

An Assessment on Architectural Parameters of Civic Pride in Public Buildings with Special Reference to the City of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sarathweera K. D. P. *, Hettiarachchi A. A. H.

Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

Abstract

Sri Lanka, being a country with a rich cultural heritage needs strategies to revitalize the sense of civic pride in contemporary citizens who are leaving the country amidst the current crisis. It is vital to uplift the citizens' sense of belongingness and satisfaction, to uphold their confidence in living in the country. Taking an Architectural approach this study explores the parameters that contribute to fostering the sense of 'civic pride' with reference to public building in Colombo. Five selected architectural elements pertaining to civic pride were evaluated via adapting the Civic Pride Correlation Matrix (Morrison, 2016).

BMICH and National Museum were selected as case studies through a pilot study executed with random participants (n=88) and the perception of civic pride was evaluated through expert surveys with Architects (n=18) and in-site questionnaires with random participants (n=68).

The research revealed the importance of the application of architectural elements through visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory experiences of human in conducive levels to enhance the sense of civic pride. While spatial definition (60%), materials and colours (82.2%), and the architectural detailing (67.1%) have contributed with reference to the National Museum, spatial definition (53.8%) and the materials and colours (64%) have become significant in fostering sense of pride related to the BMICH. The CPCM reveals that, even with an extended average relationship to the city, only 55.3% of respondents thought their neighbourhood offered a sense of pride. Pilot study as well as the expert opinion surveys highlighted the emerging timely necessity of a measure for 'sense of civic pride'. The research underscores the importance of utilizing appropriate architectural and Urban design interventions in public buildings and spaces to foster civic pride in future citizens.

Keywords: sense of civic pride, architectural elements, public buildings, city of Colombo, spatial indicators.

* Corresponding Author: Sarathweera K.D.P; E-mail- pramudi1996sara@gmail.com

1. Introduction

This study intends to determine the relationship between architectural aspects and the sense of pride of building occupants by experiencing and living with these components. The architects who design the future world, need to be much conscious about the sense of space, which establish confidence within the user and how to design places in a holistically favourable manner for the user as well as our satisfaction as the designer.

1.1. Research Problem

In present situation in Sri Lanka, country's youth has lost their trust on the future due to the economic crisis that they have had to mitigate. As a consequence, at present day we experience the 'Brain Drain' in a high capacity, where majority of the educated youth leave the country having expectations on moulding their future in an optimum level. After all majority of the citizens live centralizing cities, or doing their jobs within the cities. The loss of stability in these cities in terms of economic, social, as well as cultural aspects have led to the youth society in losing their confident.

This study mainly probed in to three research questions: The study questions on the extent that the public spaces in the city of Colombo reflect the 'Sense of Civic Pride'. How does the perception of an individual impacts in the measure of 'Civic Pride'? and what Architectural elements of public spaces impact on 'enhancing 'Civic Pride'.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study was relied on data collected from field studies and direct sample testing on how people themselves feel genuinely on the contexts around them (Collins, 2015).

Experts in sociology have had a long-standing interest in urban identities and the ways in which people engage with civic life in cities (Amin, 2006, p.38). This idea is always connected with much broader theories of place; people's experiences, how people perceive the places and their identities etc. (Collins, 2015) It is a timely necessity to enact and design policies need to be established to enhance the sense of Civic Pride in public buildings in a contextualized manner.

Productive upliftment of these spaces can positively impact on Human Pride(Tracy et al., 2010). A single positive sort of an emotional connection or association might be feeling pride of a place. (Collins, 2015) Public places or buildings often replicate the cultural identity and the values that a community owns. This inclusion of architectural elements resonates the traditions, cultural values and aesthetic value to people. This in turn generate a sense of pride and belonging within communal engagement(Collins, 2015).

The findings of the study, could inform not only the future architectural practices of western province Sri Lanka, but also the other cities with a cultural basis even with a global reputation. These recommendations would be applicable in urban planning, and in other architectural practices, etc.



