

URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA:
THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL URBANISATION POLICY

Y.A.D.S. Wanasinghe
University of Sri Jayawardenepura

Although the level of urbanization in Sri Lanka is lower than that of many other developing countries (22.4% in 1971 and 21.5% in 1981) the necessity for a national urbanization policy cannot be over emphasized.

At present there is no explicit urbanization policy at the national level but implicit spatial policies of successive Governments have had a definite impact on the national urbanization pattern. Two of the lead projects that are being implemented at present are urban-based viz; the Urban Development and Housing Programme and the programmes under the Greater Colombo Economic Commission. The Mahaweli Development Project also involves the creation of townships as rural service centres and the elevation of small junction settlements to a higher level. The above mentioned programmes reflect certain directions of policy but there is a need for an explicit urbanization policy for Sri Lanka.

This paper aims to analyse urbanization trends, level and tempo of urbanization, growth and structure of the urban system the size distribution of cities etc. that are important in the formulation of a national urbanization policy. The major components of a national urbanization strategy viz; the implicit spatial policies; urban policies that deal with congestion, pollution etc; and policies formulated to reduce regional disparities will be discussed.