CONTEXTUAL DESIGN: AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT AND THEIR MANIFESTATION IN ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION

A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Moratuwa
As a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Architecture

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July 1999
ABSTRACT

As a result of the influence of modern commercialisation, Architecture of new buildings reflect their immediate purpose without conserving the civic orders and social hierarchies of the existing built fabric. Architecture conveys the meaning of building in a form of expressions, and therefore the expression of correct meaning and its clarity is essential in order coexist with rest of the built environment. Such expressions could be generated by different forces or Generators namely; User, Activity Pattern, Purpose and the Physical Context. Among them, the Physical Context is considered to be one of the great generators of Architecture.

Thus Physical Context is a very complex entity, there is a tendency among practitioners and students to design without an in-depth response to it. As a result, the existing built environment lacks good Architecture which stimulates the minds of people. The reason underlying the above phenomenon is that the practitioners and students do not seem to have a thorough understanding and a sufficient knowledge about the Physical Context and its aspects. Though there are previous studies on this subject, some aspects have gone unmentioned. In this dissertation, the Physical Context has been examined on different stand points such as, in terms of Patterns of Locality, in terms of Character, in terms of Geometry of Site, in terms of Rhythm of Street and in terms of Architectural Idiom.

Perception of the Physical Context is essentially to be felt and understood and it is beyond the text and explanations. This study has derived the aspects of the Physical Context and has examined them in such a manner which shows how designer’s sensible response to the Physical Context have evoked specific Architectural Expressions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Archt. Vidura Sri Nummuni, Senior lecturer, Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa for the continuous guidance, comments in the formulation of this study,

Archt. Madhura Premathilaka, Dr Dayananda Waduge and Archt. Jayantha Domingo for their comments and criticisms at the initial stage of this study,

Archt. Mihindu Keerthiratne, Archt. Arosh Gamage, Archt. Panduka Samaranayake Mr. Saro Weerasooriya (Senior Structural Engineer) and Mr N. Abesuriya (Senior Structural Engineer) for their comments respect to the practice of Architecture and reference materials made available,

My colleagues Shantha, Roshan, Missara, Pashalee, Kanchana, Nuwan and Hiranthi for all their help through out this study, Ineka and Surangi for their encouragement,

My parents and family for all their support.
LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 (Edward, T. 1924: p3)
1.2 (Edward, T. 1924: p6)
1.3 Habib Bank, Chatham Street, Fort
2.1 Openings & expressions, (Meiss, P. 1990: p6)
3.1 Views of Piazza of San Marco, Venice, (Baker, G. H. 1989: p150)
3.2 Campo and cathedral, Siena, Italy. (Baker, G. H. 1989: p113)
3.3 James sterling, Extension to the National Gallery, London, (Baker, G. H. 1989: p233)
3.4 Background and figure, (Meiss, P. 1990: p22)
3.5 Patterns of Piazza of San Marco, Venice, (Baker, G. H. 1989: p130)
3.6.a National Assembly Building, Bangladesh, (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p195)
3.6.b San Lorenzo Maggiore, Milan, Italy (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p197)
3.7 Variety of linear organisations (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p198)
3.8 Terraced housing, James Sterling (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p200)
3.9 Housing development, Italy, Alvar Alto (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p206)
3.10 Variety of clustered organisations (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p214)
3.13 Variety of grid organisations (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p221)
3.15 Serial vision and spatial progression (Cullen, G. 1975: p86)
3.17 Configuration of paths (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p253)
3.18 Karlsruhe, Germany (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p259)
3.19 Path space relation ship (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p264)
3.20 Form of the circulation space (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p269)
3.21 Street in Siena, Italy (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p235)
3.23 View of Villa Hermosa, Spain (Ching, F. D. K. 1996: p262)
3.25 Arcades of houses at Square of Telo, Czechoslovakia (Ching, F. D. K. 1996:p348)
3.27.a Continuous building line, (Jacobs, A. B. 1993:p156)
3.27.b Set back building line, Jacobs, A. B. 1993:p159)
3.28 Vertical Punctuation, Office building at Wellawatta
3.29 Monastic Complex at Assisi (Baker, G. H. 1989:pp92,93,94,95,96,97)
3.30 Plan: Town hall junction
3.31 New Haylees building & Lipton building: Union place
3.32.a Beginning of Sir Baron Jayathilaka Mawatha: Fort
3.32.b Grindays Bank: Fort
3.33 Victoria Mem. building: Town Hall
3.34 Church building: Town Hall
LIST OF PLATES