Figure 1.2: Civic engagement in city of Colombo - public streets



Figure 1.1: Commercial development impacts on old building environs in Colombo

Thoughtful architectural adaptations acquire the ability to practice more socially inclusive and accessible public spaces for any social group without segregation, ensuring that everyone regardless the age, gender, from any background feel comfortable and at the same time very confident in the particular environment (Foster, 1989). At the end this study would strengthen the existing knowledge flow of architecture, sociology and urban planning, so that it would create valuable insight and even the empirical evidence on how specific architectural elements impact on people's sense of pride in public spaces (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

1.3. Research objectives

This study mainly focuses on elaborating the idea of "Civic Pride" which is a psychological aspect of human mind on places where they live in, while exploring on the possibilities of applications in architecture which requires much attention in the present situation in Sri Lanka.

- To assess the residents', 'sense of civic pride' on the overall perception on city of Colombo applying Correlation Matrix of Civic Pride and the quantitative analysis through application of Quality of life survey - 2008 (Morrison, 2016).
- To build up a better theoretical explanation for 'the sense of civic pride' in Sri Lankan context with the theoretical background of the previous researches conducted in different countries.
- To determine the relationship between identified architectural parameters and the community's sense of civic pride.
- To suggest future research opportunities and recommendations in terms of architecture, encouraging the 'sense of civic pride' among the local populace.

1.4. Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study was to identify the aforesaid emerging instances of the sense of civic pride using a set of parameters and to identify the architectural principles of civic pride. There were several limitations too. The studies were conducted selecting the building category as, public buildings of which the human engagement is high within Colombo city. Each city owns a civic pride based on unique characteristics but, due to the time constraints, the study had to be restricted to city of Colombo.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Introduction

Among many factors which are social, economic, cultural, religious, political, etc., there are architectural factors influencing on the sense of civic pride. Theory building was supported by the identified architectural parameters.

- Special elements of spatial definition which are unique
- The density of spaces in buildings
- Depth of the spaces
- Material usage and colour finishes used
- The circulation spaces
- Volumes of spaces
- Architectural detailing

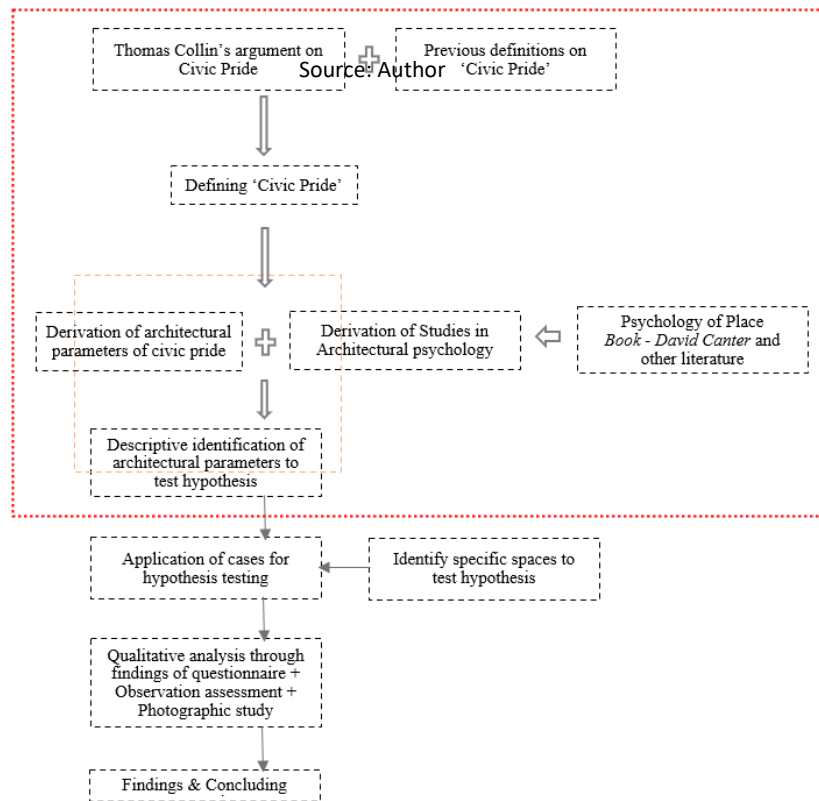


Figure 2.1: Areas of discussion

2.2. Defining Civic Pride

This study concentrates on the facets of social advantages characterized by the locals' perceptions of their places of belonging. It is believed that while being intangible, the sense of civic pride can nevertheless be measured in a methodical and quantitative manner (Wood, 2006). According to the descriptions that are available, civic pride is typically described in a simple or ambiguous manner. For instance, civic pride is defined as "pride in one's locality or one's community" by Wind Cowie and Gregory (2011: 14), whereas author and critic Trevor White (2012) defines it as the "goodwill a society has for itself." Although (Wood, 2006) acknowledges that a "shared and cohesive city image" is what defines civic pride, she also notes that the term "does not represent an exclusively well-defined and understood construct (Crow, G, 1994).

