongst the leadership of the international architectural fraternity over the period 1928-1956 (the International Congress of Modern Architecture: CIAM). The generic formulation of modern town planning and modern architecture was perhaps most clearly stated in the CIAM Athens Charter of 1933, following Le Corbusier's presentation of his Radiant City proposals. These discourses of nearly 100 years ago have led to the functionalist city as distinct from the countryside with: the characteristic separation of functions (live, work, play, move); the demise of the street and of mixed-use development; the tower in the park image; the seemingly ever expanding use of the motor vehicle and the construction of limited access highways and transit systems linking the separate parts of the city. More and more urban areas of the world are increasingly looking and feeling alike and many of them do not perform particularly well for their inhabitants. Major issues these forms of developments have raised relate to massive pollution and insufficient care for natural resources, very significant non-renewable energy consumption, increasing lack of identity, problems with food security, and so on. Many of the urban forms derived are not sustainable.

Surely, is it now time to reflect on these developments, explore how well or badly the built-in tendencies actually deliver newer portions of settlements and formulate more appropriate and sustainable models for the common person and community?

This is what the combined theory course and the studio practicals seek to promote.

Because only five days are available for the exploration, our methods have to be appropriate and effective. We will start with reviewing international modernist settlement developments and identifying core operative modernist settlement-making concepts, as well as a range of more traditional, historic concepts. We will interrogate the nature of appropriate plans/designs for local mixed-use areas and formulate proposals across urban and architectural typologies. In an intensive way and in parallel (save for the first two days which will focus on the history/theory of city-making ideas), we will address both theory and practice. Then we will apply our best understandings to the formulation of settlement proposals for one or more chosen sites in the Colombo context. The scope for learning is massive.