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Changes in the cultural landscape and their impacts on heritage management : a study of Dutch Fort at Galle, Sri Lanka

Jinadasa, U.N.

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Author: Jinadasa, U.N.

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6. Socio-Economic Changes in the Urban Landscape

The chapter focuses on the drastic demographic, economic and cultural changes at Galle Fort that occurred in the wake of World Heritage recognition, paying special attention to its urban community.

6.1 WHAT GALLE FORT MEANS TO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

Here I discuss how the various stakeholders identified and experienced the fort based on interviews, personal conversations and my own reasoned observations, giving priority to the voices of local residents.

6.1.1 GAMA (“VILLAGE”) IN THE EYES OF THE RESIDENTS

In general, most of the interviewed residents (28 out of 33) identified Galle Fort as their home town, indicated by the Sinhala term *gama* (literally “village”), despite the fort being a town with urban features. The idea of *gama* also symbolizes the sense of ownership and self-identity associated with one’s birthplace or the place one lives in a local context.⁴⁰⁹ Following Pieris (1964, 39), the Sinhala term *gama* (Pali *gāma*, Sanskrit *grāma*), translated as “village,” will be understood to connote an inhabited village (Pieris 1956, 39).⁴¹⁰ In certain contexts, *gama* signifies landed property or estate, or can also designate a collection of landholdings.⁴¹¹

409 The phrase [*magē*] *gama Gāllē*, “[I am] from Galle,” as often proudly proclaimed by the people of Galle, shows their self-identity, which symbolises the rigidity and bravery of the Southerners.

410 The idea of an “inhabited village,” rather than a “village,” is based on the term *olagam*, mentioned in the *vitti-pot* (“books of incidents”) and signifying uninhabited villages. The *vitti-pot* are written in colloquial Sinhala prose on palm-leaf manuscripts (Pieris 1956, 39, 269).

411 Pieris (1956) explains this with the contemporary phrase *ūta mama nama dunnā gama dunnē nē*, “I gave him my

Pieris further mentions that in many villages, there were people who claimed descent from some original ancestor, real or imaginary (Pieris 1956, 39). In the first case, a *gama* could also be identified as a settlement where people with blood relations live, as is also common to many typical Sri Lankan villages. There is a distinction between “native” and other inhabitants (Codrington 1938; Pieris 1956), while the natives develop a sense of belonging to their territorial and social unit (Pieris 1956, 40). The sense of ownership associated with *gama* is implied by two colloquial Sinhala terms—*gankārayō*, the “village inhabitants,” and *pitagankārayō*, the typical term for “outsiders,” often used negatively.⁴¹² The villagers’ ownership of local resources can further be illustrated by the Sinhala saying *gamē vāla gamē kaputanta*, “village jackfruits are [only] for the village crows.”

Just as the walled city is not an ordinary town with respect to its architecture, I have observed that its residents’ relationships with each other are not similar to those of ordinary town dwellers. The households were separated by common walls, and everybody lived in a crowded space, creating more opportunity for interaction with each other. Thus,

name, but not my estate.” *Nama gama* means name and estate, “the name by which any person of rank is distinguished, and generally known, being that of the village in which his ancestral or principal estates are situated” (D’Oyly (1832, 60) quoted by Pieris (1956, 39). Among the other important terms associated with *gama* during the Kandyan Kingdom are: *gabadāgam*, the royal lands directly associated with the crown, and attached to one of the royal storehouses; *vidānagam*, a special type of *gabadāgam*, usually inhabited by low-caste persons engaged in public services of a menial kind; and *nindagam*, certain royal lands (*gabadāgam*) granted to individuals and inscribed in the *lekam miti* or “land rolls” (Pieris 1956). The last category is associated with D’Oyly’s above-mentioned idea, and is somewhat prevalent even now. *Vihāragam* and *dēvāla-gam*, the villages held by the temples, also belong to this last category (Codrington 1938).

412 In formal Sinhala usage, *gankārayō* is *gam-vāsiyō*, while *pitagankārayō* is *pitagamkārayō*. The latter could be translated as “people outside the village” or “people from outside villages” [*pīta*, “outside;” *gam*, “villages;” *kārayō*, “people”].

they appeared to know each other as well as in a typical Sri Lankan *gama*, despite their different ethnicities. Besides this, some families have lived there for generations, which has strengthened their community and neighbourhood relationships, while fostering a strong attachment to the landscape. This sentiment was expressed by a retired banker whose family has lived in the fort for generations: “I was born here, lived here, worked here and I want to die here.”⁴¹³ Mr Fernandopulle, whose family has lived in the fort for several generations, recalled his memories of the mid-’80s, when he knew everyone well and thus could even “go to the other end of the fort without wearing a shirt”—the informal way that men dress at home, among familiar people, and an indication of how the whole fort was like “home.”⁴¹⁴ This strong community feeling, a major social aspect of the fort and substantially threatened by gentrification, is elaborated separately in an anecdote in sub-chapter 6.6.2. Interestingly, the views of a few senior citizens reflected the colonial nature of the fort. The late Mr Vitange, a third-generation resident of the fort, used the word “colony” instead of the popular term “the fort.”⁴¹⁵ One 79-year-old resident said of the fort, “Our city built by the Dutch.”⁴¹⁶

In general, most of the residents interviewed said they were very happy to live in Galle Fort (30 out of 33). Their satisfaction mainly rested on their birthright, good neighbours, unity and ethnic harmony⁴¹⁷ and better infrastructure, as well as reasons directly associated with the positive socio-economic impact of World Heritage recognition, such as business opportunities, high land value, global experience through tourism, the prestige of living and owning properties in a heritage city, safety and security. Despite the majority of the population being Muslim, there is a sense of unity among the different ethnicities. According to one Malay Muslim resident, “all ethnic problems end at

the gateway to the fort.”⁴¹⁸ The economic benefits and the prestige of living in Galle Fort, a positive outcome of gaining heritage status, is reflected by the response of Mr Miguel: it is “the place with highest land value in the country.”⁴¹⁹

With the tremendous increase of tourism-related business, Mr Hameed, who runs a café in Leyn Baan Street, saw the fort negatively as a “business city,” although he is happy about the “additional income generated.”⁴²⁰ Ms Abbas, who is not engaged in any tourism-related business, unlike the majority of residents, stated that the “environment of the fort is no longer healthy for ordinary people.”⁴²¹ However, these ideas, whether positive or negative, are not static and change with their day-to-day experiences. Mrs and Mr Rodrigo, who run a B&B, identified the fort as “our beautiful *gama*—the best place to live” in December 2015, but were very disappointed when the UDA notified them to demolish their [“illegally” developed] third floor at the end of next year, and “lost interest in living in the fort anymore.”⁴²² Overall, the commercialization associated with tourism has become a major factor determining the residents’ views of their *gama*.

6.1.2 THE RAMPART, THE DUTCH AND THE SEA: LOCAL VISITORS

In the “mental image” of Sri Lankans who visited the fort (both from Galle and outside), Galle Fort could be identified in four words as the ramparts, the sea, the Dutch and tourists (69%, 16%, 8% and 4%, respectively). These four words can be turned into a meaningful sentence, which gives a larger picture of Galle Fort as “(huge) Dutch built ramparts surrounded by the sea and visited by tourists.” This also indicates that the local presence of the fort is not as prominent in the general Sri Lankan view of Galle Fort.

Among domestic tourists, the popularity of the notion of World Heritage has eclipsed the fort’s colonial origin; nearly 65% of the local visitors surveyed identified the fort as a World Heritage

413 Personal conversation, March 2016.

414 Interview, 29 January 2016. However, nowadays he must wear a shirt to go to the shop at the end of his street, just a few houses away.

415 Interview, 3 March 2016.

416 Interview with Mr Gunadasa, 3 March 2016.

417 As a country that suffered from ethnic conflicts for nearly three decades, ethnic harmony is specifically considered important throughout the country.

418 Interview with Mr Deen, 10 February 2016.

419 Interview, 1 March 2016.

420 Interview, 12 February 2016.

421 Interview, 1 March 2016.

422 Interview on 17 December 2015 and personal conversation in January 2017.

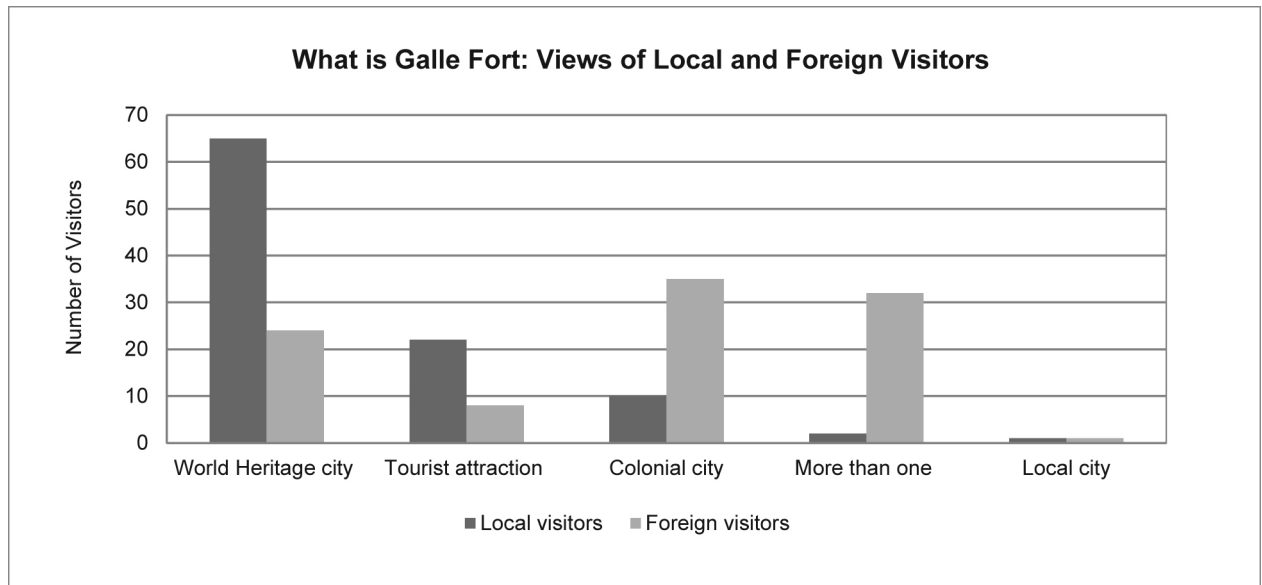


Fig. 216 How local and foreign visitors describe Galle Fort.

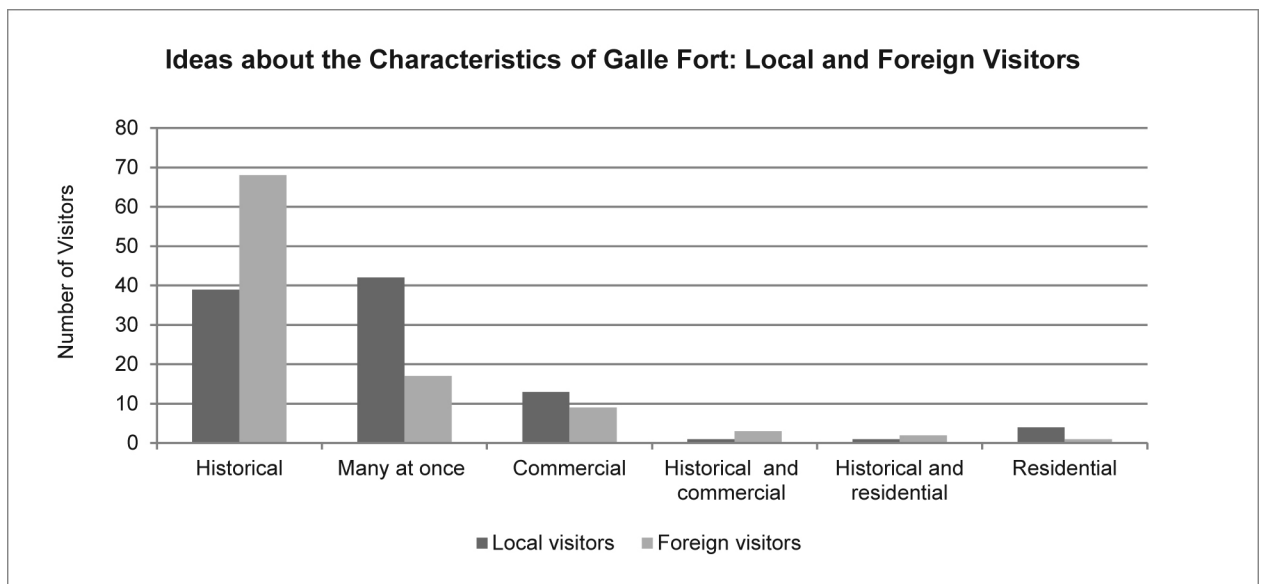


Fig. 217 Ideas of local and foreign visitors about the fort's characteristics.

city (Fig. 216).⁴²³ In contrast, the majority of foreign tourists, of whom a large percentage were Europeans (58%), recognized the fort as a colonial city. However, only one-tenth of the local visitors had the same idea, while hardly any group saw the fort as a local city.

Galle Fort was not merely a tourist destination for some tourists, who demonstrated ownership of the colonial landscape. A note in the visitor's book of All Saints' Church read "... this is the land of my

⁴²³ Based on questionnaires given to a hundred local visitors, as discussed under in sub-chapter 3.2.3.

ancestors.”⁴²⁴ Personal attachment to the landscape associated with memories is indicated by another note: “lovely to visit the Church where my parents were married on 14 Aug 1958!!.”⁴²⁵ Each year, a number of tourists request the assistance of heritage institutes (sometimes even residents) in searching for their former ancestral homes or tombs, which also demonstrates their connection to the colonial landscape.⁴²⁶

There was a difference between the way both local and foreign visitors identified the characteristics (values) of the fort. While a majority of local visitors (42%) identified the fort as a place with multiple characteristics (including historical, commercial and residential), by contrast, nearly 70% of foreign tourists, most of whom were first-time visitors (93%), gave priority to its historic character (Fig. 217). It was evident that the ideas of locals rested mainly on their day-to-day experience of the fort, as nearly 30% of them were frequent visitors who live close by. In general, the rampart was the most familiar space to these frequent visitors, who come to relax and spend the evening. In general, both local and foreign visitors were very happy to visit Galle Fort, 95% and 98%, respectively.

6.1.3 LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY, HERITAGE OFFICERS AND OTHERS

Half of the local business community, comprised of both residents and outsiders, perceived the fort as World Heritage city (50%); it was viewed to a lesser extent as a *gama* (37%), a city with business opportunities (8%) and a historic city (5%). Interestingly, a businessman identified the fort as “a city that has fallen into the hands of foreigners” a response based on the remarkable foreign direct investments.⁴²⁷

The opinions of the heads/relevant officers of public institutions, religious places, museums and banks (20 in total) located inside the fort were also surveyed. In general, these individuals were aware of

current trends at the fort, including foreign and local investments. Despite the majority viewing the fort as a World Heritage city, their experiences and interactions with the community led to identifications like “a city with heritage as well as living community” (the head priest of a church).⁴²⁸ The secretary of one institution called the fort “a foreigners’ city.”⁴²⁹ Although almost all of these institutions were located in heritage buildings, not all of them were admired by their users. According to the Registrar of one of the courts located at the fort, the people who come to the courts have greater concerns than appreciating the colonial architecture.⁴³⁰

Although the above-mentioned groups are generally happy to live or work in Galle Fort, the heritage officers are something of an exception. There are heritage officers who are not happy to work at the fort, especially the ones who are directly involved in taking legal action against “illegal” developers, and also suffer from these tense situations.⁴³¹ One heritage officer stated that “although I am happy to work in Galle Fort, I doubt whether we have followed the guidelines of UNESCO sufficiently.”⁴³² Thus, some of them saw the fort in the context of heritage theories, guidelines and their working experiences, and felt the need for making it a better place. My interaction with them over three years (2016–2018) showed that some of them have gradually developed a feeling of ownership over the landscape from a decidedly professional perspective, which was not much appreciated by the residents, who are attached to the landscape as *apē gama* (“our village”).

“The Pride of Galle”: A Localized Colonial Monument?

“The huge ramparts of Galle Fort show how much the colonial powers were afraid of the local people of Galle” — Sanjeewa Wijeweera, a local reporter and a resident of Galle⁴³³

The South (the ancient Kingdom of Ruhuna) and southerners have played an important role in the country’s political history. The country’s one of the

424 “May the great god walk with you, this is the land of my ancestors,” read a note by one foreign visitor, 19 January 2016.

425 Note by a foreign visitor, 5 January 2015.

426 Interview with an Archaeological Research Officer attached to the Regional Archaeology Office (South), at the fort on 5 January 2016; personal communication with Ms Atukorala in December 2016.

427 Based on questionnaires given to 23 business owners (or their staff), March 2016.

428 Personal conversation, March 2017.

429 Personal conversation, March 2016.

430 Personal conversation, March 2016.

431 Personal conversations, 2016–2018.

432 Personal conversation with a key heritage officer of Galle Fort, 2 September 2018.

433 A Facebook post by Sanjeewa Wijeweera (who wished to be named) in July 2018 and personal conversation, 4 March 2019.

most powerful Sinhalese Buddhist king came from the South, and it was the southerners who contributed to the Buddhist revivalist movement in the 19th century, which contributed to Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as well as to the independence movement.⁴³⁴ In popular belief, southerners bravely took part in national freedom struggles. They were loyal to the Sinhalese King of Kandy even when the Maritime Provinces were under British control (as the last colonial power), despite being located far from the kingdom.⁴³⁵ Thus, there is no wonder that the three main landward bastions of Galle Fort are the strongest and most impressive, addressing the risk of possible local attacks, with smaller ones to the sea, despite the risk of possible naval attacks from rival European nations.⁴³⁶ These huge colonial ramparts, which gradually became part of the lives of local people, have become a landmark of Galle despite their harsh colonial associations.

The ramparts of Galle Fort were identified as the “Pride of Galle” by a Galle District parliamentarian during the Parliamentary Debates of 2007; he further stated, “Galle reminds everyone of the historic ramparts,” a fact that is hard to deny as a Sri Lankan (*Hansard* 2007, 3268). In general, the frontal view of the [Dutch] ramparts of Galle Fort with the clock tower is seen as the iconic image of Galle, which was featured on the postal stamp issued for the centenary celebration of Galle Municipal Council (1867–1967). In 2018, the new Mayor of Galle used the same view as the background image in his Facebook acknowledgement message, indicating that the fort is currently a localized colonial monument.⁴³⁷ Not only the politicians, but also the residents of the fort, those who live outside it and those who currently live abroad use the Galle Fort as a background image in their profile photos on Facebook, showing their identity as people of Galle.⁴³⁸

6.1.4 GALLE FORT: COLLECTIVE MEMORIES

When three middle-aged women—two who had lived in the fort for several years, and one who currently still lives there—were asked to draw Galle Fort, the first question they asked was whether they should draw the “earlier fort” or the “current fort,” showing a clear distinction between the landscape before and after heritage recognition. When they were asked to choose whichever they wished, they opted for the “earlier fort,” resulting in the map “Recalling the Galle Fort of Three Past and Present Residents” (Fig. 218).

