

# The Landscape Architect in Housing

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Many professionals are required to make housing a success one of whom is a Landscape Architect. A Landscape Architect is concerned with man's natural environment, the design and construction of outdoor spaces and the activities contained within them. In Housing the Landscape Architect is directly concerned with the following :

1. The design and construction of related spaces such as play areas, recreational and open spaces to relax and contemplate. It would require the careful use of suitable materials and detailing to make up these spaces and affect its quality. The ultimate success of these spaces would speak for itself. It is un-used because there is no maintenance? It is far from the housing complex? It is hot, dusty noisy or too close to vehicular traffic? It is cut away from the rest of the activities? There would be few of the questions to be answered if the spaces are to successfully serve the community.
2. The micro and macro landscape environment for housing. In Sri Lanka the urban housing may receive careful design of its landscape environment. Large scale Planting, paving water sculpture may be introduced to improve the landscape quality. In semi urban and rural housing the environment may often be natural landscapes of outstanding beauty. A forest, grassland, and aquatic marsh, undulating mountains, rock crops, rivers and waterfalls may form the landscape scenery of the housing complex. **To ensure that these landscapes are protected, enhanced and not marred by housing would be the responsibility of the Landscape Architect.**

In Sri Lanka the profession of Landscape Architecture has not quite begun but landscape design has been practiced for centuries as seen in the historical examples the country is very proud to own. The 5c water gardens at Sigiriya is one of the oldest landscape gardens in the world. The concepts of landscaping used in these gardens are indeed bewildering. Seeing these historic examples at Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kandy, Dambulla, it is indeed very evident that successful landscape design involving natural landscapes was very much a part of our culture.

**On a more domestic scale a traditional dwelling in our country is seen as a functional landscape space that fit into the pattern of the natural landscape.** The dwelling faces a clean sand swept front "midula" that lead by informal stone steps to a foot path on a bund adjacent a water course, which feeds yard the paddy fields. The well is situated in the front yard and the toilet away from it at the rear. Fruit or bearing trees for consumption such as Coconut *Cocos nucifera*, Jak *artocarpus heterophyl*", Bread fruit "*artocarpus nabilis* or *artocarpus incisus*", Banana *Musea acuminata*" Lime 'citrus", Arecanut "Areca catechu" on which vines of betel and pepper climb, are grown providing a comfortable environment.

Today's housing complexes can be categorized as follows :

- A. High rise blocks set in a park like environment.
- B. Open space within the framework of housing.
- C. Clusters of housing with public open space.

Whatever the housing type a landscaped micro and macro environment is a social necessity.

At the initial stage of a housing project along with architects, planners, engineers, surveyors, a Landscape Architect should be involved in the formulation of the design brief. Landscaping is not left over space after building, but spaces designed for use along with the building requirements. A landscape created should fit the immediate surroundings rather like a building to a townscape.

In response to the need for landscape designers the Landscape Unit of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Moratuwa is commencing a postgraduate Master of Science Course in Landscape Design. Persons trained in related fields and with an attitude for design will be eligible to enter and follow, for the first time in Sri Lanka, a full time two year course in Landscape Design based on concepts of tropical design, modelled after recognised international courses.

These designers would be trained to make skilled assessment of the balance between the natural and man-made environment. While working as a team member the specialists in Landscape Design will help create a better housing environment.

Often costs become a crucial constraint in providing landscaping for housing. **Legislation insisting on landscape proposals would be necessary to make landscaping for housing a reality.**

## Editorial Note - 6

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The paper by VSN (Building Vs Architecture) attempts to establish the difference between Architecture and Building and to claim THAT SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS COULD AND SHOULD BE ARCHITECTURE.

Subsequent papers by C de S, TKNP de S and VB (pp 15 - 27, 28 - 32, 33 - 40) clearly SHOW the richness of the Sri Lankan tradition in domestic architecture and therefore THE NEED FOR SUCH SHELTER TO BE ARCHITECTURE.

KARD BEGINS THE PROCESS OF UNDERLINING HOW DIFFICULT THE TASK OF CREATING ARCHITECTURE IS. His paper (pp 43 - 47) deals with the need to separate NEEDS from WANTS.

CW and SB in their papers (pp 51 - 58, 61 - 62) attempt to show the need for cost consciousness and the immense possibilities of exploiting natural landscape elements to create SHELTER that is ARCHITECTURE.

PERSUASIVE AS THEY ARE, THESE PAPERS REMAIN, PIOUS ADMONITIONS, WISE WAGGINGS OF AN INTELLECTUAL HEAD, IMPRACTICAL ACADEMIC TRIVIAMERE WORDS-UNLESS THE PROCESS OF TURNING THEM INTO CONCRETE BUILT FORM (plans and specifications for laying brick and mortar; timber and nail) is SPELT OUT.

VSN IN HIS PAPER (pp 65 - 68) ATTEMPTS TO SHOW how peoples needs and aspirations may be given expression through shelter; how individual, sub cultural and the cultural needs of people may achieve a satisfying degree of fulfilment through architecture; HOW ARCHITECTURE MAY BE USED AS A TOOL TO SOLVE, AT LEAST IN PART, THE PROBLEMS OF MEN AND SOCIETY; how shelter could be more than a passive resistor of sun, rain and predator HOW ARCHITECTURE AND THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSOR COULD STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH OTHER FORCES IN THE SOCIETY IN THE COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY.

VSN