2.3. Pride

'Pride' is obviously hard to define precisely. It might be too comprehensive and wide-ranging to fit under a single definition or idea. When used in a positive context, pride typically refers to a sense of fulfillment or self-worth over one's identity or of a group (Tracy et al., 2010). It may originate from a self-created, intimate feeling stemming from one's connection to a specific identity or group, or it may be the outcome of a personal success or benefit. Pride could be interpreted in two ways, as authentic pride and hubristic pride.

2.4. Sense of Civic Pride

Pride is a feeling that arises through having an interest in someone, something, or some place; it is not just another indicator of well-being. As an example, consider the statements "I am proud of my achievement" and "I am proud of my city". These replicate what it attempts to mean by, pride.

“Despite the limitations in being able to monitor our progress regionally, it is known that residents with a strong sense of pride are key to building strong, socially sustainable and connected communities. These people will act as advocates for their region and promote the positive aspects their region has to offer and contribute to improving their neighbourhoods.”
(Street, 2011)

2.5. Ancient Sri Lankan Identity

Ancient Sri Lankan civilizations, especially the eras of the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, had significant ‘civic pride’, in various ways which were glamorously replicated through architectural interpretations in comparison to contemporary Sri Lanka. Existed cities with sophisticated technologies of engineering and architectural design, such as Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, were more precisely planned.

2.6. Influence of Modernism & Post - Modernism

Modernized architecture came in to practice with more simplistic forms and characters and also as a cost-effective practice of architecture. Beginning from the material usage expanding up to many other implications in architecture, strategic modern architectural solutions can be observed. But all the features such as forms, patterns, hierarchy were subjected into a drastic change in comparison to past. Modernist concepts were adopted by architects such as Geoffrey Bawa, who modified them to fit the regional environment, customs, and language (Raheem, 2008). Post-Modernist Architecture reintroduced decoration, a variety of design features, and historical allusions, challenging the rigid rules of Modernism. In order to provide a distinctive architectural approach, Sri Lankan architects began experimenting with Post-Modernist features, fusing modern and traditional design aspects. The emphasis placed by Postmodernism on valuing individuality and cultural diversity may have rekindled interest in Sri Lanka's past. A feeling of pride was given by structures that included historical themes or made homage to classic architectural features (Nast, 2020).

2.7. Significance of fostering ‘Civic Pride.

By analyzing several definitions on ‘civic pride’ established by previous scholars, a person's and a community's positive attitude towards residing in a particular city is known as Civic Pride. Having an emotional, financial, or cultural value or any other worthy commitment in something's success is necessary for feeling proud of it, unlike other feelings like happiness or life satisfaction, which have a weakly positive correlation in comparison (Morrison, 2016).

2.8. Theory Building

Table 5: Selected variables and hypothesis; Source: Author

Selected Architectural element	Architectural characteristic	Hypothesis No.	Hypothesis	Possible Extreme Variable
Characteristics of space	Special elements of spatial definition	H1	If special elements of spatial definition is well lit (naturally) and ventilated, users may not experience sensorial hardships even in overcrowded days	If spaces with special elements of spatial definition is not very well lit and ventilated, users might not get the positive impact, when navigating through spaces.
	Depth of space	H2	If the depth of the space is presented in an appropriate manner; users may experience a positive sensorial impact.	If the depth of the space is presented in an inappropriate manner; users might have to experience a negative sensorial impact.
	Density of space	H3	Appropriate use of architectural techniques used, would replicate the exact density of space while offering the best experience to the user.	If architectural techniques replicate the density of buildings more than enough or less, the user do not embrace the design so that gets rejected.
View and Consistency of Built Form and Environment	Materials & Colour	H4	Usage of materials and color selection in the walls impact mentally and physically in the user confidence of action.	
Articulation of Transition space	Circulation Spaces	H5	Circulation corridors connected with exterior natural environment may help user to experience a positive sensorial impact in commuting process in public spaces.	Dark least ventilated middle corridors impact negatively to both physical and mental status of users in the process of commuting
The sense of human scale	Volumetric spaces	H6	User might experience the sense of pride in high volume spaces rather than domestic scales	If patient waiting spaces are designed in dome layouts users may feel sense of ill than of recovery due to the large spatial volumes in domes.
Level of Performance and Spatial sophistication	Architectural detailing	H7	Architectural detailing showing out the Sri Lankan identity, may able to add sense of pride and improve user satisfaction	Presence of modern detailing without local identical detailing may give user satisfaction but no pride/ sense of belonging.