While they drew the streets first, the urban landscape was then constructed by recalling places and landmarks. Among the places were churches, the temple, mosque, library, lighthouse, clock tower, ramparts, Hayleys Building, Walker Building, E Court’s Building, three banks,⁴³⁹ the post office, army camp, etc. Places of personal attachment were significant, and they gave priority to the YWCA, featured prominently in the middle, as they all were council members there. Although their houses were marked on the map, they had lesser importance, although the houses were important in general. The places or landmarks that were important to one individual were not always important to the others, as I observed several times. The former Hayleys Building was a must-draw for Ms Gunawardene, while Ms Pieris wanted to include the fort’s former printing company (currently a boutique hotel).

They recalled important incidents associated with places and the people who lived there as collective memories. For instance, the current Rampart Hotel was Dr Kularatne’s bungalow, which firstly reminded them of the tragic murder of the doctor’s wife by poisoning.⁴⁴⁰ Then they recalled their memories of

434 Anagarika Dharmapala (formerly Don David Hewavitarne, 1864–1933), Rev. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala (1927–1911) and Rev. Migettuwatte Gunananda (1823–1890) were all southerners; they worked together with Colonel Henty Steel Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society, which also contributed to this movement.

435 This idea was further elaborated by Obeyesekere (2018).

436 It was mentioned in sub-chapter 1.1.3 that King Rājasingha closely blockaded Galle Fort by land in 1642, soon after its acquisition by the Dutch.

437 Galle Mayor, in a Facebook post dated 23 March 2018.

438 Personal observations, 2017–2019.

439 The Bank of Ceylon, People’s Bank and Mercantile Bank (currently Commercial Bank).

440 The famous Kularatne poisoning case of 1976:

“Poisoning is rare, and the alleged use of arsenic as a murder weapon made its belated debut in the Kularatne poisoning case of 1976. At the trial, discussed by Alles in his second essay, the prosecution charged Dr Daymon Kularatne, his mother Laura, and their cook Mavelege Sophia with murdering the doctor’s estranged wife, Padmini, who was kept a virtual prisoner in an untended garret room of the family residence. After the jury convicted all three defendants, the Court of Criminal Appeal reversed, inter alia, that two Crown scientific witnesses lacked sufficient expertise to support their testimony intended to show that the victim ingested potassium arsenite drawn from the doctor’s dispensary,” writes Borowitz,



Fig. 218 "Recalling the Galle Fort of Three Past and Present Residents," drawn by Ms Monnina Gunawardene, Ms Mala Buultjens and Ms Surangani Pieris.⁴⁴¹

the doctor, which were connected to the "place": "my husband still remembers the way the doctor went on horseback" (Ms Gunawardene); "Dr Kularatne had a clinic here" (Ms Buultjens pointed it out in the map); "It was similar to Dr Ginige's" (Ms Pieris); "It was the only place that had air conditioning in those days" (Ms Gunawardene).⁴⁴²

quoting *Famous Criminal Cases of Sri Lanka, Vol. 4 of 11 vols.* by A. C. Alles, a former solicitor general and judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka (Borowitz 2002, 45). The appeal was defended by the brilliant criminal lawyer and statesman Dr Colvin R. de Silva, who vehemently opposed the capital punishment.

⁴⁴¹ The artists of this image wished to be named.

⁴⁴² Group conversation, 29 January 2017.

In January 2018, Mrs De Silva, who worked in the fort for more than 15 years, also drew a picture of the "current fort (2017)," which she sees as "a busy, commercialized place where lots of activities are going on" (Fig. 219).⁴⁴³ While most of the picture consists of various commercial establishments and tourists, these differences are further elaborated in the next sub-chapter.

6.2 CHANGES AT GALLE FORT: PERCEPTIONS OF THE RESIDENTS

Here I elaborate on the changes in the fort's urban landscape before and after World Heritage recognition, based on the ideas of the local residents.

⁴⁴³ Personal conversation, 30 January 2017.



Fig. 219 "The Current Fort [2017]," by Mrs Chandani De Silva.⁴⁴⁷

6.2.1 GALLE FORT BEFORE AND DURING THE INITIAL STAGES OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROJECT

At the initiation of the World Heritage project, the fort had a residential-administrative character. First, it was a town with a community of nearly 2,000, as well as the institutions and individuals that fulfilled their needs, such as several retail shops, two bakeries, milkmen, door-to-door vegetable sellers,⁴⁴⁴ religious places of different faiths, a clinic, salon, etc. Secondly, the number of provincial government departments and institutions, including courts, the post office and the police station, were located in the fort, mainly in the northern part. Although residents saw "white heads" in the early '70s, there were no "Lansi"⁴⁴⁵ people by the mid-'80s.⁴⁴⁶ According

to a resident who is in his mid-'70s, the remaining ones moved to Australia by the mid-'80s.⁴⁴⁸ The last Burgher was Ms Bultjens, who died in 2003.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, the fort was something of a local space, despite the occasional tourist.⁴⁵⁰

Gunasekere, 16 March 2016. According to Mrs Paulas, there were ten to 15 Burghers at the fort in the early '60s (Interview, 3 February 2016).

⁴⁴⁷ The artist of this image wished to be named.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Mr Gunasekere, 16 March 2016.

⁴⁴⁹ "My mummy (mother-in-law) was the last Burgher lady," Ms Bultjens mentioned, which was confirmed by Ms Gunawardene and Ms Pieris in a group conversation on 28 January 2017.

⁴⁵⁰ Although the Burghers were officially identified as a local ethnicity, they were rather "people in between" in the local context, which is the common view of other local ethnicities at Galle Fort.

⁴⁴⁴ This is a common sight, even now.

⁴⁴⁵ Colloquial term for colonial descendants, derived from the term "Hollandaise" (person or people from Holland).

⁴⁴⁶ Interviews with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2017, and Mr

There was a strong community feeling at the fort. Women living on opposite sides of the streets used to sit on the front steps of their verandahs to chat with each other at night.⁴⁵¹ Planter's chairs were kept on the verandahs, where men sat chewing betel leaves and smoking cheroot.⁴⁵² Many used to go to the ramparts around 6.30 pm in the evening, including women, where they enjoyed a chat and the sea breeze at sunset.⁴⁵³ The children went to school together, and it was their duty to distribute sweetmeats among the neighbours during the New Year.⁴⁵⁴ As the houses had no yards, the ramparts and the present-day Court's Square served as playgrounds for the children, who bathed in the sea after playing.⁴⁵⁵ Sometimes they also played in the roads, which were not busy.⁴⁵⁶

The streets were coated with tar and had potholes and cracks. It was a time when cattle roamed the streets of the fort. The cattle were owned by two families, one which was known as *kiri gedara*, "the milk house" since converted into a boutique hotel.⁴⁵⁷ The cattle as well as the beggars rested in open verandahs at night, which caused the owners to close the verandahs, apart from increasing the floor area (as discussed in sub-chapter 5.3.1).⁴⁵⁸ *Sara vita*⁴⁵⁹ sellers could be found on the road, and bull-driven buggy carts were used as modern-day three-wheeler taxis.⁴⁶⁰

The houses were old, with huge coral walls of colonial origin and leaking roofs that often need repairs.⁴⁶¹ According to a shop owner, a known set of carpenters and roof-repairers were busy throughout

the whole year with these old houses.⁴⁶² Furthermore, nobody wanted to buy the fort's old houses, separated by common walls, crowded and sometimes partly dilapidated in the '80s, as confirmed by several individuals, including two elderly residents.⁴⁶³ According to Mr Fowzie, "not even a Muslim bridegroom accepted a house from the fort as a dowry with the high maintenance costs."⁴⁶⁴ A higher official attached to a heritage institution decided not to buy the current Rampart Hotel for nearly a half a million rupees—which would have been a bargain at the time—mainly due to its age and the stories associated with the old mansion, such as the well-known tragic murder that took place at the residence.⁴⁶⁵ Some houses were dilapidated, and as a child, Ms Pieris believed ghosts haunted the old houses, which looked gloomy at night.⁴⁶⁶ Generally, these incidents show that the houses were financially condemned before the World Heritage recognition of the fort, although the occupants enjoyed a peaceful life.

Similarly, the residents were not as interested in developing houses as at present, since it was not profitable in return.⁴⁶⁷ According to a long-time resident, although there were laws to protect houses even in the '70s, they were not as strict as they are today, and the Department of Archaeology (hereafter also referred to as "DOA") was the authority responsible, whereas today it is "UDA" (Urban Development Authority).⁴⁶⁸ Although people engaged in "illegal" development, unlike today, court cases were not filed.⁴⁶⁹ According to Mr Piyasena, the owner of a guest house, there were not many tourists in the '80s, while only two other families beside themselves provided homestay accommodation in the mid-1990s.⁴⁷⁰ Ordinary residents regarded it as

451 Personal conversation with Ms Buultjans, September 2017.

452 Interview with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2017.

453 Personal conversation with Ms Buultjans, September 2017; interview with Mr Hassan, 10 March 2017.

454 Personal conversation with Mr Perera, 15 March 2016.

455 Interview with Miss Gamage [undergraduate and formerly a resident], 12 March 2016; "My children played in the rampart; both of them are doctors now. Although we don't have a yard, the road too served as their playground" (Ms Miguel, personal conversation, 27 February 2016).

456 Ibid.

457 Interview with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2017; conversations with Ms Atukorala, 5 December 2016.

458 Interview with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2017.

459 A street food with grated and dried coconut, which is brightly colored, spiced and wrapped in a betel leaf. This was common in the 1970s and '80s.

460 Personal conversation with Ms Pieris, 1 September 2015.

461 Personal conversation with Ms Hewage, 5 December 2016, and further elaborated in anecdote 1 in sub-chapter 6.6.1.

462 Personal conversation with Ms Atukorala, 5 December 2016.

463 Ibid. This was also confirmed by Mr Gunasekera (interview, 16 March 2016) and Mr Piyasena (personal conversation, 10 December 2016), whose house had partly collapsed.

464 Interview, 15 February 2016. Giving a house to the bridegroom as a dowry for a daughter's marriage is a local custom of the Muslims, and is also in practice at the fort.

465 See footnote 440.

466 Interview with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2017.

467 Personal Conversation with Ms Atukorala, 5 December 2016.

468 Interview with Mr Gunasekera, 16 March 2016.

469 Interviews with a few residents, February and March 2016.

470 Personal conversation, 5 December 2016.

a shame to accommodate tourists, except for some affluent families.⁴⁷¹ Unlike today, tourism was not the major source income for the majority of residents, who mostly engaged in outside jobs.⁴⁷² Although living at the fort was not considered as prestigious as today, there was a common belief that decent people lived at the fort.⁴⁷³ Among the fort's natives are some of the country's most renowned doctors and a sports figure.

6.2.2 CHANGES WITH HERITAGE RECOGNITION: PERCEPTIONS OF THE RESIDENTS

Although change is a common process in any city, 31 out of the 33 residents interviewed stated that the fort had undergone a drastic change. As the people who had been living there continuously, the residents were the ones who experienced this transformation the most. Rather than picking one factor, the majority of them (28) stated that “everything has changed,” which included even the people themselves.

The reasons for the drastic change, as identified by the residents, includes the World Heritage project (12), the tsunami in December 2004 (9),⁴⁷⁴ an increase of tourist arrivals after the end of the war in 2009 (5),⁴⁷⁵ and other reasons (7), including property purchases by foreigners, the Preservation of Private Houses Project (2006–2009) funded by the Dutch government and the tourism policies of the former government (2005–2015).⁴⁷⁶ According to a resident, the handover of Hong Kong to China by the British government (1997) also caused some

Hong Kong-based Westerners to move to Galle.⁴⁷⁷ This idea parallels the accounts of Samarawickrema (2012, 111), who identifies one such Hong Kong-based British banker as the second expatriate to buy a house in the fort. While the root cause of the changes is World Heritage recognition, the other factors have also contributed.

Interestingly, the majority of them (21) were both “satisfied as well as dissatisfied” regarding the change. Although the residents are in favour of the positive economic and social benefits of the World Heritage project discussed above, they are disappointed with the negative social, cultural and administrative outcomes, like losing the peace and tranquillity of the city due to commercialization, the difficulty of developing properties under heritage laws, neighbours moving away from the fort due to land sales, lack of safety due to the heavy flow of unknown people/tourists and negative cultural effects.

While 21 of the residents mentioned the fort looks better now than before, the rest were happier with the appearance of the past. However, paving the road network with interlocking cement paving blocks in 2011, which made a huge visual difference, was appreciated by several residents, who said it motivates them to keep the environment in order.⁴⁷⁸ Regarding the increase in the development of buildings (either legal or “illegal”), a significant change, mainly associated with the economic benefits of tourism, was noted by the residents, who had different views on the matter. Mr Piyasena saw this positively, as “the fort is more pleasant now; buildings were dilapidated in those days, and even my house had partly collapsed. I was able to renovate and maintain this old building, as I run this guest house.” However, the views of Mr Galappaththi, who also runs a B&B, indicates that the fort is not always being used wisely or properly for this very reason: “If there are shops and hotels everywhere, there will be nothing to see in the fort; the oldness will fade away. Every [old] façade is turning into a showroom today. It's time for the government to take the necessary actions to prevent this.”⁴⁷⁹ Meanwhile, there are people who

471 Interviews with Mr Piyasena, 10 February 2016, and Mr Gunasekera, 16 March 2016.

472 Interview with Ms Pieris, 2 September 2015.

473 Ibid.

474 According to Sanjeewani (2012, 33), after the 2004 tsunami, a substantial number of international NGO's established their offices inside the fort; as it had not been damaged much by the tsunami, it was a practical location for many aid agencies. This very fact promoted the fort as a prime location among foreigners.

475 In 2009, government forces defeated the LTTE, who had been fighting for a separate Tamil state or *Tamil Eelam* for the Tamil ethnic minority in northern Sri Lanka since 1983.

476 The former regime was also responsible for the end of the war. Developing Galle Port as a tourism port (as further discussed in sub-chapter 7.7.3), as part of the development of cultural tourism in the country, and the renovation of Galle Maritime Museum were policy decisions of this regime, as per the election manifesto of former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa (Ministry of Finance and Planning 2006).

477 Interview with Mr Fernandopulle, 29 January 2016.

478 Personal conversations with Ms Abbas, March 2016, and Ms Hewage, 5 December 2016.

479 Interview, March 2016.

think that the architectural change is in accordance with the law. Mr Gunasekera states “although there are developments, we can still see the oldness in the façades due to the strict laws of UDA, which do not allow the façades to be renovated in modern style.”

However, not everybody agrees with this idea, as the new developments have changed the former sense of the place. According to Ms Hewage, “Nowadays the houses have ‘an archaeology face’ (*purāvidyā moona*)—a face given by the archaeology [institutions], but not the original face.”⁴⁸⁰ Instead of the term “façade,” she uses *moona*, the everyday colloquial Sinhala term for “face,” primarily used to identify people. In a way, the statement shows that the development of houses is rather perceived as a change of decades of familiar faces—a testimony to the identification of the historic urban landscape as a “living organism.”

The social and cultural issues created by the flourishing tourism industry and gentrification are discussed separately in sub-chapters 6.4 and 6.6. Although the past is nostalgic and the change is drastic, the majority of the residents have forgotten the negative aspects of World Heritage recognition, as the economic benefits are much higher. Thus, some see their *gama* (village) as a “global village.”⁴⁸¹

6.3 GENTRIFICATION: FOREIGN INVESTMENTS AND LAWS

“Galle is a jewel ... Wandering its rambling lanes you’ll pass stylish cafés, quirky boutiques and impeccably restored hotels owned by local and foreign artists, writers, photographers and designers” (Lonelyplanet.com, 2018).⁴⁸²

Lonely Planet’s 2018 introduction to Galle Fort, reprinted above, is a clear indication of the gentrification of the fort, which used to be a local space before World Heritage recognition, as discussed above. Samarawickrema (2012) discusses the real-estate boom and gentrification of Galle Fort through the views of the first foreign investors and

expatriates; here I discuss the process of gentrification from the views of the local residents.

6.3.1 FOREIGN (AND LOCAL) INVESTMENTS: VIEWS OF RESIDENTS

According to the 33 residents interviewed in 2016, the major reason for locals selling or leasing properties to foreign (and local) investors is the exorbitant land value of the fort. The process has made some residents relocate, while increasing tourism-oriented investments. A similar number believe that the Muslim tradition of giving a house as a daughter’s dowry also contributes to this. Although this undoubtedly affects the Muslim half of the fort’s population, anecdote 1 shows that not only Muslims but also the Sinhalese sell properties for the sake of their daughters. Thirdly, a property having multiple owners or under co-ownership also leads to its sale and the distribution of the money among owners. However, there are recent examples of investments in such properties by one or more co-owners.⁴⁸³ The majority of the locals (70%) believe that investors buy or lease properties in the fort due to economic benefits, while they cite an interest in living there, prestige, tax concessions (or the ability to avoid taxes via loopholes), safety and security as other reasons.

6.3.2 LAWS AND POLICIES AFFECTING GENTRIFICATION: FOREIGN PROPERTY PURCHASES AND LEASES

Generally, local laws discourage foreign ownership of property, although investment opportunities are also provided. According to Finance Act No. 11 of 1963, a 100% transfer fee of property tax (equivalent to the value of the property) is charged to transfer the ownership of any property in Sri Lanka to a foreigner (Section 58, Finance Act No. 11 of 1963).⁴⁸⁴ Foreign land purchases, especially by Europeans, increased significantly at Galle Fort when the government temporally suspended the above-mentioned 100% tax

480 Personal conversation, 30 August 2017.

481 Interviews with Ms Mahadeva, 19 March 2016, and Rev Hemaloka, the chief monk of the fort’s Buddhist temple, 8 September 2015.

482 Available at <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/sri-lanka/the-south/galle> (accessed 9 August 2018).

483 Personal conversations with residents from 2016 to 2018.

484 “Subject to the provisions of subsection (4), where there is a transfer of ownership of any property in Ceylon to a person who is not a citizen of Ceylon, there shall be charged from the transferee of such property a tax of such amount as is equivalent to the value of that property” [Section 58 (1), Finance Act No. 11 of 1963].

in 2002. The Finance (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2004 re-introduced the 100% tax on foreigners, namely the individuals or companies incorporated in Sri Lanka under the Companies Act (No. 7 of 2007)⁴⁸⁵ with 25% or above foreign shareholding [Section 58 (3A)].

To avoid the 100% tax, foreign property purchases are mostly made by establishing companies incorporated in Sri Lanka under the Companies Act with less than 25% foreign shareholding. This is the responsibility of the Department of the Registrar of Companies, under the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. However, the foreign investors usually take control over the property by gradually increasing the percentage of foreign shareholding, which was a loophole in the law.