1.1 Hot dog stand, LA (Jencks, C. 1984:p65)
3.1 The Grand Axis, Paris (Kostof, S. 1991:p243)
3.2 Lucca, Tuscany (Kostof, S. 1992:p173)
3.3 The Palazzo del Popolo (Bentley, J. 1995:p87)
3.4 Palazzo, Popolo, Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p109)
3.5 The Grand Axis, Paris (Kostof S. 1991:p243)
3.6 Grenade- Sur-Garonne, France (Kostof, S. 1991:p129)
3.7.a Winding road to Uzzano, Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p44)
3.7.b Uzzano, Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p48)
3.7.c Uzzano, Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p57)
3.8.a Portofino, Italy (Salino, C. 1988:p207)
3.8.b Portofino, Italy (Salino, C. 1988:p203)
3.9 Pallazzo, Cancelleria (Bentley, J. 1995:p119)
3.10 Monastery, St. Johns, Patmos Island, Greece (Morris, J. 1992:p33)
3.11 Raws of Houses, Copenhagen, Denmark (Morris, J. 1992:p5)
3.13 Amalfi, Italy (Salino, C. 1988:p229)
3.14 Amalfi, Italy (Salino, C. 1988:p228)
3.15 Rivier Amo, Paris (Morris, J. 1992:pp7,8)
3.16 (AD - Organic Architecture, p24)
3.17 (AD - Organic Architecture, p24)
3.18 Rocca, Aldobrandesca, Italy (Bentley, J. 1995:p179)
3.19 Piliglino, Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p190)
3.20 (Bentley, J. 1995:p143)
3.21 Prague, street Nemdora (Kostof, S. 1991:p67)
3.22 Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p75)
3.23 The Piazza Nettnno, Bologna, Italy (Kostof, S. 1991:p246)
3.24 The Triumphal Arch, New Dheld, India (Kostof, S. 1991:p247)
3.25 (AD - Organic Architecture, p6)
3.26 (AD - Organic Architecture, p9)
3.27 San Gimignano, Tuscany Italy (Bentley, J. 1995:p89)
3.28.a AD - Organic Architecture, p70)
3.28.b D- Organic Architecture, p71)
3.29 Naples, Italy (Morris, J. 1992:pp34,35)
3.30 Tuscany (Bentley, J. 1995:p153)
# CONTENTS

Abstract ................................. ii
Acknowledgements ..................... iii
List of figures .......................... iv
List of plates ........................... vi
Introduction ............................. vii

Chapter One - Architectural Design: Definitions and problems .................. 01

1.1 Problematic Architectural Situation: variety and stimulation ............... 02
1.2 Meaning of Architecture ................. 05
1.3 Symbolism: Signs and symbols ........... 06
1.4 Interpretation of Architectural Expression ....................... 07

Chapter Two - Generators of Expression ........................................ 08

2.1 Architectural Expression and user ................................... 10
2.2 Generators of Architectural Expression ......................... 12
   2.2.1 User as a Generator .................................... 12
   2.2.2 Activity pattern as a Generator ....................... 13
   2.2.3 Purpose as a Generator ................................ 14
   2.2.4 Physical Context as a Generator ....................... 14

Chapter Three - The Physical Context as a Generator .................. 16

3.1 Background for the Examination: Man and the building in the context of Physical Environment ............ 18
   3.1.1 The Cosmos ........................................... 22
   3.1.2 The Country .......................................... 22
   3.1.3 The Zone ............................................. 22
   3.1.4 The Neighbourhood ............................... 23
   3.1.5 The Street .......................................... 23
   3.1.6 The Site ............................................. 23

3.2 Interpretation of Contextual Design ........................................... 23
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Concept of Context</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Interpretation of Physical Context</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Aspects of the Physical Context</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Patterns of locality</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1.1</td>
<td>Patterns of organisation of Masses</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1.2</td>
<td>Patterns of sequence of Spatial Progression</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1.3</td>
<td>Patterns of Activity</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1.4</td>
<td>Patterns of Architectural Style</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td>Character (Spirit of place)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1</td>
<td>Natural system</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.a</td>
<td>Cosmic Order</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.a.1</td>
<td>Climate of Locality</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.a.2</td>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b</td>
<td>Physical Order</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.1</td>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.2</td>
<td>Water table and Water bodies</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.3</td>
<td>Vegetation (Plant cover)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.4</td>
<td>Engineering class of soil</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.5</td>
<td>Soil as a planting medium</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.6</td>
<td>Surface problems</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.7</td>
<td>Land form</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.8</td>
<td>Shading</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.1.b.9</td>
<td>Building Orientation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2.2</td>
<td>Cultural system</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.3</td>
<td>Visual system</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.3.1</td>
<td>Paths</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.3.2</td>
<td>Edges</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In a stage drama it is an obvious fact that the Stage Set such as different levels of lighting, colours and textures of background and etc., are the are modifiers which enhances the particular role, and therefore grasp the audience that bringing them to climax. Depending on the type of role the form of stage set varies. Therefore it is very distinct that a particular role could be played only within a specific setting. On even terms it could be argued that, a particular setting supports a specific role.