3. Research Methodology

In chapter two Literature review, a clear understanding of the architectural parameters that enhance the sense of civic pride will be given. The data related to case studies were collected based on the identified parameters. Qualitative data collection was used to collect data on identifying the most familiar waiting choices among people. In this way, it would be easy to collect more accurate data relevant to the architectural parameters.

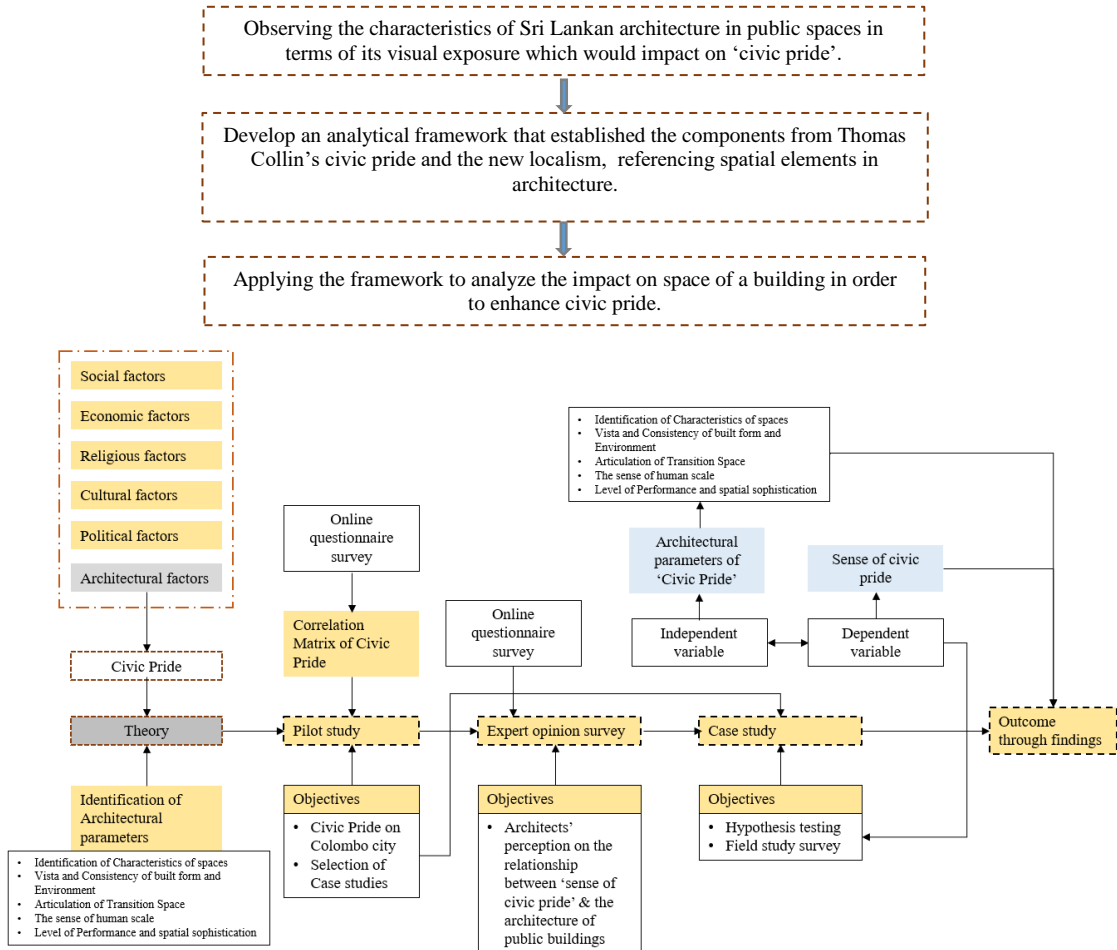


Figure 5: Formulation of Framework

Source: Author

Relevant to the framework, variables were identified in order to collect and analyse data which could be derived from Four Phases.