The changes in the fort have attracted media attention since the early 2000s. In 2001, the *Sunday Times* reported that the heritage city would soon transform into a “holiday resort.”⁴⁸⁶ As a consequence of the 2002 policy, the increasing foreign land purchases at Galle Fort were frequently discussed in newspapers, often as a threat to local values and the economy in general. In 2008, both *The Island* and *Daily News* reported that foreign-invested hotels in Galle Fort do not benefit the people or the country through foreign exchange, as they are invoiced overseas by the owners or agents.⁴⁸⁷

In general, the peaceful state of the country after the end of the war in 2009 coupled with economic policies resulted in continuous economic growth while increasing foreign investment.⁴⁸⁸ Against this background, the previous regime (2005–2015) introduced a new law by abolishing the freehold of lands and properties by foreigners in order to “protect our land resources from outright transfers to foreign

ownership” (Budget Speech 2014, 4).⁴⁸⁹ The new law, Land (Restrictions on Alienation) Act No. 38 of 2014, banned the 100% tax and introduced a 15% Land Lease Tax for a maximum tenure not exceeding 99 years for foreigners (individuals or companies incorporated in Sri Lanka under the Companies Act with 50% or more foreign shareholding) leasing out land in Sri Lanka [Sections 5 and 6 (2)].⁴⁹⁰ Although it is possible to avoid the 15% tax by forming a company with less than 50% foreign shareholding, the new law prohibits changes in the shareholding percentage for 20 years and the increase of foreign shareholding above 50%, which would render the land purchase null and void.⁴⁹¹ Thus, it was difficult to obtain greater legal ownership over a property and still avoid the 15% tax under this law. This resulted in a decrease in foreign investment in the southern coast in general, including Galle Fort.⁴⁹² The 2016 budget removed the above-mentioned land lease tax, “which has been an impediment for attracting investments to the country,” in January 2016, a result of policy changes by the new coalition government, active since January 2015 (Budget Speech 2016, 27).⁴⁹³ I observed some of the new foreign-invested ventures at the fort in 2016 and 2017.

489 “Similarly, we have formulated laws to protect our land resources from outright transfers to foreign ownership. From this year, foreigners can have access to state and private land only through long-term lease arrangements. As infrastructure development has improved the value of all lands, it is necessary to implement a land lease tax structure to protect long-term value of lands. Hence a 15 percent upfront tax will be imposed in the event of lease of state or private lands to foreigners” Quoted from President Mahinda Rajapaksa’s Budget Speech 2014, available at <http://www.treasury.gov.lk/documents/10181/440258/budgetspeech2014-eng.pdf/78964dff-3bfa-4645-b808-56501bd88ac6> (accessed 2 February 2019).

490 Article 5 and 6.2 of Land (Restrictions on Alienation) Act No. 38 of 2014. As per section 3 of the act, this is not applicable to eight types of land transferred to foreigners, including dual citizens of Sri Lanka, and land transferred by intestacy, gift or testamentary disposition to a next of kin (who is a foreigner) of the owner of the land.

491 Sections 2 (2) (a) and 2 (2)(b)(ii), Land (Restrictions on Alienation) Act No. 38 of 2014.

492 Personal conversation with Ms Prabhashwari, Attorney at Law, Galle District Courts, 4 September 2017.

493 “I propose to remove the tax imposed on the leasing of land to foreigners and also to consider the removal of restrictions on ownership on identified investments imposed through the Land (Restrictions on Alienation) Act, which has been an impediment for attracting investments to the country” Quoted from Budget Speech 2016, available at <http://treasury.gov.lk/documents/10181/28027/Budget+Speech+2016/07f592ff-770f-4d71-8c26-b06de595eab0?version=1.0> (accessed 30 July 2018).

485 Formerly the Companies Act No. 17 of 1982.

486 “Galle Fort- an absolutely galling attack,” the *Sunday Times*. Available at <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/030622/plus/1.html> (accessed 30 July 2018).

487 “Saving Galle Fort, the 38th World Heritage Site,” the *Island*. Available at <http://www.island.lk/2008/02/11/opinion1.html>; “Galle Fort - 38th World Heritage Site,” the *Daily News*. Available at http://archives.dailynews.lk/2008/02/13/main_Letters.asp (accessed 30 July 2018).

488 In 2019, the World Bank reported, “following 30 years of civil war that ended in 2009, Sri Lanka’s economy grew at an average 5.8 percent during the period of 2010–2017, reflecting a peace dividend and a determined policy thrust towards reconstruction and growth; although there were some signs of a slowdown in the last few years.” Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/overview> (accessed 6 February 2019).

I have noted that forming companies is the most common method for foreigners to purchase or lease properties in Galle Fort. The 2013 cadastral survey of Galle Fort (Survey Department, Sri Lanka) records only six freehold foreign properties, while there are 31 company-owned properties. It was identified that 28 of these were foreign-owned properties in 2016.⁴⁹⁴ Marrying a resident Sri Lankan, another way to avoid taxes, is not very common in the fort, although there are a few examples.⁴⁹⁵

6.3.3 THE PROCESS OF GENTRIFICATION

The fort's houses did not have much financial value before heritage recognition (as discussed earlier), although there were exceptions in the case of prime properties. In 1970, a resident paid nearly 10,000 LKR for his property (approximately 50 sqm), while another paid 40,000 LKR in 1976 (approximately 150 sqm).⁴⁹⁶ In general, houses had limited space, while maintenance was a burden and required frequent repairs.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, development was not encouraged.⁴⁹⁸ Against this background, some residents were fed up with living in these houses.⁴⁹⁹

The First Wave of Property Sales

The land value of the fort per perch (25.29 sqm) was 25,000 LKR in the fourth year of the fort's World Heritage recognition—an ordinary price. The value rose eightfold from 1992 to 2000 (Fig. 220), with a gradual demand for fort properties by foreign investors beginning in the late 1990s.⁵⁰⁰ The demand increased with the temporary lifting of the 100%

tax on foreign property ownership in 2002, which lasted until 2004 (as discussed above). Parallel to this, the (draft) Building Regulations, which came into effect in 2000,⁵⁰¹ allowed for development, which was not quite possible earlier, resulting in a wave of foreign investment. In 2003, the Asia edition of *Time Magazine* reported Galle Fort as South Asia's "latest boom town," with UNESCO World Heritage status attracting foreign investors (Palling 2003). According to Mr Amarasuriya, the foreign investors continued to increase their offers in 2005.⁵⁰²

The local residents, who never even dreamed the future tourism potential of the heritage city, took this as an opportunity to sell their properties, which had never been valued before. The traditional Muslim dowry system (mentioned in sub-chapter 6.3.1) largely contributed to such sales, which resulted in the subdivision of houses and associated social problems. During the early and mid -2000s, Muslim bridegrooms preferred properties in Colombo, the capital city, over Galle.⁵⁰³ Since the early 2010s, the families sold their properties at the fort and subsequently bought a number of houses—corresponding to the number of their daughters—in the suburbs of Galle.⁵⁰⁴ In addition, a number of the fort's houses were inhabited on a rental basis at the time of World Heritage recognition.⁵⁰⁵ The rental fees were rather low, and some did not even bother paying them.⁵⁰⁶ The increasing land value resulted in owners acquiring the properties, and subsequently selling them or investing in tourism-related businesses, which also resulted in residents moving outside the fortress.⁵⁰⁷

494 Three foreign-owned properties belonging to a leading foreign-owned boutique hotel were transferred to a leading local company, which dropped the total number of foreign-owned properties to 28.

495 In this case, a foreigner can buy property in the name of the child, and there are such examples at the fort. The next method, buying the property in the Sri Lankan's name—which depends solely on the trust of the local owner—is said to be practiced in the area, although there is no reliable evidence for this at the fort, as it is usually hidden.

496 Personal conversation with a resident on 19 December 2015, and interview with a resident on 1 March 2016.

497 Personal conversation with Ms Atukorala, 12 December 2016; this factor was mentioned by a number of residents, including Ms Pieris (1 September 2015) and Mr Fowzie (15 February 2016).

498 Ibid.

499 Ibid.

500 Foreign investments began in 1998, according to Ms Pieris (interview, 1 September 2015).

501 According to the Town Planning Officer of UDA (Galle), the Special Regulations were implemented at a basic level from 2000, prior to its formulation as a draft regulation by the Development Plan of 2002 (personal conversation, January 2017).

502 Interview, 3 March 2016.

503 Interview with Mr Fowzie, 15 February 2016.

504 In 2016, a mother of three daughters sold her property on a small residential street and bought properties for her daughters outside the fort (personal conversations, February 2016).

505 Personal conversation with Mr Zoysa, 4 September 2017. Two examples are provided in the chapter, at the end of this sub-chapter and in sub-chapter 6.6.1.

506 Personal conversation with Mr Zoysa, 4 September 2017.

507 Sometimes this has also required court cases, according to personal conversations with residents in 2017.

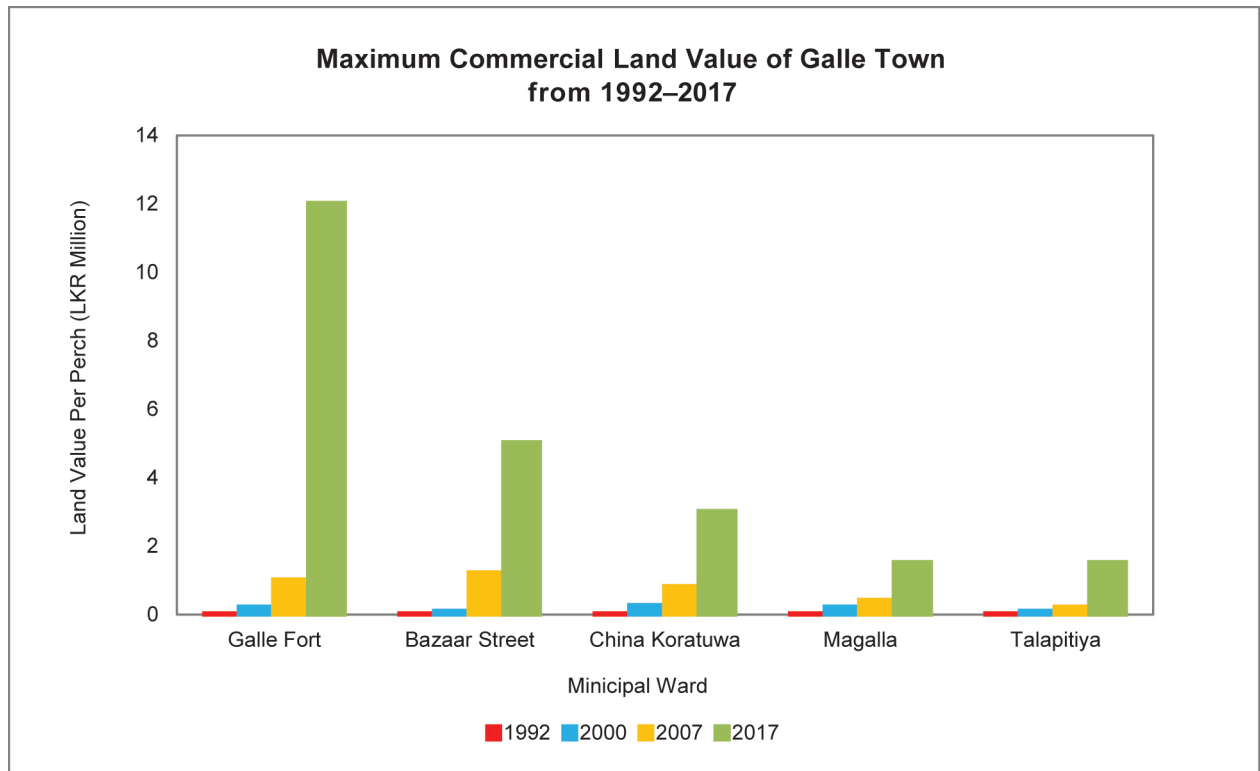


Fig. 220 Maximum commercial land value of Galle Town from 1992 to 2017 (LKR million).⁵¹²

Among the influential foreign investors who took the investment opportunity presented by the 2002 tax concession was the late Karl Steinberg, an Australian. However, the first foreign property purchase, by an American, goes back to mid-'80s, even before the World Heritage recognition.⁵⁰⁸ Steinberg, who popularized heritage/boutique hotels, was identified by a resident as the “person who marketed Galle Fort.”⁵⁰⁹ Steinberg and his Malaysian business partner, Christopher Ong, invested \$1 million USD into a partly dilapidated colonial building on Church Street that used to be the family house of Macan Marker, the gem merchants.⁵¹⁰ It was restored in 2004 as the Galle Fort Hotel, a boutique hotel that was awarded the Asia Pacific Heritage Award of Distinction by UNESCO in 2007 and number of other awards (Fig. 221).⁵¹¹ The local entrepreneurs also invested in the

fort during this phase. Local entrepreneur Dominic Sansoni’s renowned designing company Barefoot has had a showroom in the historic centre since 2004, which was opened in a restored residential property.⁵¹³ Some of these early investors (as well as later ones) invested in more than one property, while a few kept houses as holiday homes.⁵¹⁴ There were a few who claimed they were interested in living in the fort. Among them were luxury hotelier Olivia Richli, the opening manager of Amagalla (2005), an Aman resort, who considers her fort house as her home (2014).⁵¹⁵

508 [The late] Charles Hulse bought a house in the fort in 1986 (Samarawickrema 2012, 111).

509 Personal conversation with a resident in February 2016.

510 Available at <http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/wh/asia-pacific-heritage-awards/previous-heritage-awards-2000-2013/2007/award-winners/2007dt3/> (accessed 30 July 2018).

511 Ibid.; “Sri Lanka’s Leading Boutique Hotel” at the

World Travel Awards in 2007, 2008, 2010, 2016 and 2017. Available at <https://www.worldtravelawards.com/profile-5073-galle-fort-hotel> (accessed 30 July 2018).

512 Sources: UDA 2009, personal conversations with the residents of Galle Fort (2015–2017) and Managing Director, Asian Credit Company Pvt Ltd, Galle (2 November 2017).

513 Available at <http://www.barefootceylon.com/shops/> (accessed 30 July 2018).

514 Interview with a property agent in February 2015, and observations of property ownerships and use in 2016–2018.

515 “Interview with Olivia Richli of Aman Canal Grande,



Fig. 221 Façade of the restored main building of Galle Fort Hotel, 2016.

However, the properties sold in the first wave were not highly valued when compared with respect to their later value, while foreign investors also acted as property agents during early 2000s.⁵¹⁶ A property on one of the three main streets was sold for nearly 3.5

Venice,” 5 June 2014.

Available at <https://www.andrewharper.com/articles/view/interview-with-olivia-richli-of-aman-canal-grande-venice/> (accessed 30 July 2018).

⁵¹⁶ Interviews with Ms Hewage, 24 March 2016, and Mr Fowzie, 15 February 2016. According to Samarawickrema (2012), one of the first expatriates was an agent for a few property sales, including the sale of the locally owned New Oriental Hotel to the multinational boutique hotel chain Aman Resorts, resulting in the opening of Amangalla. According to my interviews and personal conversations with residents (2016), it is well known in the fort that this late expatriate was also a property dealer. Furthermore, another expatriate had a real-estate company at the fort (Samarawickrema 2012).

million LKR, and the amount was not enough for the owners to buy a house in the suburbs of Colombo, the capital city.⁵¹⁷ However, there were also lucky ones. The next property was sold for 6 million LKR.⁵¹⁸ The former owners bought a house in the suburbs of Galle and a vehicle, and also began cultivating tea, which provides an extra source of income for many locals.⁵¹⁹ Both of the above-mentioned properties were bought by a single foreigner, who also bought the adjacent property, and developed the three into one building with colonial architecture. According to a neighbour, the two-storey building (approximately 400 sqm of land) was on sale for nearly 200 million LKR in 2017, illustrated the “super-gentrification” of the fort (super-gentrification is discussed in sub-

⁵¹⁷ Interview with a resident, 3 March 2016.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.



Fig. 222 A property bought and restored by an entrepreneur.

chapter 2.2.4), currently a common scenario.⁵²⁰ Thus, proper development carried out according to heritage guidelines substantially increases property value, which is far higher than land value.

This process of gentrification had three outcomes; some were instant, others more gradual. The investors (local and foreign) were financially capable of developing properties, which was an expensive process for ordinary locals, and the direct outcome was creating an impression among such locals that the rich and powerful are treated better than them when it comes to building developments (further discussed in chapter 7). Positively, the trend motivated local residents to initiate tourism-related businesses, while negatively resulting in “illegal” developments aimed at this purpose. Finally, it also created a sustainable trend among local residents of following the proper channels to develop properties into villas and B&Bs, similarly to their foreign counterparts.

The Second Wave

The land value exceeded one million LKR in 2007, which is just below the value of Bazar Street, the main shopping street of Galle (Fig. 220). Apart from foreign investors, the investments of locals were also significant during this period, including those of entrepreneurs, businessmen, members of political families, popular sports figures and artists (Fig. 222). In addition, some of the properties in foreign hands were bought by local companies and individuals. The above-mentioned Galle Fort Hotel was purchased by Lankem Ceylon PLC, a leading local company, for \$7 million USD in 2011, symbolizing “super-gentrification.”⁵²¹ This trend has continued, and nearly ten properties that are in the hands of foreigners have passed to local investors as

520 Ibid.

521 “Lankem buys boutique Galle Fort Hotel for Rs. 770 m,” available at <http://www.ft.lk/article/57770/Lankem-buys-boutique-Galle-Fort-Hotel-for-Rs--770-m> (accessed 30 July 2018).



Figs. 223–224 A house for long-term lease in January 2018, and the same as a business place in January 2019.

of 2016.⁵²² These “gentry,” both local and foreign, were capable of following the (expensive) building development procedures of the fort, which was welcomed by the heritage officials, who were fed up with the “wave of illegal renovations” by the local residents in the mid-2010s.⁵²³ In fact, at the time the heritage officials were more interested in preserving built heritage, and did not bother to encourage the local residents to stay in the fort.⁵²⁴

While an extremely small number of foreigners (and locals) kept these buildings as holiday homes, the rest were utilized for commercial purposes, especially for high-end boutique hotels, villas, restaurants and cafés. Furthermore, the involvement of local residents as property agents was significant during this phase. According to one of them, among whose clients were one of the country’s leading entrepreneurs and a renowned sports figure, the important thing that he tells his clients is that developments are possible in the fort, and two storeys are permitted.⁵²⁵ Some of the local gentry also

considered the “community feeling” of the fort as an added value of the property, which was an assurance of safety within a multi-ethnic community.⁵²⁶

Anecdote on Selling Properties ⁵²⁷

According to a former resident, who is currently in her early 50s, she inherited her parental house, which was bought for nearly 2000 LKR in 1977.⁵²⁸ Their family has lived in the house on a rental basis so far. The two-perch house (50.58 sqm), which had three-foot-wide coral walls, used to be stables. Back then, the night soil was collected in a bucket, common in Galle Fort and other urban areas in the country.⁵²⁹ They renovated the house in 2005 by reducing the width of walls, thereby increasing the floor area, and also added another floor. Yet the house was not spacious enough for their family of five. Besides, it had no garden, front or back yard. Therefore, the laundry was hung by the roadside, common at some houses, as I observed (2015–2018). In 2012, they sold the property for a very good price and bought

522 Interview with a local property dealer, 14 February 2016.

523 “Sometimes change of use may be good for this particular building, (and) some of these richer people love these buildings and they tend to renovate them [according to our guidelines]” (interview with higher-level heritage official on 7 September 2017); “Our main goal in the heritage city is preserving its built heritage” (interview with a higher-level heritage officer, 2 March 2016); “there was a wave of illegal renovations in mid-2010 after the tsunami” (interview with Ms Hewage, 24 March 2016).

