

Traditions of Living Histories: Modular Communal Contexts as Learning Labs for Design Education

Prasanna Pitigala Liyanage¹, Shauri Hettiarachchi²

Design education requires the transferring of knowledge of a wide variety of subjects from fields of science to the arts while developing a sense for empathy with society and design thinking. In the foundation level of the Bachelor of Design degree at the Department of Integrated Design at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, the potential of locally existing contexts is used as the primary resource for learning.

Empathising with society begins with self-realization. Knowing the traditions that has created the manner of present societies that we are a part of, is of essential importance in this process. The practice of “Gammadu Shanthikarma” due to its historical roots and its lively existence in the current society provides an ideal ground for students to grasp social patterns of converting belief systems into material and non-material components of culture.

The research done under the grant SRC/ST/2015/05 provided by the Senate Research Committee of the University of Moratuwa explored the research question of; how and in what ways can traditional practices in communities be used to understand social patterns in the foundation level of design education? Empirical data was primarily gathered through participatory observations. Gathered data was triangulated against the success of student realization of curricular content. While on-site, students used various methods of measuring and recording, a final exhibition inclusive of documentation was used for assessing.

Key words: Context based Learning, Design Education, Learning Labs, Sociocultural Patterns

1 Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. pitigalap@gmail.com

2 Department of Integrated Design, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. shau.hettiarachchi@gmail.com