- Phase 01 - Data collection through Observation Assessment from Pilot study and an Expert survey to identify the existing public spaces & to identify the needs regarding the sense of civic pride.

Pilot study was aligned to get an overall idea of Colombo residents (current residents) out of the participants in this study. There were overall 88 participants who were residents in Colombo among the responded. The questionnaire was conducted online. There were two objectives of this pilot study

- Assessing the level of Civic Pride of the participant sample, as a model.
- Selection of case studies.

The opinion of architects on the 'sense of civic pride' in overall and their recommendations were grasped. The expert opinion was an online survey, tested with the limitation due to inconvenience of physically interviewing architects.

- Phase 02 - Application of Correlation Matrix of Civic Pride
- Phase 03 - Data Observation through selected local Case studies to identify how our country / culture have been adapted 'the sense of civic pride' in designing public buildings while identifying the gaps.

For the selection of case studies, several public buildings which were the most visited in the city of Colombo were given and let the participants choose the most preferred. Accordingly, National Museum - Colombo and Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) were selected.

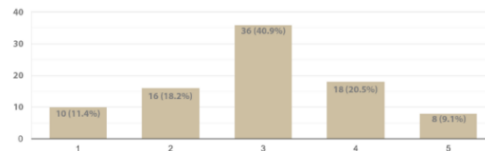
- Phase 04 - Data confirmation through In - site Questionnaire and observation assessment to reorganize the needs and to identify principles that can be adapted in designing public buildings.

4. Results

Pilot Study

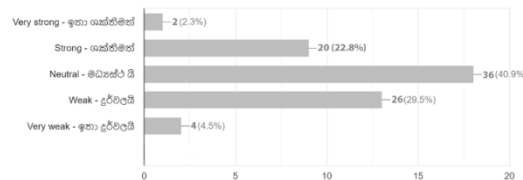
Out of the 88 respondents in Pilot Study, 64% (56) were female and 36% (32) were male. 39% of participants are currently living in Colombo minimum for two years while 27% are born in Colombo, and 23% have lived for a long time previously in Colombo, but now have moved. The study conducted under controlled conditions: having the participant sample from a same age category, (25 - 35)

Table 6: Scale on Pride of being a citizen in Colombo



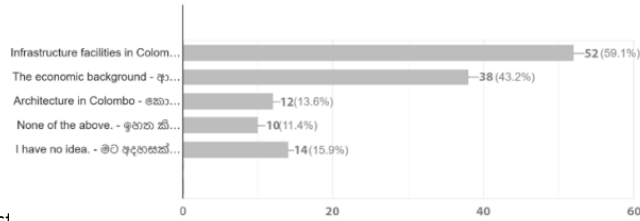
It is clear that the pride of residents in Colombo for being a citizen in Colombo is almost neutral. 40.9% (36) hold the maximum percentage out of the participants being neutral on the aforesaid statement.

Table 7: Subjects' rating on the overall atmosphere and the strength of the sense of community perceived



The "sense of Community" in Colombo is almost neutral having the highest percentage of 40.9 and a little bit more towards the positive side which they are more confidence of their sense of community rather than being negative on this aspect.

Table 8: Aspects about Colombo, make its Citizens proud to live in the city



59.1% of the people stated that Infrastructure facilities in Colombo is the main reason that sustain their confidence of proudly living in Colombo. Second highest preferred reason is the Economic background in Colombo.

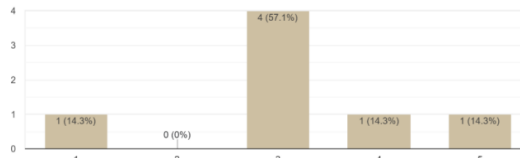
Seven of the top searched public buildings in 2023 were given and the most visited were recorded. As per the results, Almost the sample has visited,

- BMICH
- National Museum – Colombo

These public buildings become the case studies of my research.