524 Ibid. Interviews and conversations with heritage officials in 2016–2018.

525 Interview with a local resident who is a property agent, 14 February 2016.

526 Ibid. “He was bit reluctant to buy the property at first [due to the fort’s multi-ethnicity]. So I invited him for a morning walk in the fort with me [to show the strong community feeling of the fort despite different ethnicities]. He came one morning and we started the walk in. Everybody—both Sinhalese and Muslims—was wishing me a good morning, and asked my whereabouts, while I too was the same towards them. Soon he touched my hand, stopped and said ‘I have decided to buy the house.’”

527 Interview with a former resident, 1 September 2015.

528 “However, 2000 rupees was a lot back then, so my grandmother hid the money inside the pillowcase” (ibid.).

529 “When our grandfather died, we had to ask the night-soil collector to not to come, as we had no back entrance, while grandfather’s body was kept in the living room” (ibid.).



Figs. 225–226 Modest restaurants run by Italians and Chinese.

a spacious house with a garden in one of the decent neighbourhoods of Galle.⁵³⁰ They were also able to save some money, and thus she has been very happy about the decision she made.

The Third Phase

By 2015, the land value per perch reached the extraordinary price of 10 million LKR, while it reached 20 million LKR (approximately 115,000 USD) in January 2019, a direct result of the World Heritage recognition. While buying, selling and leasing properties became very common in the fort, this also resulted in lowering owners' attachment to the landscape due to the properties' constant change of ownership. One house on an inner street, currently owned by a foreigner, has passed between the hands of four owners over the past 13 years.⁵³¹ Real-estate agencies, both local and foreign, have replaced individual property dealers today. By the end of 2016, there were four property sales companies in the fort (personal observations).

Interestingly, the residents rarely sell properties now. Instead, they opt to lease properties, partly or fully, the latter of which is more profitable, however again causes residents to move (Figs. 223–224). Even a part of a verandah could be leased for more than 50,000 LKR monthly for a retail space for jewellery, packed tea or souvenirs. Interviews with 33 residents in 2016 revealed that there were two

families who planned to move due to leasing out their properties. They proceeded as they planned within one year. Although three of them planned to sell their properties, none of them has yet proceeded to do so. Not only the residents, but in 2015, even Galle Municipal Council has leased one of the council's properties on Pedlar Street to a local company, which planned an investment of nearly 200 million LKR.⁵³² The deal, which also received criticism from the local community because of the property's heritage value, became null and void due to legal issues.⁵³³

Large-scale investments were significant during this period, including the high-end boutique hotel Fort Bazar, opened in 2016 by Austin Davies (Pvt.) Ltd., a foreign investment. According to the project manager of a foreign-invested venture, foreign companies are not afraid of large-scale investments, unlike local ones.⁵³⁴ However, a similar investment was also carried out by Hermitage Hotel (Pvt.) Ltd., a local company. Based on my observations, these two developments were carried out very rapidly, with crew even working during the night to finish before the beginning of the "tourist season" at the end of the year. In general, developments (mostly tourism-oriented) are very common in the fort now, at a high rate uncommon to an ordinary neighbourhood.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁰ The exact amount of money has been omitted to respect the owner's privacy.

⁵³¹ According to a neighbour, March 2016.

⁵³² Personal conversations with residents, heritage officers and an officer attached to the Four Gravets Divisional Secretariat, Galle, and personal observations in 2015 and 2016.

⁵³³ Personal conversations with residents and heritage officers and personal observations in 2016 and 2017.

⁵³⁴ Personal conversations, 15 December 2015.

⁵³⁵ During April and May 2016, I observed 26 ongoing

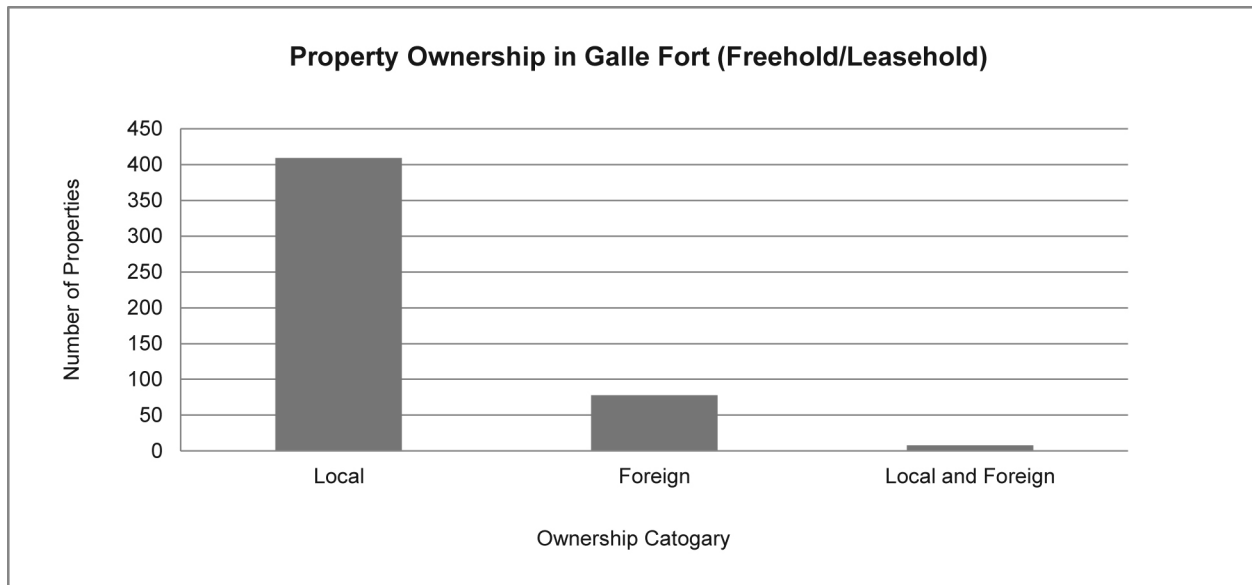


Fig. 227 Property ownership in Galle Fort, 2016.

A remarkable change at this stage was the direct involvement of local residents in tourism-related businesses, as discussed in sub-chapter 6.5.2. Not only companies and wealthy individuals, but also ordinary locals and foreigners moved to the fort and started businesses. Among the latter were Chinese, Russian and Italian individuals and families who invested in cafés and restaurants (Figs. 225–226).

6.3.4 FOREIGN INVESTMENT LEVELS

Foreign property ownership is a hidden phenomenon in Galle Fort, not recorded by most of the local authorities, including the Municipality or the Divisional Secretariat. Most of the properties, including residential ones, are registered as companies (as discussed in sub-chapter 6.3.2), while 71% of them were converted into commercial places in 2016. According to the GN officer,⁵³⁶ even the few foreigners who reside at the fort are not registered in the voter's register (which is voluntary), and thus no information could be obtained regarding

their residency.⁵³⁷ According to the Project Planning Officer of Galle Heritage Foundation (hereafter also referred to as “GHF”), the strategic methods for foreign land purchases (discussed in 6.3.2) make it difficult to figure out whether the foreigners have substantially invested in the fort.⁵³⁸ In fact, very few foreigners are directly involved in these businesses, while the rest are managed by locals.

Foreign ownership of properties was surveyed at the end of 2016, through observing the properties for one year and soliciting the ideas of neighbours and the local staff of the properties. As the fort's properties share common walls, the residents usually know who owns the adjacent property. Thus, 78 foreign-owned properties out of 494 were identified, which is nearly 16% of the overall property ownership (Fig. 227). It was difficult to narrow the ownership type down to freehold or leasehold without information from the actual owners. In addition, there are eight properties with both local and foreign ownership.

This amount is rather low when compared to the 20% to 25% specified by researchers, heritage officials and newspapers.⁵³⁹ However, 55 out of

developments, which is almost 5% of total property ownership.

⁵³⁶ The public officer appointed by the Central Government to carry out the duties in a GN Division, the smallest public administrative subunit of Sri Lanka.

⁵³⁷ Personal conversation with the GN Officer of the fort, 10 September 2015.

⁵³⁸ Interview with the Project Planning Officer of GHF, 3 September 2017.

⁵³⁹ 20% as 60 out of 360 homes (Sanjeevani 2012, 33); over 80 (Samarawickrema 2012, 115); 25% as 90 out of 360 townhouses (Rajapakse 2013, 9); over 100 properties as specified



Figs. 228–229 Prominence of restored architecture: a foreign-owned property during (2016) and after restoration (2017).



Figs. 230–231 Prominence of buildings with a comparatively large size (2016): the foreign-owned boutique hotel, the Fort Printers (left), and another building, an amalgamation of three properties (right).⁵⁴¹

these 78 properties are either beautifully restored, have been developed in conformity with the colonial architecture or are well-maintained, and thus are more eye-catching than ordinary buildings (Figs. 228–229). In addition, most of these properties (and lands) are relatively large when compared to the majority of the fort's properties (Figs. 230–231). The greater part of the fort properties (35%) are less than 3 perches, mainly due to the subdivisions (Fig. 232).⁵⁴⁰ This is followed by properties of

6 to 10 perches (20%).⁵⁴² In contrast, in 2013, the majority of foreign-owned properties (recorded in the cadastral survey as companies/freehold and confirmed by fieldwork in 2016) were between 6 and 10 perches, while 62% of them were above 10 perches (Fig. 233).⁵⁴³ These two reasons make them

by Project Planning Officer of GHF during an interview on 3 September 2017; and 25% according to the *Sunday Observer*, a local newspaper, on 7 February 2016, available at <http://archives.sundayobserver.lk/2016/02/07/spe-her-01.asp> (accessed 30 July 2018).

540 This analysis is based on the data acquired through the

UDA, Galle in 2015.

541 Kuruppu and Wijesuriya (1992, 157) shows three houses here, which have since been replaced by this building.

542 Ibid.

543 However, there are number of examples where foreign businessmen have started up business in small lots. I have observed this a current trend, with ordinary foreigners (as well as locals)

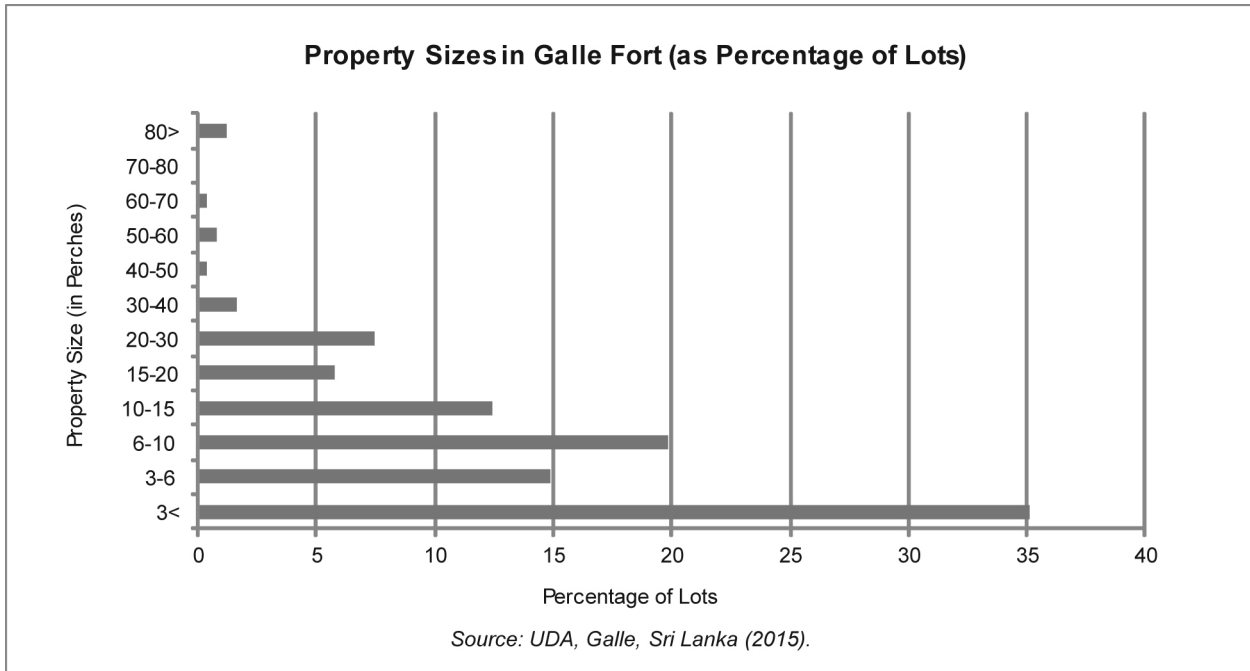


Fig. 232 Property sizes of Galle Fort as a percentage, 2015.

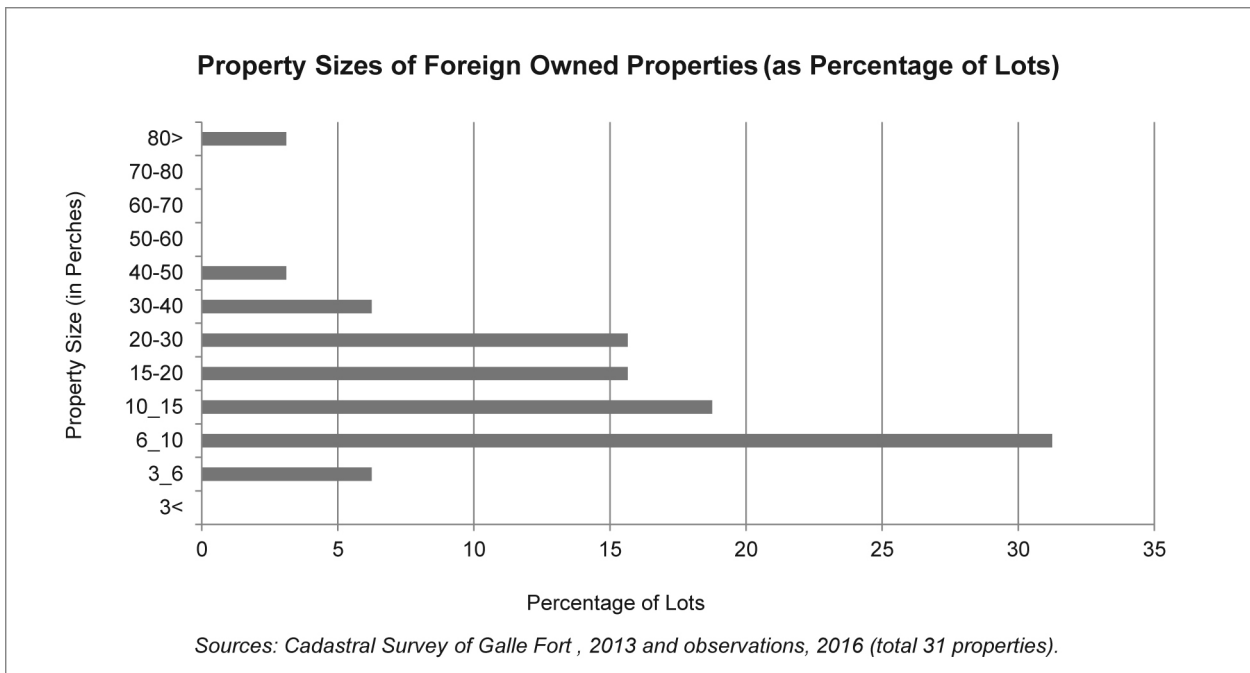


Fig. 233 Property sizes of foreign-owned (freehold/leasehold) properties as a percentage, 2013.



Figs. 234–235 A boutique villa (left) and a house (right), both developed and owned by local investors (2016).

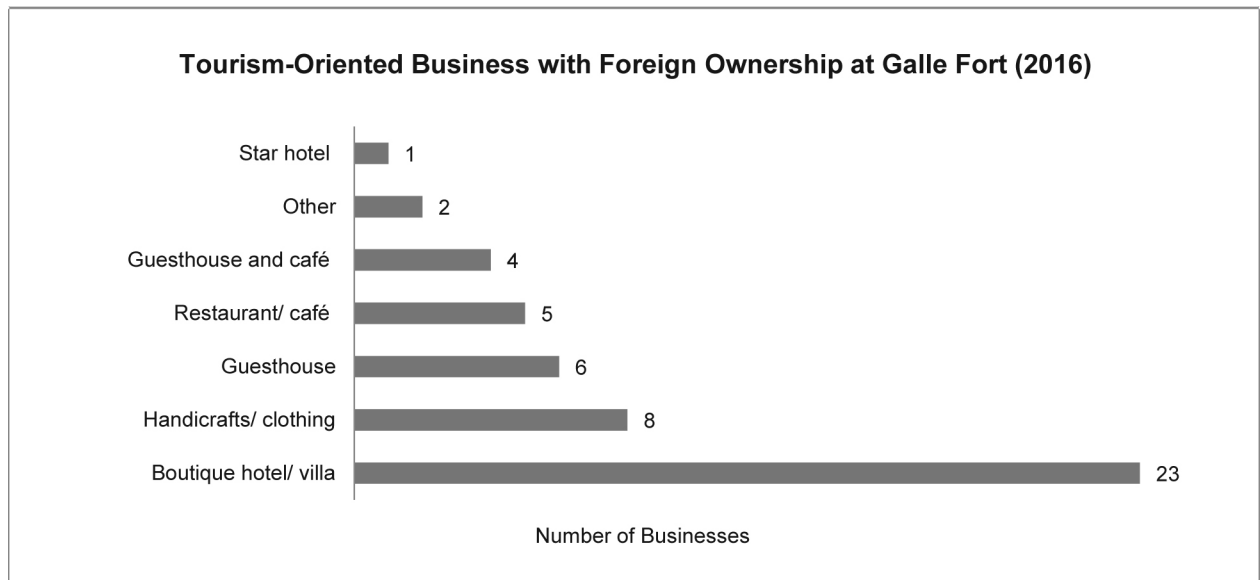


Fig. 236 Commercial usage of foreign-owned properties.

more prominent than others, giving the impression that foreigners own more properties in Galle Fort. In addition, there are a number of properties that have been well restored by local investors, some of which have been leased to foreign companies, and are thus mistakenly identified as foreign-owned (Figs. 234–235).

Nearly 70% of currently foreign-owned properties had a residential function at the initiation of the World Heritage project. In contrast, 71% (56 out

of 78) are now catering to tourists, while some are under construction (5), not yet developed or have been abandoned (5; Fig 236). However, very few—less than 10—are residential. The highest number of foreign investments are on Pedlar Street, with 25% (18 out of 71) of the total properties owned or leased by foreigners.

The most common foreign investments are directed to boutique hotels or luxury villas. 23 out of 28 such investments were carried out by foreign companies or individuals in 2016.

starting up businesses in the fort, as discussed in this chapter.