In architecture also the role or the product would fit into a specific setting or into an identical environment. This setting is termed as the Context. Since this setting or the Context can evoke a certain product, Context is one of the generators in Architecture. Context comprises of both Physical and non-physical entities. The term Physical Context appears to be a unique entity; non-physical Context constitute things those are untouchable but yet named as the elements of Context. It consists all the qualities which exist in place, such as imageability etc. But in a practical point of view it is very difficult to distinguish Physical and non-physical Context.

A role of a stage drama is full of expression. These expressions convey the meaning of role towards the audience. Proper blend of expressions and stage set is very essential for audience to understand the meaning. Similarly Architecture, as an expressive art, makes expression through symbolic communication. These expressions create dialogue between perceiver and building. To convey the proper meaning Architectural product should well fit in to its Context.

Need of the Study

There is a tendency among young Architecture students and practitioners to play with eye catching forms and shapes which impress the user as well as the designer and this tendency has resulted in paying lack of attention and insufficient thought about the Context. As a result, in many places it is possible to observe set of nice buildings which do not coexist and bind with rest of the built environment. The prevalence of this practice and attitude lead to a conclusion that Contemporary Architects' response to the Physical Context is extremely poor.
As a consequence of above mentioned phenomenon, the built environment does not stimulate people. Architecture as an art should stimulate the minds of people; therefore Architecture which does not serve this purpose will become mere buildings. The problem underlying this phenomenon is the lack of appreciation of the Physical Context as one of the generators in Architecture which capable of evoking variety and meaningful Architecture. The Physical Context is a complex entity that comprises of many components or aspects. A comprehensive understanding and knowledge on these aspects (such as locational patterns, geometry of site, character of site, spirit of place etc.) will contribute to better response to the Physical Context. What is argued here is that among practitioners and students, there is a big lacuna of knowledge of the complexity of the Physical Context. If this lacuna could be filled with a Dissertation it will be helpful for all the parties to identify elements of physical Context and make proper and in depth response to them, which ultimately produce good contextual Designs.

**Aims and objectives of the study**

There are different interpretations about Context and their aspects. Many scholars define these aspects on different platforms and most of the times these platforms reflect their personal biases. Because of these biases, some of the aspects of Context seem to be missing in their studies and therefore, students and practitioners in architecture miss a deal of learning part. This is one of the reasons that leads to the above mentioned lacuna. Accordingly in this Dissertation, it will be attempted to identify and examine the different aspects of the Physical Context and come up with a complete study and to show designers reactions to these aspects which have lead to specific architectural expression.

**Limitations of the study**

As the Contextual Design and the Physical Context are almosty interdependent in design process, they demand two separate studies of its own. But in the present study, Contextual Design has been partly discussed in order to emphasise the importance of Contextual Designs in built environment.

This dissertation, as already mentioned is an attempt to identify the aspects of the Physical context and examine them in-depth to show their manifestation in architectural practice. Therefore it is not
expected to study the process / practice of Contextual design and measures of Contextual compatibility and relevance of present built environment.

As there are no principally accepted methods of examining the Physical Context, but for the purpose of this study, a method has been derived which enables to fulfil the intention of this study. Also the manifestation has been limited to selected examples as necessitated by the intention of study.

Methodology

Before dealing with the physical context it is very essential to build up a proper background for it. Therefore in the first chapter it is expected to create a connection between architectural design and the Physical Environment of human. In the second chapter it will be emphasised how this physical environment and its contents generate architecture. Specially under this section the different viewpoints of various scholars will be taken in to account in order to consolidate a basis for Chapter three. Chapter three is the critical chapter that defines all the aspects of Physical context. In this chapter it will be attempted to make a categorisation from the aspects identified and then examine them with reference to both local and international examples.