Expert study: According to the Expert Survey, following graphical representation shows the distribution, in response to the statement, “I am feeling very proud about living in the city of Colombo”. Most of their answer is neutral. There is a minority that even unsatisfied of being in Colombo.

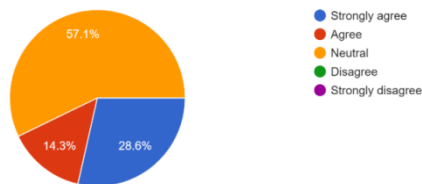
Table 9: Table 2: Scale on Pride of being a citizen in Colombo



57.1% of participants sample is neutral on being a proud citizen who lives in Colombo while 28.6% have a positive tend towards being proud.

The statement, “Every individual must have a ‘civic pride’ on the place they are belonging to, so that their efficiency and confidence in role, would increase.”, was neutralized by 57.1% while 43% of the participants agree that, the civic pride is vital in the society.

Table 10 : Assessment on acceptance of the necessity of Civic Pride



Application of Correlation Matrix of Civic Pride

Table 11 : 'Correlation Matrix of Civic Pride' applied in Sri Lankan context - Colombo

Variable		Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
Controls	Gender			0.50
	Health	Health good or very good		0.49
Emotional Stakes	Duration	Resident in city 10 years +	0.70	0.46
Financial stakes	Community	Sense of community	0.55	0.50
	Owner	Home owner	0.62	0.49
	Not employed Enough	Not employed Income meets everyday needs	0.43	0.44 0.34
Cultural stakes	Minority	Not a citizen in Colombo by birth	0.23	0.42
Civic stakes	Safe	Feel safe in central city	0.63	0.48
	Clean	No rubbish noticed	0.29	0.50
	Council	Confidence in council decisions	0.25	0.50

Using the correlation matrix, the research focused on the subjective responses of participants as one of the declared possible sources of variation. ('Pride and the city' by Morrison, Philip S. - European Regional Science Association (ERSA)) The graph elaborates the means and standard deviations of several variables examined. Each binary variable is coded so that civic pride and the expected sign have a positive connection. The city's emotional investment is represented by two elements. Upon examining the duration of stay, we discovered that over 70% of the individuals had been there for a decade or longer. 55.3% of respondents believed their neighborhood provided a feeling of community, despite their longer than average bond to the city.

In - site questionnaire and observations assessment

This questionnaire was designed and conducted to gather information on architectural elements to test hypothesis and on locations indicators identified in Case studies. As concluded by the hypothesis testing analysis as per spatial indicators of National Museum, the special elements of spatial definition (60%), the materials and colours used (82.2%), and the architectural detailing (67.1%) of preference in fostering civic pride, are the outstanding elements which can exert a major impact if positively applied, in fostering the 'sense of civic pride' and as concluded by the hypothesis testing analysis as per spatial indicators of Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), the special elements of spatial definition (53.8%) and the materials and colours used (64%), of preference in fostering civic pride, are the outstanding elements which can exert a major impact if positively applied, in fostering the 'sense of civic pride'.

Conclusion

The buildings are designed to fulfil people's needs. The cultural involvement is capable of generating the civic pride within native people, whereas the building components following particular design principles reflect the dignity of a community (Collins, 2015). Therefore, there is an immense contribution on the sense of civic pride through architectural interpretations of a city or a country.

It is clear that, the tested architectural elements; Special elements of spatial definition which are unique to every single building, the density of spaces in buildings, Depth of the spaces, Material usage and colour finishes used, the circulation spaces, volumes of spaces and architectural detailing impact in different levels on the sense of civic pride in human. As analyzed by testing hypothesis on spatial indicators of National Museum, the special elements of spatial definition (60%), the materials and colour used (82.2%), and the architectural detailing (67.1%) of preference in fostering civic pride, are the outstanding elements which can exert a major impact if positively applied, in fostering the 'sense of civic pride'.