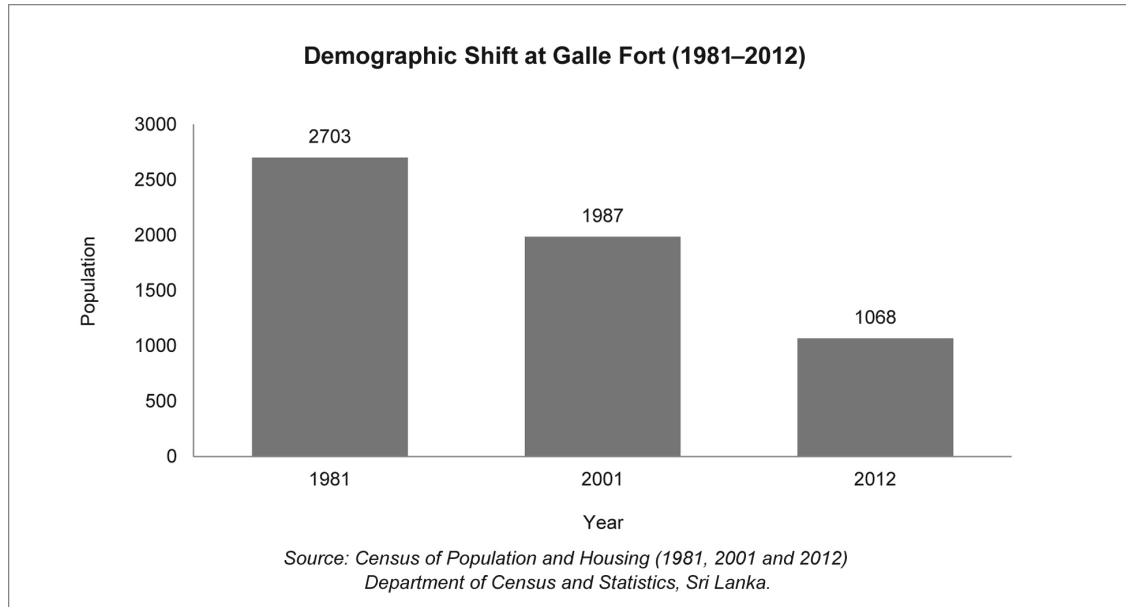


Fig. 237 Demographic shift at Galle Fort (1981–2012).

An Anecdote⁵⁴⁴

An American woman leased a café (formerly a fort bakery) in the middle of the historic centre in 2017; it was run by a local resident. She had formerly worked with restaurants in Singapore and had been travelling to Sri Lanka over the past seven years. She thought that Galle Fort was the “obvious choice” of place to start a business. Besides, the fort is her “favourite part of Sri Lanka, [as it] has all the history and the most beautiful architecture.”

6.4 GENTRIFICATION: DEMOGRAPHY AND CULTURE

In this sub-chapter, loss of population is analysed statistically, while the impact of gentrification on the local community is analysed based on qualitative analysis methods.

6.4.1 LOSS OF POPULATION

The gentrification process discussed in sub-chapter 6.3.3 created a huge social change in the fort, severely

affecting its population. The population of Galle Fort (GN division) was 2,703 in 1981, seven years before the fort’s World Heritage recognition. Although a population census is held once every ten years, the next census was held in 2001; the fort’s population had dropped by nearly 30% over these two decades. The fort experienced a significant demographic shift in the next decade, with a drop in population by nearly half from 2001 to 2012 (Fig. 237).

Although the proportional population in the fort was estimated at 1,107 by the Galle Branch of the Census and Statistics Department, affiliated with the District Secretariat, Galle, in 2016 (as the next population census falls roughly in 2022),⁵⁴⁵ the actual population should be far lower than that, based on my observations. According to the residents, “The ones who have moved are more than the number that stay.”⁵⁴⁶ Although the number of sale properties has currently dropped, the residents continue to lease and rent out properties, which causes them to move outside the fort, resulting in a continuous drop in population (as discussed in sub-chapter 6.3.3). On

⁵⁴⁴ Personal conversation with the owner, 2 September 2017.

⁵⁴⁵ Data acquired from the Galle Branch of the Census and Statistics Department, affiliated with the District Secretariat, Galle, in 2016.

⁵⁴⁶ Personal conversations with residents, 2017.

the other hand, the newcomers are mostly investors or small-scale businessmen who do not seek residency in the fort, while demonstrating less attachment to the landscape.⁵⁴⁷ In contrast, some of the former residents who have moved out of the fort still visit the fort in evenings, showing their attachment to the familiar landscape.⁵⁴⁸ While I was talking to a (long-time) local businessman on Light House Street in late 2017, he pointed out a gentleman passing by on a motorbike and said, “That’s Mr Buhari, who also sold his house, but still visits the fort in the evening.”⁵⁴⁹ The scenario seriously affects the “living heritage” of the fort; the intangible values associated with this are discussed in sub-chapter 6.6.

6.4.2 IMPACT OF GENTRIFICATION ON THE LOCAL CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE

Just as local residents have mixed impressions about foreign/local investments and their impact on their day-to-day lives, culture and local values, the phenomenon has also brought mixed results, both positive and negative. However, the views of residents mostly depend on the individual characteristics of the investors.

The late Karl Steinburg, one of the pioneering investors, is regarded as a philanthropist by some residents; he ensured the welfare of the monks at the Buddhist temple and distributed Christmas gifts among the children.⁵⁵⁰ A shrine table at the fort’s Sacred Bodhi Tree of the Buddhist temple was dedicated to him by his sons, a typical Buddhist

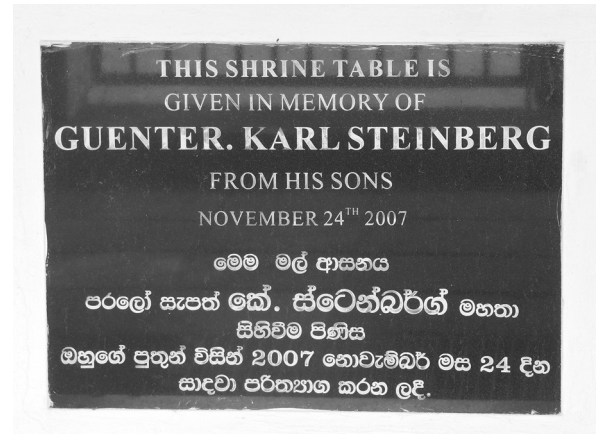


Fig. 238 The plaque of the shrine table at the fort’s Buddhist temple dedicated to the late investor Mr Steinberg.

custom and an indication of the first investors adapting local values. The Sinhala translation of the plaque on the shrine table included the typical Sinhala Buddhist term *paralō sāpat* (“travelled to the other world”) before the name of the deceased—obviously the work of the sculptor—although I have never seen this used for a foreigner outside the faith (Fig. 238). In contrast, sometimes the local culture is threatened by the behaviour of powerful investors. Some of the neighbours of one of the first foreign expatriates said he insisted that they not use firecrackers on Sinhala New Year—a customary local tradition—claiming it disturbs him. Another influential (and politicized) incident was the temporary travel ban of a luxury hotelier and a founder of the fort’s literary festival by the Governor of the Southern Province. It is reported that the foreign investor hoisted the Sri Lankan flag with its lion upside down near the Governor’s residence just before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka in 2013, and thereby insulted the country.⁵⁵¹ The alleged same-sex relationships of a few pioneering foreign investors even gained attention in newspapers in the early 2000s, as this is very uncommon in ordinary Sri Lankan neighbourhoods. However, I observed that

547 Observations and personal conversations with residents and businessmen, 2017–2018.

548 Observations and personal conversations with residents, 2017–2018. A few Muslim residents said that their former neighbours and relatives who moved out of the fort still visited in the evenings, even visiting the mosque for certain important events, especially those residents who have settled in suburban areas. On one occasion, I met a Muslim gentleman on Small Cross Street who sold his property years back and currently lives in Colombo, but still visits the fort and stays at one of his neighbour’s houses, since he is still attached to the place where he lived. One of the residents, who sold her property in 2016, told me that she will keep visiting neighbours and relatives, and she is sad to miss the fort.

549 Personal conversation with Mr Zoysa, 4 August 2017.

550 Interviews with Miss Gamage, December 2016; Mr Gunasekera, 16 March 2016; and the chief monk of the fort’s Buddhist temple, 8 September 2015. In contrast, the heritage intuitions have had some conflicts with the late investor, and thus some heritage officials are not happy with the late investor (personal conversation with a few heritage officers in March 2016).

551 Available at <https://www.news.com.au/world/sri-lanka-bans-hotelier-geoffrey-dobbs-for-flying-national-flag-upside-down/news-story/f0a52baec4dbcca47e6b6dc6d5604f50> (accessed 1 February 2019). Although the flag hoisting did not take place at the fort, the investor had businesses in Galle, including the fort and was an active member of the fort’s literary festival.

the residents were not as bothered by these things as the newspapers suggested. In fact, Galle Fort did not become a “gay city,” as the *Sunday Times* (a leading local newspaper) had predicted in 2001.⁵⁵²

The majority of upper-class investors, both local and foreign, who are mostly just occasional visitors, do not maintain relationships with ordinary locals.⁵⁵³ However, there are a few examples of ordinary middle-class foreigners developing neighbourhood relationships with locals. A foreign family who moved to one of the small inner streets is one such example, according to some of their neighbours.⁵⁵⁴ In 2018, Ms Hewage mentioned that the two foreign businessmen who run restaurants in her neighbourhood are “nice and friendly people.”⁵⁵⁵ Even the young men who work in one of these restaurants call the owner’s father *seeeyā* (“grandpa”). However, being “nice and friendly” in a local context does not mean that they are integrated into the local culture.

According to Mr Amarasuriya, the foreign businessmen today do not bother to develop neighbourhood relationships with locals. As Mr Mendis states, “the primary aim of these foreigners and local businessmen is earning [profits] as they have to pay huge rentals. So, they don’t care about blocking your entrance nor the security issues of neighbours caused by the uncaring individuals they employ.”⁵⁵⁶ Although residents generally have negative impressions of these employees, there are also exceptions. Ms Mahalingam, a retired banker states that the young men who work at the café across the street are almost like their neighbours.⁵⁵⁷ She sometimes asks them for food, such as onions or chillies, when she runs short while cooking. This used to reflect a good neighbourly relationship among the fort’s women, as is mentioned by Mrs Gunawardene and Mrs Miguel.⁵⁵⁸

The tourism economy of the fort has resulted in an increase in the value of goods, services and cost

of living, and the residents who do not engage in tourism-oriented business are the ones who suffer from this. According to a resident, “Things are expensive in fort now. We buy everything outside. Sometimes we cannot even buy a loaf of bread during the holidays.”⁵⁵⁹ In general, residents and the locals who work in the fort often criticize the three-wheeler taxi drivers catering only to tourists.⁵⁶⁰

Pitagankārayō: The Outsiders

“The objection of the ‘native’ to the acquisition of land in his village by a stranger, even though resident a mile or so away, is still strong in parts of Ceylon” (Codrington 1938, 1).

My observations in the fort showed that Codrington’s above-mentioned idea is somewhat prevalent at the fort, even now within the scenario of the fort being a “tourist city,” displacing local residents. Mr Mauroof, a resident in his early 70s, lamented that “the fort has now become a place of *pitagankārayō*”—the colloquial Sinhala term used to negatively denote the outsiders to a *gama* (“village”), mentioned in sub-chapter 6.1.1. Thus, he says, occasions for meeting other residents are “mostly limited to ‘the mosque’ and ‘the temple’ now.”⁵⁶¹ From the point of view of the natives, there is often a clear distinction between them (the natives) and the local residents who settled in the fort a few decades ago, although both groups identify the fort as *gama*. The second group was well integrated into the culture, and was never known as “outsiders.” However, the ones who came after the initiation of the World Heritage project—the *suddō* (“whites”) or the foreign investors, local investors, businessmen and business staff—fall under the category of *pitagankārayō* in the local sense. In February 2016, the chief monk of the fort’s Buddhist temple expressed his views in this regard at a Security Council meeting at Galle Fort: “Today, the streets are full of uncaring individuals who are engaged in various businesses. They do not even recognize the chief monk of the temple when I am on my way to temple, whereas the residents used to ask my whereabouts whenever they saw me in the street in those days. Now I feel I am a stranger in

552 “Galle Fort- an absolutely galling attack,” the *Sunday Times*. Available at <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/030622/plus/1.html> (accessed 1 August 2018).

553 Personal conversations with residents, 2016–2017.

554 Personal conversations with neighbours, January 2017; personal observations, 2017.

555 Personal conversation, September 2017.

556 Personal conversation, March 2016.

557 Personal conversation, March 2016.

558 Personal conversations January 2017 and in September 2017.

559 Personal conversation with Mr Mauroof, 5 September 2017.

560 Personal conversations with residents and people who worked in the fort in 2016–2018.

561 Ibid.



Fig. 239 Pedlar Street at night, January 2019.

another city.”⁵⁶² Mrs Musthapa, a native and a retired teacher, has the same idea: “When I am in the street, I see lots of unknown people, which gives me the feeling that I am a stranger in my hometown.”⁵⁶³ In 2017, a disappointed resident said, “If there would be an election in the fort, surely a foreigner would be elected.”⁵⁶⁴

The city’s culture is also changing, similarly to its hybrid architecture. Some of the local visitors see the fort as a “different place” and “a subculture” associated with the tourism economy.⁵⁶⁵ Trendy, European-style restaurants have been opened by foreigners, as well as by locals who had formerly been

employed in Europe. Tourists eat and drink outside, which is not very common in the local environment, and is seen negatively by some residents. Ms Abbas worries about raising her children at the fort, as they “might consider the way these foreigners dress and behave as part of their own culture.” Yet there are always opposing views, like that “the foreigners behave well; it is the locals who do not.”⁵⁶⁶ The English term “guest” is commonly used to denote tourists by the locals and others who cater to tourists. Restaurants, cafés and shops are open until late at night, also providing a nightlife at the fort (Fig. 239). Tourists wander through the narrow streets of the fort during the night, where earlier the women used to sit on their front steps and chat with each

⁵⁶² The Security Council meeting was held at the Sri Sudarmalaya Temple on 17 February 2016.

⁵⁶³ Interview, 3 March 2016.

⁵⁶⁴ Personal conversation with a resident, September 2017.

⁵⁶⁵ Personal conversations with local visitors in March and April 2016. The term “subculture” was used by a teacher.

⁵⁶⁶ Interview with Mr. Fowzie, February 16, 2016.

other. I no longer observe the fort's lively residential neighbourhood, mentioned by the residents and discussed in sub-chapter 6.2.1.

An Anecdote: The “Gentry” and the Locals ⁵⁶⁷

Mr Gunadasa, a resident in his early 80s who has lived alone since his wife's death, believes that his greatest happiness is living at the fort; as he expresses it, “just being here is heaven.” His small, two-storey house (approximately 20 sqm of land) gets a fresh sea breeze and has a modest antique shop on the ground floor. He grows flowers, admired by tourists, on the opposite side of the road. The large property next to his house was bought by one of the country's famed sports figures in the early 2010s, who then began development (with the permission of the Planning Sub-Committee). However, his entrance was substantially blocked by Mr Gunadasa's small house. He told Mr Gunadasa, “Uncle, tell me wherever you would like to have a property in [Sri] Lanka,” which indirectly broached his willingness to sell his house. Mr Gunadasa has no intention to move out; however, he admits that his famous new neighbour, whom he has not seen much, is a friendly person.

6.4.3 MITIGATING THE GENTRIFICATION

Gentrification has not yet been identified as a significant issue in Galle Fort by heritage authorities, who have not yet taken the proper steps to mitigate the process. On the contrary, it was evaluated from a material-based perspective. Thus, amid the “change of use” of residential buildings to “permitted uses,”⁵⁶⁸ the Special Regulations (2009) recommends that 35% of the total building area should be allocated for residential purposes (Article 70.11).

The analysis of the change of use of residential buildings from 1992 to 2016 reveals the following results:

- i. Change of use of the residential building units to a commercial purpose: 15.6%

⁵⁶⁷ Based on a personal conversation with Ms Gunadasa in September 2017.

⁵⁶⁸ Tourism-industry-related handicraft showrooms; museums; small-scale hotels without swimming pool or pond; tourist gift centres; ticket-issuing centres; guest houses; small-scale restaurants; appropriate recreational activities; bookshops; small professional offices; art galleries; small shops; gem and jewellery shops; and related cottage industries.

- ii. Change of use of the residential building units to dual-purpose (residential and commercial): 13.6%

Thus, the change of use affects approximately 29.2% of building stock, while the overall percentage of residential buildings has dropped to 35% (discussed in sub-chapter 5.2), resulting in a critical threat to maintaining 35% of the total building area for residential purposes.

The heritage institutions in general focus on materiality, and keep records on the material heritage of Galle Fort; they do not bother to find out whether residents have moved away from the heritage city or the investors have moved in. According to a second-ranking higher official from one of the main heritage institutions (2015), the main objective of the heritage institutions at Galle Fort was preserving its colonial-built heritage, and this goal has been fulfilled to a certain extent.⁵⁶⁹ According to the Director General of the DOA (2017), neither the DOA nor any other government institution in Sri Lanka has provisions to control the selling of properties in the World Heritage city, which is the fundamental right of a person.⁵⁷⁰ However, the DOA can prohibit the change of use when ownership is transferred,⁵⁷¹ which however has no positive impact on the residential community. In general, there is also the impression among some top-level heritage officials that “elites and the rich love these buildings and they renovate them according to the proper channels”—a material-based view.⁵⁷²

However, the middle-level heritage officers at GHF and the DOA at Galle do think about the value of keeping residents in the city to preserve its “living heritage.” The exponential land value of the fort is described as “a gem under one's pillow” by the Project Planning Officer of the GHF.⁵⁷³ According to him, the challenge of the heritage authorities is to convince people how this valuable property can be kept (without selling or leasing it) and its heritage value be used positively.⁵⁷⁴ The personal

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with a higher official, 2 March 2016.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with the Director General of Archaeology, 12 September 2017.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Interviews and personal conversations with top-level heritage officials, 2015–2017.

⁵⁷³ Interview with the Project Planning Officer of GHF, 3 September 2017.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

conversation I had with the late Mr Vitanage, a local resident, while he was passing Light House Street shows that gentrification has been hard to control due to financial factors that affect it directly and substantially.⁵⁷⁵

Q: “Whose houses are these?”

A: “All these have been bought by whites—all whites, no Sinhalese nor Muslims.”

Q: “What happened to the locals who lived here?”

A: “They sold their houses and moved; what else they can do? What you need is money.”

Q: “Why did they sell their houses?”

A: “You have to ask that to the people who sold them. [They] sold them because they need money; sell the property here, buy property there, buy a vehicle (smiles).”

The Director General of the DOA states that the “Integrated Management System 2015” has taken some steps towards motivating residents at lower economic levels to stay in the fort. While the proposed Conservation Assistance Fund (under GHF) will provide them financial assistance to renovate their houses, there will also be a separate section of GHF for Chartered Architects who can prepare development plans free of charge, which is an economic burden to residents, as identified sub-chapter 7.2.⁵⁷⁶ As an initial step, the DOA’s Regional Office (South) provided free development plans to a few families in 2016 and 2017.⁵⁷⁷

However, the Project Planning Officer of GHF says that the heritage authorities have so far not given any compensation to residents for the rights to their properties taken over by heritage laws (especially Special Regulations, 2009).⁵⁷⁸ Although he believes the community of the heritage city should be given prime attention, the majority of the interviewed residents (23 out of 33) do not feel they are valued by the heritage authorities.

