

HOLDING THE FORT IN PETTAH : THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC
INTER-CITY AREAS IN RETAINING THE GROWTH PATTERNS OF COLOMBO.

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Since earliest times, continuity and 'sense of permanence' have been the underlying rationale in both social and physical attributes of the city. It is revealed that, this sense of continuity associated with the city is best exemplified through its built environment and, in turn, has contributed to these notions, in a process which can be loosely termed cumulative and cyclic too.

It is argued that, the objectives of conservation of cities include retaining the momentum of this intertwined and cyclic process which encompasses their social and material culture as well. One of the basic assumptions in this approach is that architecture and architectural conservation have many common areas in their aims and scope. Lynch's definition, 'architecture is total environment made visible' enables us to identify some characteristics of these two processes. Based on that, it is argued that, retaining the overall spatial character of a historic sector, including its streetscape, scale and nature of physical development, could contribute to develop the 'sense of continuity' in the material and social aspects of a city.

The study identifies several historic sectors of the Colombo city - namely Fort, Pettah and outer Pettah areas which emerged before the harbour expansions and underwent changes subsequently, to discuss the above hypothesis. In that, it attempts to illustrate the growth patterns of Pettah and outer Pettah areas as historic residential sectors and their significance as the nucleus around which the city developed.

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