These tested architectural elements impact positively as well as negatively according to the user's perception, on the sense of civic pride. As concluded by the hypothesis testing analysis of spatial indicators of Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), the special elements of spatial definition (53.8%) and the materials and colour used (64%), are the most significant elements which can exert a major impact if positively applied, in fostering the 'sense of civic pride'. The findings reveal that mostly the people do not notice the significance of the density and the depth of spaces on fostering the sense even though it does. These features can emerge through different ways in buildings. As an example, ash colour strips on walls are used in National Museum in order to control the visual impact of volume in gallery spaces.

During the hypothesis testing of architectural elements, unique elements of public buildings are embraced in different manners by people while these elements acquire the highest potential of presenting the overall positive ambiance of the building. As an example, the hexagonal form of BMICH makes it a unique feature of building that could appear it as an icon in Colombo city. This potential is proved by the 60% preference (National Museum), 53.8% preference (BMICH) of people, in terms of the sense of civic pride. In both the buildings, the colour used for wall finishes is brilliant white. The 82.2% of preference (National Museum) and 64% of people's preference (BMICH) on materials & colours replicate that white colour is a more glamorous colour which can enhance the sense of civic pride in comparison to other colours as per the spatial indicators' variation of placement.

The Correlation Matrix of Civic Pride reveals that, even with this extended average relationship to the city, only 55.3% of respondents thought their neighbourhood offered a sense of pride. Civic pride is still a relatively unmeasured indicator of how we feel about our city and, as such, isn't being used to gauge how public and private investment is distributed.

Recommendations

- Architectural pieces need to be designed in future collaborating specific elements blending them with extracted Sri Lankan identity without duplicating the existing historic elements.
- The densities and depth of spaces in buildings need to be controlled considering the functional aspect at the same time generating the expected ambiance of the building.
- Much spacious, visually connected and legible circulation spaces need to be designed in public buildings.
- Control of levels and volumes is necessarily a huge impact on human perception in spaces inside buildings. The designers need to control volumes without having unnecessary spaces created.
- Architectural detailing of a building is also much important as this is a potential instance where the designer's creativity could be injected easily. The public buildings have to be detailed adding native characteristics in relevance with the building purpose.

References:

- Akin, Ö. (1986). *Psychology of Architectural Design*. Pion.
- Alharbi, S., Basaad, H., & Taylor, G. (2022b). The Impact of Indoor, Outdoor and Urban Architecture on Human Psychology. *Civil Engineering and Architecture*, 10, 132–137. <https://doi.org/10.13189/cea.2022.101317>
- Amin, A. (2006). *Land of Strangers*. Wiley.
- Canter, D. V. (1969). *The Psychology of Place*. RIBA Publications Limited.
- Collins, T. (2016). Urban civic pride and the new localism. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12113>
- Crow, G. (1994). *Community Life*. Harvester Wheatsheaf. <https://saint-andre.be/en/our-life/community-life/>
- Foster, S. (1989). *Analysis of Spatial Patterns in Buildings*. Glasgow University. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/abs/analysis-of-spatial-patterns-in-buildings-access-analysis-as-an-insight-into-social-structure-examples-from-the-scottish-atlantic-iron-age/4F1AFFF48D022EFFAA2A5EB070AE5CB8>
- Gehl, J., & Svarre, B. (2013). *How to Study Public Life* (2nd edition). Island Press.
- Kakkar, G. (n.d.). *Architectural Psychology: The Impact of Architecture in Human Psyche*.
- Meiss, P. V. (2023). *Elements of Architecture | From Form to Place | Tay*. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315024691/elements-architecture-pierre-von-meiss>
- Morrison, P. S. (2016). Pride and the city. *REGION*, 3(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.18335/region.v3i2.130>
- Nast, C. (2020, February 18). *15 Playfully Bold Examples of Postmodern Architecture*. Architectural Digest. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/playfully-bold-postmodern-architecture>
- Raheem, I. (2008). Plesner in Sri Lanka. *The Architect*, 109(2), Article 2.
- Rapoport, A. (1969). *House Form & Culture*. Prentice-Hall. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324687573_Book_Review_House_Form_and_Culture_-_Amos_Rapoport_1969_-_by_JA_Adedeji_and_SA_2010
- Wood, E. (2005). Measuring the economic and social impacts of local authority events. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 18, 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550510576143>