⁵⁷⁵ Personal conversation, 2 February 2016.

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with the Director General of Archaeology, 12 September 2017; “Integrated Management System 2005” (Mandawala 2015).

⁵⁷⁷ Personal conversation with the responsible officer of the DOA, Galle in 2016–2017; personal conversation with two residents who used this service in 2017–2018.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with the Project Planning Officer of GHF, 3 September 2017. “For instance, while the people outside the fortress walls can build a number of floors, residents of the fortress have to limit the height of the buildings to 10 meters over two floors.”

6.5 ECONOMY AND COMMERCIALIZATION

“The fort has become a minting machine now!” — Mrs Musthapa, a local resident⁵⁷⁹

In this sub-chapter, I discuss the commercialization of Galle Fort and how it has affected the local population and their economy, both positively and negatively.

6.5.1 RESIDENTIAL STREETS TO SHOPPING STREETS

The fort’s World Heritage recognition in 1988 resulted in a steady increase in tourist arrivals and parallel developments in tourism-oriented commercialization, which offers goods and services required by tourists. Sub-chapter 5.2 shows how the townhouse of Galle Fort became an object of income generation against this background. In general, tourism-oriented commercialization has spread to nearly half of the (45%) of the total properties (2016). Thus, the streets of the fort, which were primarily residential at the initiation of the World Heritage project, have now turned into shopping streets (Figs. 240–241).

In general, commercialization has spread throughout the fort, while the four main streets, Pedlar, Church, Light House and Leyn Baan Streets, show even higher rates (Fig. 242). In addition, Hospital and Rampart Streets, the outer roads, are also commercializing, while the trend has gradually spread to the small, inner residential streets, including Sudharmalaya, Chando and Parawa Streets. These inner streets also feature foreign and local investments as well as the investments of local residents.

Common Investments and Special Regulations, 2009

Generally, the most common tourism business is that of providing accommodation, with nearly 20% of the total properties (97) utilized either fully or partly for this purpose (Fig. 243). By 2009, the fort had 104 rooms that provided tourist accommodation, which increased nearly four times (354) by 2015 (GHF Survey 2009; UDA data, 2015).⁵⁸⁰ The current number must be far more than that. The business is handled by international and local hotel chains,

⁵⁷⁹ Interview, 3 March 2016.

⁵⁸⁰ Liyana Arachchi 2009; data acquired through the UDA, Galle in 2015.

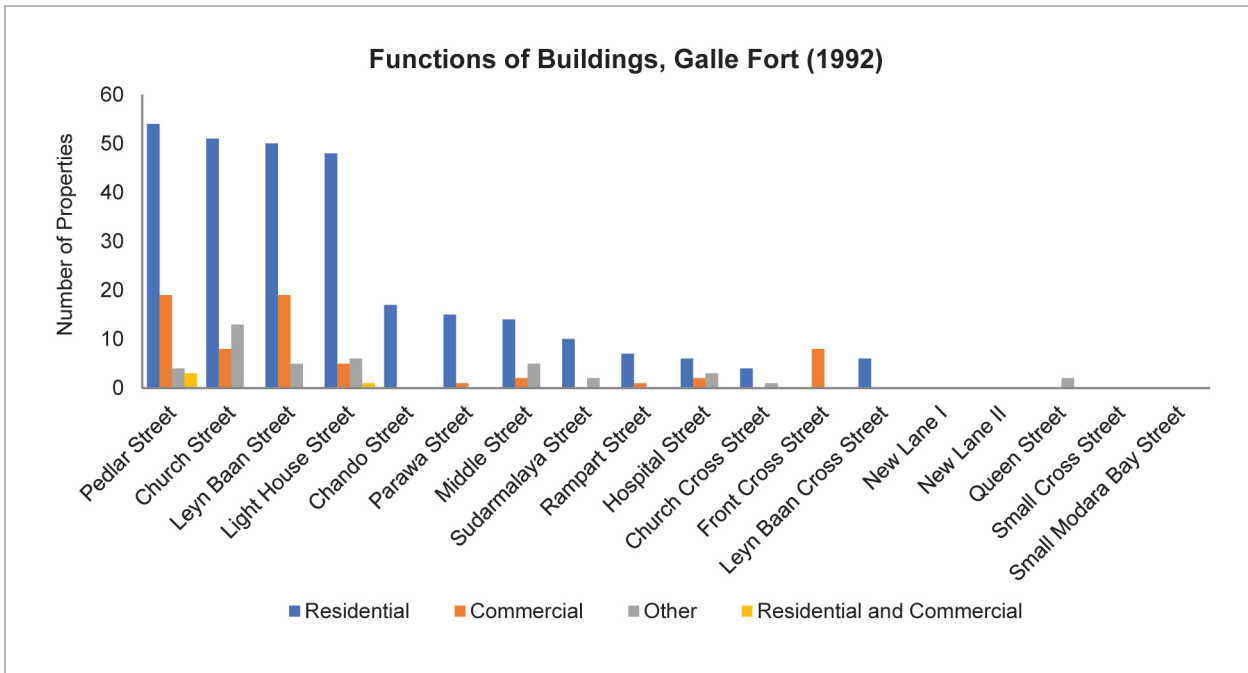


Fig. 240 Functions of buildings by street, Galle Fort, 1992 (source: Kuruppu and Wijesuriya, 1992).

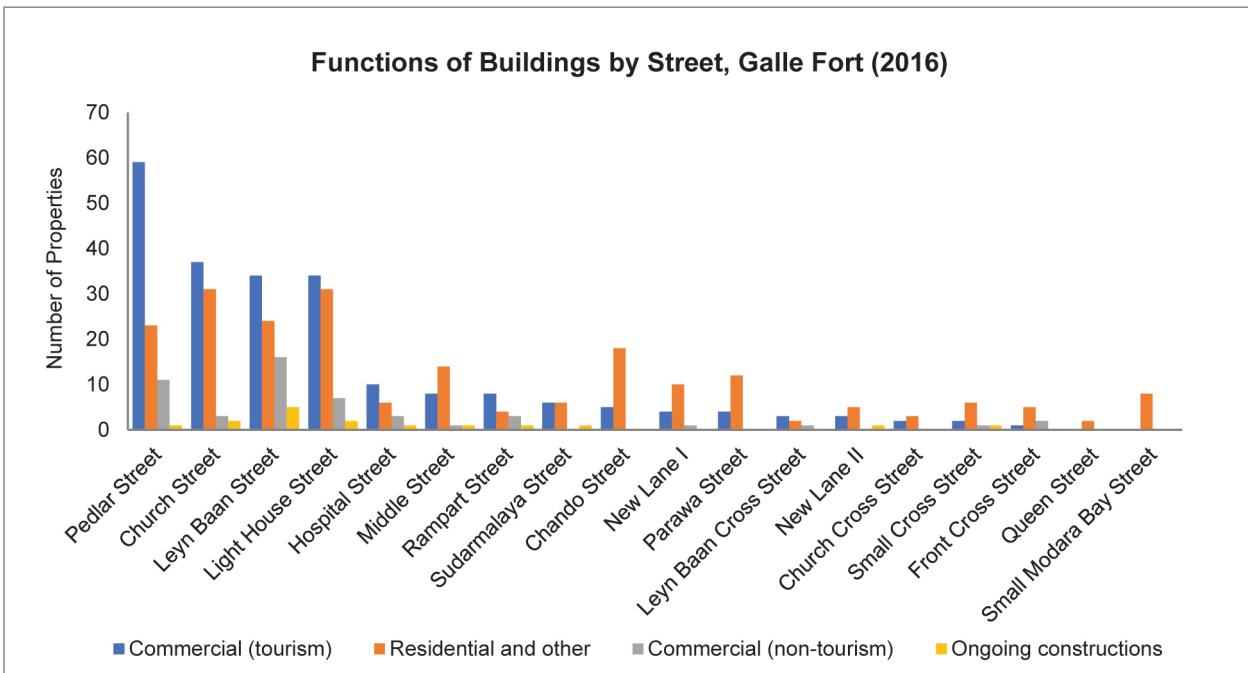


Fig. 241 Functions of buildings by street, Galle Fort (2016).



Fig. 242 Commercialization, Pedlar Street, July 2017.

foreign and local companies, as well as individuals, including the residents.

Hotels that exceed 20 rooms are not allowed in the fort by Special Regulations, 2009 (Article 70.11), except the already-existing NOH (currently the Amangalla). Thus, boutique hotels and villas, a concept that fits well with heritage buildings, was popularized by foreign investors (as discussed in sub-chapter 6.3.3) and also adopted by local companies, individuals and local residents. Some companies and residents of the fort have more than one such venture. While one foreign company runs five luxury villas in the fort, a local one runs two such villas. In general, B&Bs and guest houses have spread to all parts of the fort, including the innermost parts, which were previously known by residents as *watta* and *mukukkuwa*—literally “garden” and “slum,” but implying lower economic neighbourhoods in the

fort’s context—indicating that the “wind of change” blows into all corners of the fort.

The next most popular business is gem and jewellery sales (10% of the total properties), a business run solely by local individuals, both residents and outsiders, who engage in this business on a rental basis more often than the residents do (Fig. 244). According to a resident of Light House Street, the fort previously had two jewellery shops, the Ebrahim and the Casim.⁵⁸¹ As the number of businesses has grown, there is the impression among some businessmen that profits are lower.⁵⁸² As a consequence, tea and spice have become popular since

581 Personal conversation with Mrs Nawaz, February 2016.

582 Personal conversations with a few businessmen, February 2016.

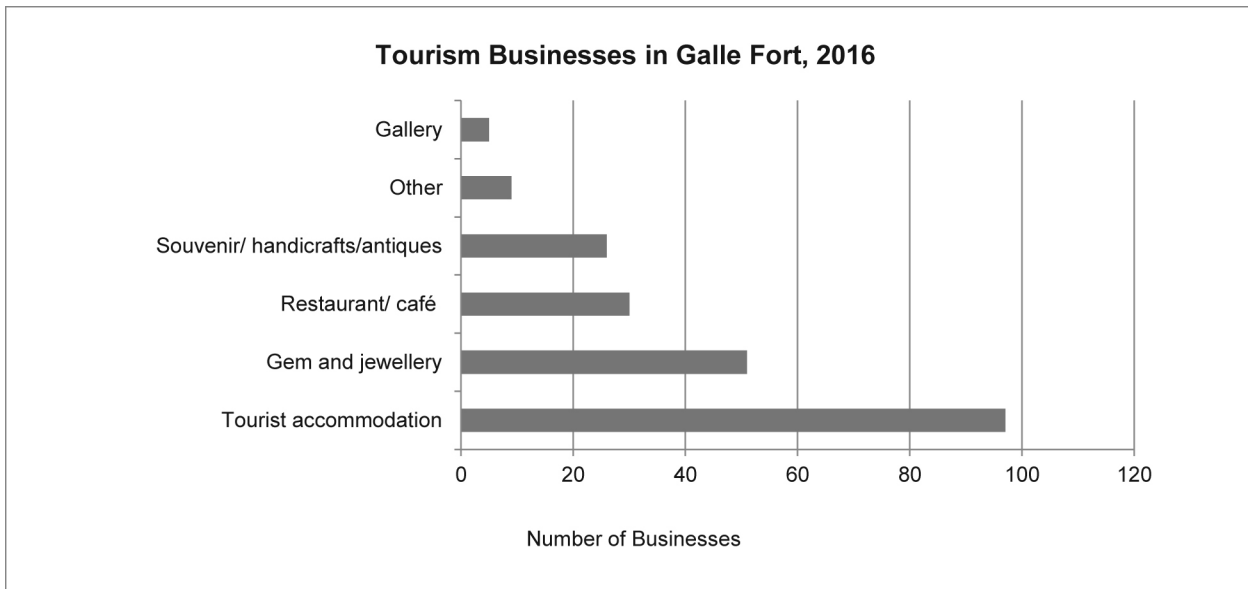


Fig. 243 Tourism-oriented businesses in Galle Fort (2016).

2017. The third most popular business, restaurant/cafés, are run by locals (residents and outsiders) as well as foreigners. A few locals (both fort residents and outsiders) who formerly lived and worked in Europe have started restaurants in the fort. Among them is one who has formerly worked at restaurants in Belgium, and currently runs the fort's most popular sea food restaurant.⁵⁸³ Women have also started restaurants, which mainly offer local food as well as cooking lessons. Among them was one who quit her permanent, pensionable job to work at her restaurant full-time, as it was a profitable endeavour.⁵⁸⁴ Another who runs a successful restaurant was formerly employed at a foreign-owned restaurant at the fort and decided to start her own business.⁵⁸⁵ Souvenirs, handicrafts and antique shops are the next popular businesses, and mostly run by locals, except for a few foreign businessmen and reputed local companies who have recently entered the industry (Figs. 244–246).

These business owners, from companies to individuals, use the fort's "Dutchness" to promote their businesses. Jetwing Hotels Ltd., a leading local

hotel chain, opened a villa on Light House Street, advertising it as "a 17th century Dutch colonial home in a bustling UNESCO World Heritage Site."⁵⁸⁶ The terms "fort," "*fortaleza*," "Dutch," "*ōlanda*" (the Holland in Sinhala) etc. are common in the names of these businesses.⁵⁸⁷ I observed particularly creative shop decor in Sri Lanka at Galle Fort, a phenomenon that is increasing every year and is necessary to stand out among many businesses.

Have the Special Regulations (2009) Indirectly Promoted Commercialization?

In general, the tourism-oriented commercialization of Galle Fort, as shown by Fig. 243, has a correlation with the "permitted uses" introduced by Special Regulation 2009.⁵⁸⁸ Five out of the 13 permitted uses—including hotels, guest houses, gem and jewellery shops, restaurants and tourism-related handicraft shops—have risen sharply, indicating that the Special Regulations (2009) have indirectly increased commercialization.

583 Personal conversation with the owner, August 2018.

584 Personal conversation with the owner, 12 January 2019.

585 Personal conversation with the owner, 2 September 2017.

586 Available at <http://www.jetwinghotels.com/galleheritagevilla/> (accessed 30 July 2018).

587 For instance, Lucky Fort Restaurant, Fortaleza Hotel, Olanda Antiques, Old Dutch House and Dutch Villa, to name a few.

588 Article 70.10, mentioned in sub-chapter 6.3.3; for a list of "permitted uses," see footnote 568.



Fig. 244 Shop window of a local jeweller.

The Benefits

Despite the large number of tourism businesses at Galle Fort, the registration of business names at the Divisional Secretariat remains low (Fig. 247), as a large number of businesses are handled by companies (foreign or local) that are registered under the Department of the Registrar of Companies. Three out of five high-end resorts/boutique hotels are owned by international, foreign and local companies. In addition, reputed local companies for high-end retail garments, including Barefoot, ODEL and Embark, have opened showrooms in the fort, while Spa Ceylon has also opened a luxury spa in the fort. Thus, a large share of the economic benefits of the World Heritage project goes to local and foreign companies in comparison with the amount that penetrated to the local community, which is discussed separately in sub-chapter 6.5.2.

Despite the boutique hotels and upscale restaurants that target high-end tourists, B&Bs and restaurants catering to ordinary tourists and local visitors have also been established recently, which is a healthy trend; on the other hand, the increasing number of businesses is seen negatively by many local businessmen, as it decreases the number of clients of an individual business and thereby reduces profits.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁹ Interviews and personal conversations with over ten local businessmen, 2016–2017.



Figs. 245–246 Antique, souvenir, handicrafts and miscellaneous businesses.

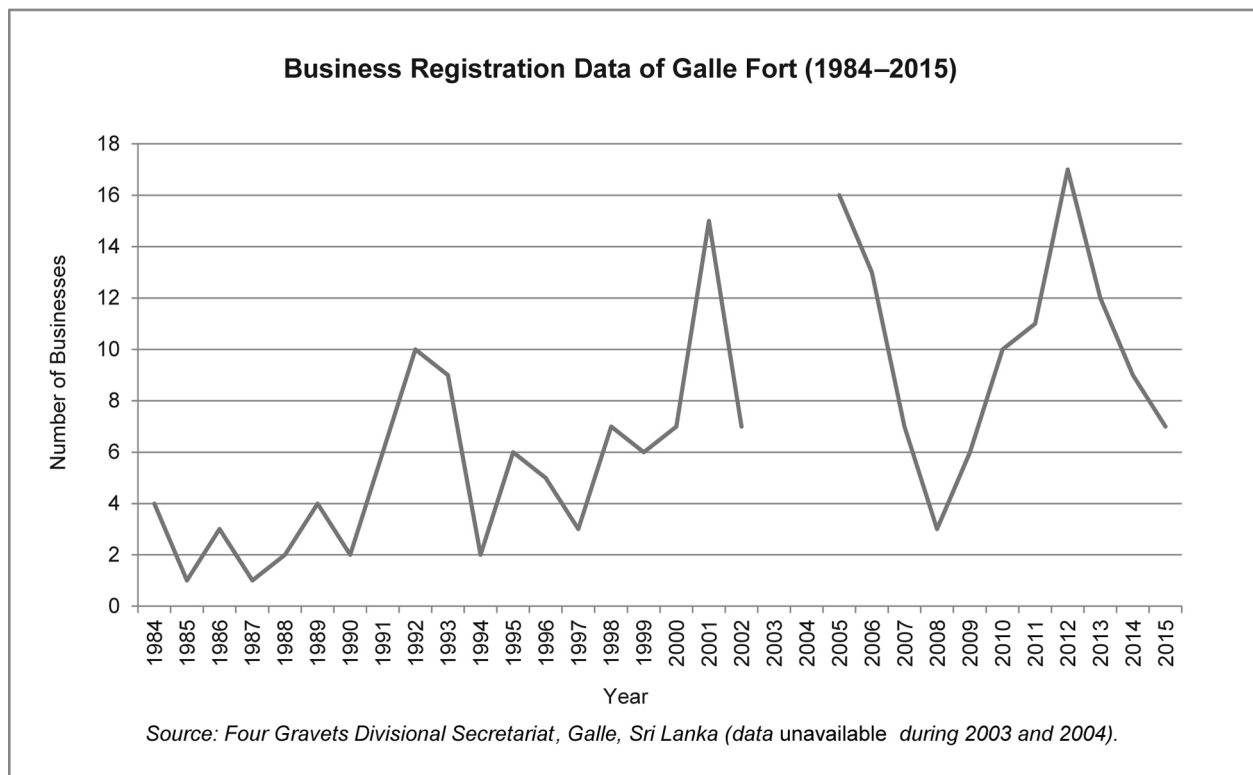


Fig. 247 Business name registrations (except companies)⁵⁹⁰ at Galle Fort, 1984–2015.

⁵⁹⁰ Companies are registered at the Department of the Registrar of Companies, as mentioned in sub-chapter 6.3.2, while small businesses are registered at the Divisional Secretariat.

Towards “Single-Use Tourism”

A gradual increase in the registration of business names at Galle Fort has been observed since the early 1990s, as seen in Fig. 247. According to the data on business name registrations from the Four Gravets Divisional Secretariat, the fort’s business name registrations were well balanced until the early 2000s, with a range of businesses that catered to the local community and the government employees who worked in the fort. These businesses included retail, grocery stores, bakeries, ordinary local “tea shops,” salons, bridal shops, pharmacies and clinics, photo and video stores, office equipment repair shops and stores selling shoes, gems and jewellery, electronics and computers, “communications”⁵⁹¹ etc.⁵⁹² Since the early 2000s, the balance has shifted towards “single-use tourism,” with a sharp reduction in businesses that cater to the local community.⁵⁹³ Some of the categories in the above list are no longer at the fort, including pharmacies, bakeries, shoe, bridal and computer shops.⁵⁹⁴ Some of the local “tea shops” (*tē kada*) were also upgraded to suit the need of the tourists.⁵⁹⁵ while the residents who have engaged in these businesses have also adapted to the new tourism economy. Thus, one of them closed his photographic studio and started a B&B. Currently, the fort has only three retail shops (Fig. 248). There are no supermarkets, as supermarkets and stores exceeding 200 sqm are not allowed in the fort, according to Special Regulations (2009), negatively affecting the local community and hoteliers as well as tourists.

6.5.2 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Although the fort’s population has largely declined due to gentrification, the very same reason has led to a substantial improvement in the economy for the



Fig. 248 A modest and typical village (*gama*) retail shop catering to local residents and, construction workers, as well as the basic requirements of tourists, such as water and soft drinks.

majority of the local population that remained in the fort. According to Mr Fowzie, “it was the foreigners who opened the eyes of the locals to the business opportunities at the fort.”⁵⁹⁶ The majority of the fort’s population was engaged in the jobs outside the fort before World Heritage recognition, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. On the contrary, a tourism economy prevails in the fort today, in which tourism-oriented businesses have become the main source of income for many resident families. Nearly half of the interviewed residents (16 out of 33) in 2016 were engaged in tourism businesses, while six of them planned to start such a business. It is very uncommon for a fort resident not to start such a business today unless there are property ownership disputes, a lack of business space or other personal issues, or no financial need on the part of the resident.

⁵⁹¹ Small roadside boutiques that offer stationary, photocopying, printing and telecommunication facilities.

⁵⁹² Based on the business name registrations of the Four Gravest Divisional Secretariat, Galle.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ Thus, local residents have to go to Galle town for these purposes; however, it is within walking distance.

⁵⁹⁵ This is also mentioned by Samarawikrema (2012), which I too observed in two cases in 2016 and 2017. Thus, it can be predicted that this category (the remaining two or three businesses) might also disappear.

⁵⁹⁶

Interview, 15 February 2016.



Fig. 249 A guest house run by a local family (2019).

A Common Investment: B&Bs and Guest Houses

Tourist accommodation, including homestays (B&B), is the most common business among local residents, among whom 33 families operate such a business (Fig. 249). Almost all of these accommodations are managed through websites such as Booking.com, Airbnb.com and Agoda.com.

An Anecdote⁵⁹⁷

Mr Ravi Gunasekera, who is in his early 40s, was formerly employed at the fort's five-star franchise hotel Amangalla. With his experience in the hotel sector, he developed his house into a family-run guest house in the early 2010s and named it 'Pedlar 62' (Fig. 250). His mother prepares authentic Sri Lankan breakfasts for the "guests." However, Ravi is disappointed with the increasing number of accommodations provided today, which has reduced the income compared to the situation a few years back.

Similarly, a retired banker provides homestay accommodation at his British period house, bought nearly 30 years before, which has become popular among tourists and enjoys a high rating on Booking.com. Thus, B&Bs have also become a source of extra income for some retired couples, and also keeps them occupied.⁵⁹⁸ In addition, family members who live abroad, especially in Europe, have invested in their parents' properties at a rate that is on par with the villas of their foreign counterparts.⁵⁹⁹



Fig. 250 Interior of the Pedlar 62 guest house (image courtesy of Mr Ravi Gunasekera).

An Anecdote⁶⁰⁰

Pushkin, Chekhov and Gogol are the nicknames of three sons who lived on a small inner street. Although property ownership traditionally passes down to the youngest son,⁶⁰¹ in this case, Gogol, the eldest son, who lives in Europe, was more financially capable of investing in the property. Thus, the family decided to pass the property ownership down to the eldest son, which would yield long-term economic benefits for the family, rather than selling the property. The eldest invested in the property and was also generous enough to buy his younger brother a house outside the fort as compensation.⁶⁰² The house was developed into a guest house, which is currently managed by the youngest son. Their mother is proud of her sons, who did what their parents could not do.

Furthermore, many residents who can afford permitted developments have also invested in their properties. Among them is a popular national sports figure and native of the fort who invested in his parental house, which was transformed into a boutique villa in 2018.

Other Businesses

Not only tourist accommodation, but also a number of other businesses, including restaurants, souvenir shops, packed tea shops, gem and jewellery shops,

owners/residents, there are four such properties.

⁶⁰⁰ Based on a personal conversation with "Gogol" (who wished to use a pseudonym) from 2016–2017 and with his mother in September 2017.

⁶⁰¹ This is the traditional custom among Sinhalese. The youngest son inherits the parental house.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Personal conversation with Mr Ravi Gunasekera and his family in 2016–2018. Mr Gunasekera wished to be named.

⁵⁹⁸ I met four such retired couples during my stay at Galle Fort.

⁵⁹⁹ According to my observations and conversations with

spice shops, handicraft shops etc. are also run by local families, while renting out spaces is also popular. The local women who engage in these businesses also have other businesses, like cooking classes, clothing shops etc. Local families also offer services such as boat rides, bike rentals and airport drop-offs. The fort's youths have also started businesses, and their professionalism and quality are growing. In 2018, a young native of the fort who studied at the prestigious Ceylon Hotel School and worked with renowned chefs started a modest restaurant in his family home.⁶⁰³ Similarly, another youth started a family-run restaurant that was rated third out of 116 in Galle on TripAdvisor in 2018.⁶⁰⁴ TripAdvisor's tourist reviews show that they select these small, family-run businesses as a way of experiencing local culture, while also paying a reasonable price.⁶⁰⁵

Improving Quality of Life and Social Impact

In general, the whole scenario has improved the lives of the local residents, sometimes equal to or even beyond their foreign counterparts. The following anecdote is one such example among many of the fort's "success stories."

An Anecdote⁶⁰⁶

Mr Silva is an ordinary local who lived in the historic centre before its World Heritage recognition. As a boy, he helped the fort's firewood seller. Firewood was brought in a bullock cart that passed each street, and Silva's responsibility was to distribute the bundles to each house.⁶⁰⁷ After the fort's World

Heritage recognition, Silva started providing tourist accommodation, which brought him success. By 2017, the family owned a few properties in the fort, including a boutique hotel, and is among the richest local families today.

The tourism economy has resulted in the emergence of a newly-rich group at the fort. Their affluence could be seen in their investments (increasing property ownership, businesses, developments), luxury vehicle ownership, various donations and sponsorships,⁶⁰⁸ travelling abroad for holidays and even "the way they dress."⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, ordinary families who run B&Bs send their children to study abroad, including to Australia, a trend among the middle and upper class.⁶¹⁰ By 2019, one family that became affluent from tourism-related business had moved to Europe. Today the residents are also more concerned about their physical health, another habit of the middle and upper class. Jogging residents are a common sight in the morning. Today, even families with lower economic backgrounds have initiated modest tourism businesses, indicating the benefits of tourism in all strata of society (Figs. 251–252). Positively, residents are gradually realizing the importance of preserving the heritage from which they benefit, and thus in 2018, a young local businessman sponsored the trimming of the trees in the fort, which was carried out by GHF.⁶¹¹ On a positive note, all strata of the society—from the bottom to the top—today enjoy the benefits of the improving local economy, with professionals, the middle class and the lowest economic groups entering the tourism industry.⁶¹²

However, the positive benefits of the tourism economy are not always appreciated by all residents. One disappointed resident stated that

603 Personal conversation with Mr Cader, who opened the restaurant, 12 January 2019.

604 Available at https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g297896-d4766204-Reviews-Lucky_Fort_Restaurant-Galle_Galle_District_Southern_Province.html (accessed 31 July 2018).

605 Ibid. It includes reviews such as the following: "I loved this small family restaurant, the Mum cooks and the daughter runs the place"; "small family-run restaurant inside what looks like their home"; "small family restaurant serving home cooked local dishes homely environment"; "we got excited with each of the curries that were served as it reminded us of home cooked food by my mom"; "excellent food and great value"; "absolutely great value for money" etc.

606 This anecdote is based on personal conversations with a number of residents in 2016–2017; they adduced this as one of the best examples of the local community becoming "richer" through tourism.

607 This was mentioned by number of residents in 2016 and 2017, indicating that he had a hard life as a young boy. In general,

Silva is currently identified by local residents as a person "who hasn't changed due to his wealth."

608 This includes donations to religious places, hospitals and heritage institutions for maintenance work on the fort, as I observed. In 2018, a local businessman donated hearing aids to needy people.

609 Sometimes also "by the amount of gold they wear," according to a local resident, although not everybody is a fan of gold (personal conversation with a resident, March 2013).

610 Personal observations, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

611 Personal conversation with a Project Planning Officer of GHF, July 2018.

612 This idea is based on observations from 2015 to January 2019. By 2017, even the lowest economic groups had initiated tourism-related businesses. In 2019, I noticed that even the members of the professional class had started tourism businesses.



Figs. 251–252 A small house—in 2016 (left) and in 2018 (right)—with a modest family-run “juice bar,” indicating how the benefits of tourism extend even to the lowest economic groups.



Fig. 253 An unknown author’s inscription on the change in the people, who have forgotten the values of humanity.

“some only run after money, as they do are not content with what they have achieved so far.”⁶¹³ “Business-jealousy” among neighbours can also be observed, which sometimes creates conflicts.⁶¹⁴ In general, these businesses have made residents busier, thereby allowing little time to maintain their former community relationships. In 2016, I spotted the following verses (originally in Sinhala) on a utility pole at the Pedlar–Church Street junction, written by an unknown author, on the change in the people, who have forgotten the values of humanity (Fig. 253):

People have changed by forgetting the values of humanity

Oh, Lord Buddha, why has the world changed?⁶¹⁵

6.6 CASE STUDIES: INTANGIBLE VALUES OF THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE

This final sub-chapter is dedicated to the intangible aspects of the historic urban landscape—the emotional attachment to houses, landscape (sense of place) and neighbourhood relationships—which I discuss by means of two case studies based on the memories of local residents.

6.6.1 ANECDOTE 1: “SELLING THE DOLL HOUSE”

The anecdote focuses mainly on the emotional attachment (sense of place) to a house demonstrated by its former owner and the collective memories of that particular place.⁶¹⁶

The Shopkeeper and the Changing Neighbourhood

Ms Hewage ran a retail shop on one of the main streets of the fort, which was started by her late father in 1984. Ms Hewage, currently in her late 50s, became the shopkeeper as a young girl, immediately after

finishing her schooling. Thus, the shop is still known as *kella kade* (“the girl’s shop”) among long-time residents. Although her family lived outside the fort, her work as a shopkeeper there for more than two decades virtually made her a fort resident. She knew almost all the residents.

Since the early 2000s, Ms Hewage has been witnessing significant neighbourhood changes due to foreign investments, which have resulted in her neighbours moving outside the fort. Her formerly residential street has gradually turned into a shopping street. The property to her right was bought by a local and leased to three young Australians, who started a clothing store. The property to her left⁶¹⁷ was leased by an Italian woman, who converted the ground floor into a souvenir shop. While the house behind her was leased by a Russian entrepreneur to start a café in 2016, the café across the street (formerly a bakery) was leased by an American woman in 2017. Even the house adjacent to the old bakery was bought and developed by a foreigner.

The Poem ⁶¹⁸

In January 2016, I saw a handwritten poem on Mrs Hewage’s table, placed under the table glass and among her collection (Fig. 254). The shopkeeper had copied this poem from a piece of newspaper; it relates a homeowner’s painful memory of selling a house to a foreign woman.

Elegant Princess
[You] bought my dollhouse
The palace you built there
More graceful than yourself
Although I cannot afford⁶¹⁹
How prized the palace is
But how nice if you could return,
My poor past you bought
The half-done sand rice⁶²⁰ I cooked
And the tears of poorness
That wet children’s eyes

613 Personal conversation with a resident, March 2016.

614 Personal conversations with various residents in 2016–2017.

615 *Miniasa miniskama atahāra wenas welā, sambudu piyē āi lōkaya wenas welā.*

616 *Another Story of Galle: A UNESCO World Heritage City*, a short documentary based on this anecdote and produced as part of this study, is available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pp7y8tDFsM>.

617 Which, however, was a shop in 1988–1990, according to Kuruppu and Wijesuriya’s survey (1992).

618 Although identified as a poem by the shopkeeper, according to the author, it is an unsung song (personal conversation with the author on 3 September 2017).

619 *Hewanakata neti muth waram* (“although I don’t have a chance to shelter”) in the original work has been copied as *gewanataka neti muth waram* (“although I cannot afford”).

620 Making *weli bath* (“sand rice”), is a children’s game.

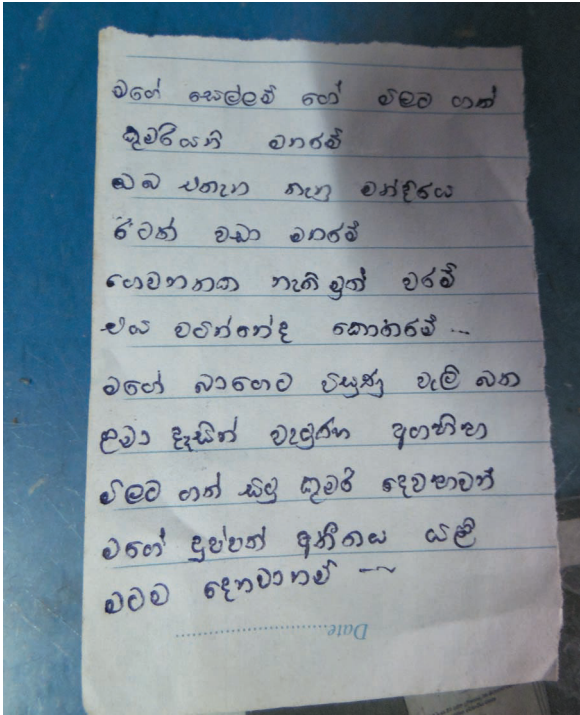


Fig. 254 The poem copied by the shopkeeper, 2016.

According to her, the poem related the experience of a former resident of the street, and one of the most renowned lyricists in the country. The conversation below illustrates the shopkeeper's attachment to the poem.

Q: "Why did you decide to keep the poem with you?"

A: "As I too live in the fort, I felt it was better to keep it."

Q: "Do you feel sad when your neighbours move after selling their properties?"

A: "Yes, yes, we ask them not to go, [we] ask them to stay."

Q: "But they move?"

A: "Yes, they sell properties due to their own requirements."⁶²¹

Ms Hewage has fond memories of the poet's wife, who is one of her frequent customers. During the wave of selling properties to foreigners in the 2010s (discussed in sub-chapter 6.3.3), the increasing offers of foreign investors panicked residents, and many

discussions about the opportunity of selling property took place. The poet's wife, who had lived in the fort all her life, used to tell the shopkeeper, "We will never move."

The Poet's Story: The Family and the Old House⁶²²

The "poem" copied by the shop keeper was originally part of the song *Sellamgeya Vikinīma* ("Selling the Doll House") in *Mal Ahura* ("Handful of Flowers," 2015), written by the country's renowned lyricist and poet Rathna Sri Wijesinghe.⁶²³ The poet came to the fort as a high-school boy, where he met his future wife, who lived in the fort. They soon fell in love, married in the late '70s, and became the parents of two daughters. He started living in his wife's parental house, where the family lived for nearly 70 years on a rental basis. It was a house entrusted to Macan Marker Trust,⁶²⁴ which owned a number of properties in the fort, in order to avoid the Ceiling on Housing Property Law (No. 1 of 1973), which limited the number of houses owned by an individual. After the marriage, the poet bought the house from the trust by paying a significant amount of money.⁶²⁵ He had written books to earn the money, while the late Gunadasa Kapuge, one of the country's legendary singers, also donated money.⁶²⁶

The fairly big old house (approximately 250 sqm) with 15-metre-high walls was in a dilapidated condition when the poet bought it (Figs. 255–258). It featured "Dutch colonial architecture," to the extent that "even a man on horseback could enter the house through its old main door." Trees were growing into walls that were deteriorating and about to collapse. Therefore, the family lived in a room next to the kitchen, where smoke came inside while cooking. The poet had to cover all his books with polythene when it rained to save them from the water pouring from the leaking roof, covered with half-round tiles.⁶²⁷

622 Personal conversation with lyricist and poet Rathna Sri Wijesinghe, who wished to be named, 3 September 2017.

623 The lyricist wished to be named in this work.

624 An elite family of famous gem merchants who owned several properties in the fort.

625 The exact amount of money has been omitted to respect the owner's privacy.

626 Kapuge, who was affiliated with the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation (formerly Radio Ceylon), was well known for his songs with a philosophical background.

627 Half-round tile roofs are usually leaking, as also mentioned in sub-chapter 5.3.3.

621 Personal conversation with shopkeeper, 2 September 2017.

They had to shift the positions of the beds to get rid of the leaking water, while their children often suffered respiratory problems due to the dust coming from the deteriorating walls. These were common issues in most of the fort's old houses back then. Despite these poor living conditions, the poet enjoyed living in the fort, which he felt was like the "Old City of Jerusalem." His best works were completed during this difficult time, while the fort became the "based on landscape" for most of them.

The poet started renovating the house in the 1990s, with the permission of the [Department of] Archaeology, without changing the interior plan. The height of the walls was reduced, and the work was finished by 1998 (Fig. 259). It became a place where the county's legendary singers, actors and artists gathered; his wife was an extremely devoted woman who treated everyone nicely, including her neighbours.⁶²⁸

Selling the Doll House

The poet's personal issues led him to sell the house. His two daughters were married, and one of them lived in a flat in the suburbs of Colombo, which was neither spacious nor comfortable enough. Although the poet wanted to support her by buying her a good house, he "did not have enough money." They saw the exponential land value of the fort as an opportunity to help their daughters, despite their extreme fondness for living in the fort. In 2011, he sold the house to a foreign investor for good money and bought two houses for his daughters.⁶²⁹ The foreign investor totally demolished the house and developed it into a two-storey building with the permission of the Planning Sub-Committee (Fig. 260). A novelty store owned by three European business partners and run by local staff was opened on the ground floor of the building. Unfortunately, the poet's wife—who had lived in the fort all her life—died soon after their moving, which was a great shock to the poet. With her loss, he felt the importance of the old house, where he had all his nice memories with her, resulting in the unsung song "Selling the Doll House."

The land value of the fort rose by six times over the next six years. According to the poet, "I do not

worry about the monetary value [of the house]. But I am sad that all the memories of my love are there. Memories of life are important to a poet. Most of the things I wrote are connected to the fort and my memories there."⁶³⁰ As a boy, he would lean against the front wall of the house, waiting until "she" came back from her school, Southlands College (at the fort). After some years, his eldest daughter would come home in the same way in the same school uniform, which he captured in one of his lyrics.

The Neighbour's Story

Mrs and Mr Miguel, a retired couple, were the poet's neighbours and family friends. In fact, the poet's wife was the best friend of Ms Miguel. According to Mr Miguel, the two women were almost like "sugar and tea," in that they blended very well.⁶³¹ Although they did not visit each other's houses often, they saw each other frequently when they stepped outside the houses, as the two houses were nearly facing each other on the same street. Both shared many things, from food to personal problems. When *kadupul* (queen of the night) flowers⁶³² bloomed at the Miguels' at midnight, Mrs Miguel used to call her friend, who offered them to *Buduhā muduruwō* (Lord Buddha).⁶³³ Mrs Miguel often remembers her—every morning, in fact, when she steps out of the house. Although their "big old house that was like a tunnel" is no longer there, the new building that replaced their house "always" reminds her, "My friend lived here [in this place]," which makes her very sad.⁶³⁴

The Sense of Place

The poet's emotional attachment to his old house, or sense of place, is connected with the "memories" of his wife, who was "born in the same house, grew old in the same house, became a girlfriend and wife as well as a mother in the same house."⁶³⁵ Therefore, the fort and the "place" where his house existed have

628 Personal conversations with neighbours, 2016–2017.

629 The exact amount of the money has been omitted to respect the owner's privacy.

630 Personal conversation, 2 September 2017.

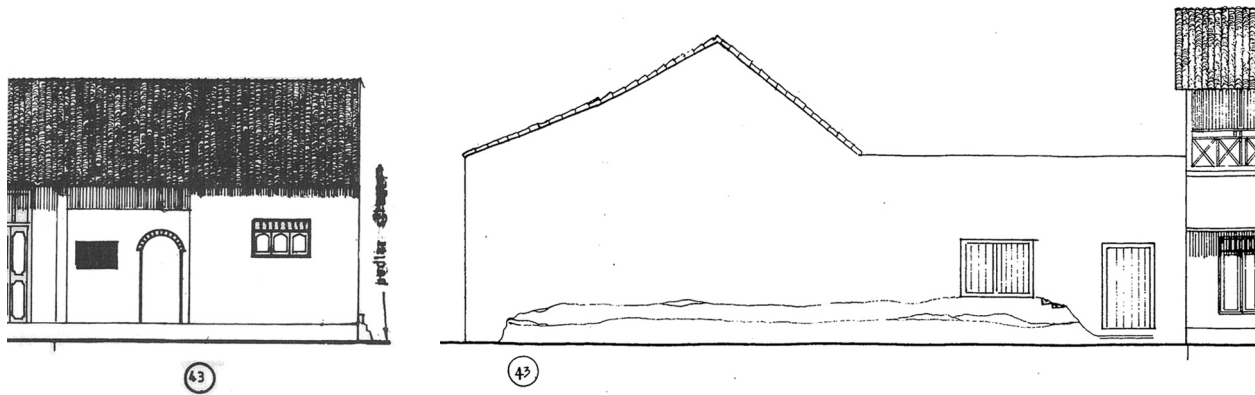
631 Personal conversation with Mr Miguel, January 2018.

632 *Epiphyllum oxypetalum*. As the flower blooms at midnight, it is difficult to offer the flower to Buddha, and this very reason has created the impression among Buddhists that offering this flower is more meritorious.

633 Personal conversation with Ms Miguel, 3 September 2017.

634 Ibid. and personal conversations in January 2018.

635 Personal conversation, 3 September 2017.



Figs. 255–256 The poet's house in 1992: the façade (left) and the wall (right), each facing a different street (Kuruppu and Wijesuriya 1992, 145, 267).



Figs. 257–258 The house during renovation in the 1990s, with the façade (left) and the dilapidated wall (right) each facing a different street (image courtesy of Mr Rathna Sri Wijesinghe).



Fig. 259 The house after renovation in 1998 (image courtesy of Mr Rathna Sri Wijesinghe).



Fig. 260 The building in 2016, after renovation by the foreign owner. The red postbox in the middle of the image is the only visible feature from the 1990s.

now become a painful memory for the poet, due to the demolition of the house (or the physical absence of the house) coupled with the drastic changes in his neighbourhood. The poet says, “The fort has totally changed now. I don’t even like to go there. I feel sad to go to the fort. There’s a huge, palace-like building there. You can see how different it is from the old house that was there. It’s sad—I feel I should cry.”⁶³⁶

6.6.2 ANECDOTE 2: NEW YEAR TREATS

This anecdote focuses on the weakening neighbourhood relationships on a small (formerly)

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

residential street due to gentrification, based on interviews and day-to-day conversations with Mrs Moninna Gunawardene,⁶³⁷ her neighbours and my reasoned observations of the place.

Our Neighbourhood: “A House with Several Rooms”

Moninna came to Galle Fort as a banker at Mercantile Bank⁶³⁸ in 1968. She got married to Ranjith, also a banker and a resident of the fort. After their marriage, Moninna started living in the parental house of Ranjith, located on Parawa Street. They were the fourth generation in the house, which had been occupied by the Dutch (or rather Dutch Burghers) at the beginning of the 19th century.

Her neighbourhood mainly comprises Parawa Street, the next two small streets and the small lane that opens from one of these streets, which has a few houses and is known as a *watta*⁶³⁹ (Fig. 261). Although she felt odd living in a house with common walls and having no big garden immediately after her marriage, she slowly got used to the environment. Gradually, the neighbours became almost like “family members” and the neighbourhood felt like “one large house with so many rooms,” with their house among them. Surprisingly, Ms Miguel, who was mentioned in the previous anecdote, has exactly the same feeling about her neighbourhood, on a main street.⁶⁴⁰ They were “quite free to go to any house, at any time, without any notice. The spirit of sharing (giving and receiving) was enjoyed by everybody.” Any event, either joy or sorrowful, was shared like a family. It was such fun to celebrate the Sinhala New Year, on which they made visits to each other’s houses and the men enjoyed a drink together. While all her neighbours were very friendly, the late Mrs Fernandopulle, who lived next door, looked after Moninna’s two children as her own grown children. Thus, her children used to call her *amma*, or “mother” in Sinhala.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁷ Mrs Gunawardene wished to be named in this anecdote.

⁶³⁸ Currently known as the Commercial Bank.

⁶³⁹ Literally “garden,” but implying a lower economic neighborhood in the local context, sometimes conveys the idea of a slum.

⁶⁴⁰ Personal conversation with Ms Miguel, 2 September 2017.

⁶⁴¹ Personal conversations, 31 August 2017.

Changing Neighbourhood Relationships

As the neighbourhood was relatively large, Parawa Street, where the house is located, is mainly discussed here. Despite the commercialization of the main streets, this small street, which had nearly 17 households, still retained its residential character in 2015, which had changed substantially by early 2019.

The left side of the street had eight houses,⁶⁴² among which were two family-run restaurants that were started by 2015. One of them was a modest but successful business offering authentic Sri Lankan food. The small street, which could only be passed by one car at a time, became very busy with tourists in the evenings due to the high ratings and reviews on TripAdvisor, particularly by Dutch tourists.⁶⁴³ One of these eight houses was owned by a Muslim lady and mother of three daughters. She sold the property to a local in 2016 and bought three houses in the suburbs of Galle for her daughters. The house was later converted into a villa. Another house on the street was also sold. Four houses had a more or less totally residential character by 2016, and Moninna's house was one of these. They were very proud of their ancestry in the fort. She has records of the generations that had lived in some houses, as stated by one of her late neighbours, showing their long-time attachment to the landscape. They made some changes in the house, including building a small self-contained upper floor, mainly used by their friends abroad, who often visited Galle. Similarly, one of their neighbours has renovated his house; he has no intention to move out of the fort, despite its decreasing liveability, as it is difficult for his older sister to adapt to a new environment.⁶⁴⁴

The other side of the street also had seven properties; three of them were converted into luxury villas, while two properties were sold, causing the neighbours to move. Two of these villas were run by locals and had frequent "guests," making

the street busier. However, these were permitted developments, and contributed to the overall colonial architecture of the fort, according to the standards of the Planning Sub-Committee.⁶⁴⁵ In the mid-'70s, a (late) Broadway actor and pioneering author of gay-themed novels in the US and his long-time (late) companion moved to Galle Fort. The foreigners, who initially lived on a close by street, later moved to a house on this small street, which they bought by forming a company.⁶⁴⁶ They did not maintain any relationship with the neighbours, and in fact, the neighbours did not know an author lived there. Their house was protected by a guard, an unusual thing in ordinary local neighbourhoods back then, although it is common now in commercial establishments. The neighbourhood of Chando Street also changed, with nearly six properties being bought or leased by foreigners, local purchases and residents relocating (by 2016).

"Plateful of New Year Sweets": A Good Neighbourhood Relationship

As the changes in the neighbourhood were substantial, I asked Moninna how she feels when her long-time neighbours move out of the fort. Her immediate response was, "The first feeling is, it will save another plate of New Year sweets." Sending a plateful of sweets on Sinhala New Year (*Sinhala Aluth Avurudda*)⁶⁴⁷ is a long-established custom in traditional Sri Lankan neighbourhoods, which symbolizes goodwill among neighbours yet is currently diminishing. Thus, sending a plate of New Year sweets was considered to demonstrate a "good neighbourly relationship" when determining changes in neighbourhood relationships in Moninna's locality. She remembers the maximum number of New Year plates she distributed as 52 in one particular year, 15 to 20 years ago, including almost her entire neighbourhood. Moninna created a neighbourhood map that includes the houses and their owners; a table was prepared based on the map

642 Additionally, there are another two houses in a small lane opening from this street.

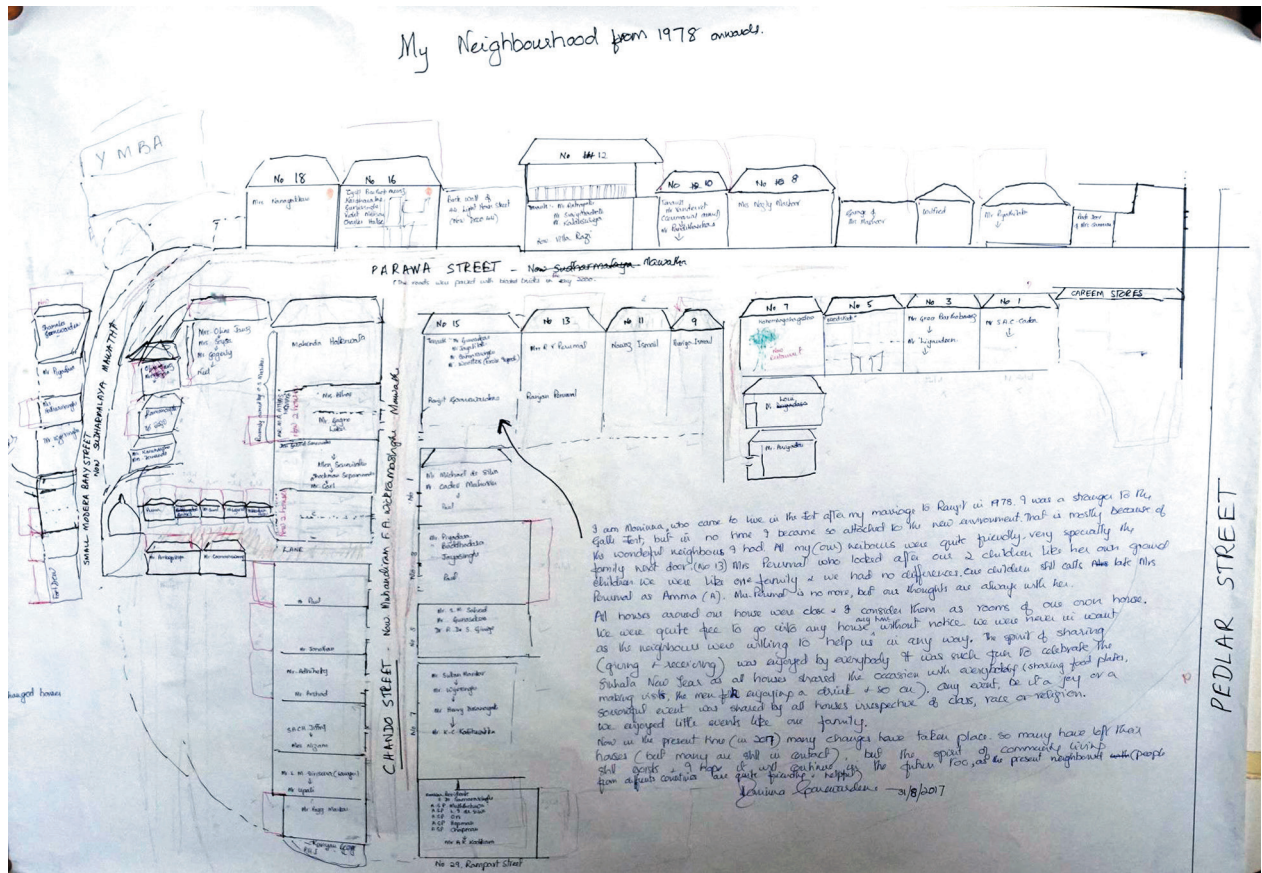
643 In February 2008, a tourist from Leiden posted *Lekkere rice en curry* ("tasty rice and curry"), which is one of more than 700 comments in Dutch on TripAdvisor—the second-highest category after English-language reviews, which numbered more than 1,200. These comments are available on the restaurant's TripAdvisor review (2018), although the name of the restaurant will not be mentioned.

644 Interview with Mr Fernandopulle, 29 January 2016.

645 Yet one of them have an "illegally" added swimming pool.

646 According to some residents (2017), they had already bought a property on Rampart Street prior to that.

647 Sinhala New Year, which is also celebrated by the Tamil people and is the most significant festival/celebration in Sri Lanka, begins when the sun moves from *Meena Rashiya* (the house of Pisces) to *Mesha Rashiya* (the house of Aries), according to local astrology (13 or 14 April).



(Fig. 261; Table 10). New Year sweets distributed from 1997 to 2002 (15 to 20 years ago, according to Moninna) and in 2017 were marked in the table in order to calculate the differences in neighbourhood relationships. According to the table, it was revealed she generally distributed 47 plates of New Year sweets among her neighbours from 1997 to 2002 (Table 10). In contrast, the number of plates she sent in Sinhala New Year 2017 dropped to 21, thereby reducing the neighbourhood relationships by more than half (Table 10). Losing neighbours by half within two decades is extremely uncommon in general Sri Lankan neighbourhoods. She identifies the reason for this as property sales and commercialization in the wake of World Heritage recognition. While 16 properties were sold, ten of them are currently owned by foreigners, who use them mainly for commercial purposes. Apart from that, another five have been turned into tourist accommodation or restaurants (Table 10).

Fig. 261 "My Neighbourhood from 1978," the neighbourhood map drawn by Moninna Gunawardene (2017). Additions of new floors are shown by lines on the tops of buildings, and the number of generations that lived in each house is written inside some of the houses.⁶⁴⁸

Thus, the residents who earlier were "quite free to go to any house any time" are now limited to certain spaces. Despite the large decrease in neighbourhood relationships, the remaining residents enjoy the spirit of community to a certain extent, while to a lesser extent they also form new relationships. Moninna's family developed a good relationship with a foreign family that moved to Chando Street, one of the very few residing in the fort. However, many who have left by selling their houses are still in contact with their former neighbours. Moninna hopes that "the spirit of community living shall exist and will continue."

Street	House No.	Neighbour	1997	2017	Reason	Current Owner
Malay	x	Mrs Cader	1	0	Sold	Unknown
	x	Mr Majeed	1	0	Sold	Unknown
	x	Mr Faizal	1	1		
	x	Mr Abayakoon	1	0	Restaurant	
	x	Mr Tabrew	1	0	Moved	
	x	Mr Piyarathna	1	0		
	x	Mrs Iftekhar	1	1		
	x	Mr Isadean	1	1		
	x	Mr Fenandopulle	1	1		
	x	Our house				
	x	Mr Paranagama	1	0	Villa	
	x	Mr Cooray	1	0	Moved	
	x	Mrs Thajudeen	1	0	Moved	
	x	Mr Samarakoon	1	0	Villa	
	x	Mr Karunasekere	1	0	Villa	
	x	Mr Samarasuriya	1	0	Foreigner	Late Mr Hunter
	x	Mr Navaratne	1	0	Moved	
Chatham	x	Mr Cassim	1	0	Foreigner	Mr Smit
	x	Mr Jayatillake	1	0	Foreigner	Mr Smit
	x	Dr Guruge	1	1		
	x	Mr Katugahalanda	1	1		
Bastion	x	Mr Subasinghe	1	0	Sold	Unknown
Chatham	x	Mr Haturusinghe	1	1		
	x	Mr Junaid (subdivided)	1	1		
	x	Mr Junaid (subdivided)	0	0	Foreigner	Mr Bruno
	x	Mr Alwis	1	0	Foreigner	Mr Thomas
	x	Mrs Rifnas (subdivided)	1	1		
	x	Mrs Rifnas (subdivided)	1	1		
	x	Mr Mohammed	1	0	Foreigner	Mr Walker
	x	Mr Manamperi	1	0	Foreigner	Mr James
	x	Mr Asraff	1	1		
	x	Mrs Navavi	1	1		
	x	Mr Upasena	1	1		
	x	Mr Raheem	1	0	Foreigner	Unknown
	x	Mr Illangakoon	1	1		
Chatham (1st Lane)	x	Mrs Gamage	1	0	Sold	Unknown
	x	Mr Fonseka	1	0	Sold	Unknown
	x	Mr Navaratne	1	1		
	x	Mr Cabraal	1	0	Sold	Unknown
	x	Mrs Nanda	1	1		

	x	Mr Chetty	1	0	Foreigner	Unknown
	x	Mr Abewardena	1	0	Hotel	
Shravasti	x	Mr Almeida	1	1		
	x	Mrs Rajapaksa	1	0	Villa	
	x	Mr Costa	1	1		
	x	Mrs Ekanayaka	1	1		
	x	Mr Liyanage	1	1		
	x	Mrs Jayawickrama	1	1		
	x	Mr Paranavitana	1	0	Foreigner	Unknown
	x	-	0	0		
	x	-	0	0		
	x	-	0	0		
	x	-	0	0		
Total	52	48	47	21		

1: Households that were given New Year treats; 0: households that were not given New Year treats. Due to the privacy, all personal names and street names have been allocated pseudonyms.

Table 10 New Year sweets distributed 20 years ago and in 2017.

Conclusion

The chapter discusses the strong indications of excessive gentrification at Galle Fort, which has substantially reduced the local population while weakening neighbourhood relationships. Despite the fact that the largest proportion of economic benefits of World Heritage recognition goes to local and foreign investors, the economy of the remaining community has improved remarkably, and they have mainly forgotten the negative impacts of heritage recognition.