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Original Paper

Acceptance and transformation of the housing "ladder" in slum resettlement projects in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study focuses on the Sustainable Township Development Programme, a slum resettlement project that represents a recent housing policy shift in Sri Lanka. Through the actual housing improvement activities of the residents of Sahaspura, a resettlement housing complex, and the slum residents in the surrounding area, the response of the beneficiaries to the housing "ladder" was clarified. Policy makers and planners intended to merge slum dwellers into the formal housing market through the provision of "ladders," a set of regular ownership and dwelling units in Sahaspura. However, residents have responded in a variety of ways, including house extensions and renovations and informal housing transactions according to their daily needs. As a result, the original intention of the planners was distorted and the "ladder" was incorporated into the indigenous housing market in the slum, revealing a "transformation" from legal tenure to de facto tenure. Factors contributing to this transformation include the location of resettlement sites near urban areas, the looseness of housing environment management, the possibility of choosing the multiple form of tenure, and the existence of actors and social relations that guarantee access to land.

Keywords
community, housing, land ownership, Sahaspura, Wanathamulla

1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and objectives of the study

In Colombo, the largest city in Sri Lanka, an urban renewal project called the Sustainable Township Development Programme (STP) has been underway since the late 1990s. The core of the STP is a plan to clear informal areas called Underserved Settlements (USS) and resettle people in high-rise housing complexes to be built on the urban periphery.

In 1998, when the STP plan was announced, there were a total of 1506 USSs in Colombo, where 363 000 people (approximately 51% of the city's population), or 66 000 households, were estimated to live.[1] Although Colombo has had "tenement" or "watta" neighborhoods in the city center since the British colonial period, they accounted for only a small proportion of the total urban population at that time. Informal areas increased after the end of the World War II, when the urban area expanded rapidly, and people from inside and outside the city built shanty houses on public land and surrounding land, such as along main roads, railway lines, riverbeds, and wetlands, and these eventually formed areas known as "shanty settlements" (Figure 1). USS is the general term for informal areas including tenements, wattas, and shanty settlements (hereafter simply referred to as "slums" unless a distinction is necessary).

The STP has the intention of rationalizing land use in urban centers by demolishing slums and redeveloping their sites. Sri Lanka's housing policy has long been focused on on-site environmental improvements with minimal forced relocation of slums, and in the 1980s, community participation in improving the living environment was internationally acclaimed. Given this history, the STP project symbolizes a shift in housing policy from the pro-poor policies that prevailed in Sri Lanka to an urban renewal policy that prioritizes economic development.

Housing policy, by the way, is said to have a role in filtering out the "core members" of the society in promoting social integration.[3] For example, Japan's housing policy from the
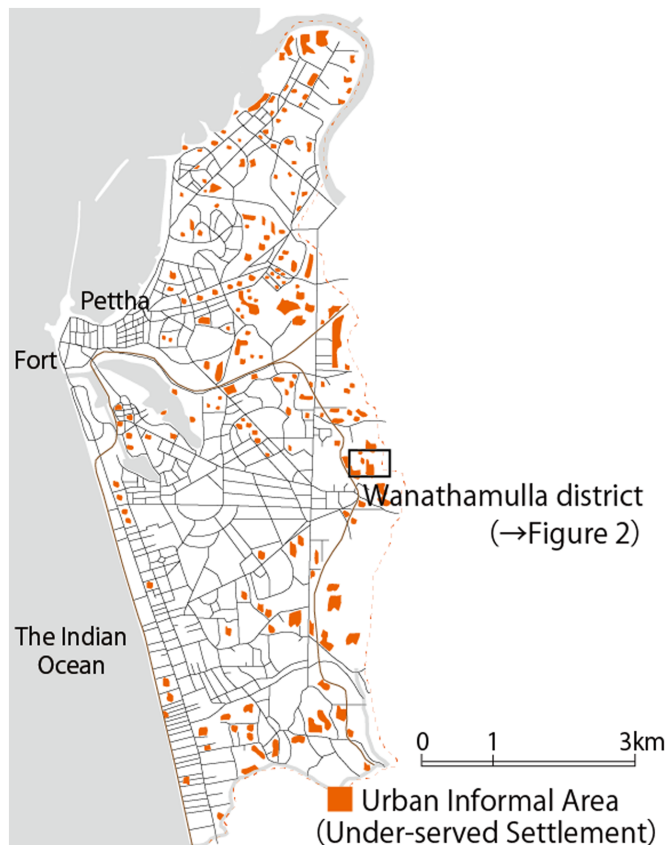
FIGURE 1. Distribution of urban informal areas in Colombo city (by the author based on Reference [2])

reconstruction period of World War II to the period of rapid economic growth is a typical example of such a role. There, the government gave preferential treatment to the acquisition of detached and owner-occupied houses by "standard households," thereby fostering a middle-income class as the "core members" of society that would contribute to the country's economic development.

The slogan of Real Estate Exchange Limited (REEL), the implementing agency of the STP, is "Home for people and land for urban development." The Mahinda Rajapaksa government, established in 2005, pushed for STPs with the target of "all people to acquire owner-occupied homes." Specifically, slum dwellers are to be given legal ownership of their dwellings, and they are to live in mid- and high-rise housing complexes, which are also symbols of their social status. In this way, they sought to integrate them into the formal housing market, raise their standard of living, and join the "mainstream" of society [Note 1].

This means that STPs are not only about physical improvement of the urban environment, but also about changing social and economic trends by providing new housing "ladders" for slum dwellers to climb, starting with the construction of mid- and high-rise housing complexes. However, there are not a few skeptical voices and criticisms about the validity of the objectives of such policies and the achievability of their results, as will be discussed in more detail later.

This study therefore defines the housing and the ownership system attached to it as the "housing ladder," which is provided as a means of intervention in the social and economic currents of the slum population as described above and

examines its functioning in specific situations. The object of verification is Sri Lanka's first high-rise housing complex for low-income people, called Sahaspura, built as a pilot project of the STP.

The STP attempted to encourage people to leave the slums by giving them units in Sahaspura in exchange for eviction from the slum. For some inhabitants, however, this "push" amounted to nothing more than an expulsion from the very fabric of life on which they depended. This gap in perceptions of the slum between the inhabitants and the government has caused various problems, but it has also created room for the housing "ladder" to be reconfigured. This paper aims to gain insight into the nature of interventions in slums by tracing the process of how the housing "ladder" is accepted by residents and how it is forced to change under the environment of slums, where multiple housing and land rights and social relations overlap and sometimes conflict with each other.

1.2 Previous research and the position of this study

Arguments in studies and discussions on the STP and Sahaspura's plan can be broadly divided into two positions. The first is the position that acknowledges the relevance of the STP in terms of sustainable urban development in Colombo.

Wickrema[4] emphasizes the need for STPs in sustainable development in Colombo, with the understanding that resettlement of slum dwellers and large-scale housing complexes for low-income people have so far "failed" in many parts of the world. Resettlement is an effective means of improving the living standards of the people, and Sahaspura is regarded as a "successful case." The conditions underpinning Sahaspura's "success" are (1) voluntary relocation, (2) housing and amenities improvements, (3) absolute ownership of the new housing, (4) temporary and permanent title deeds, (5) willingness to leave the "slum," and (6) access to transport and means of livelihood [4, p. 86]. It also introduces the findings of a survey[5] that many residents feel that their lives have improved, which it uses as an argument for "success" [Note 2]. The report also mentions the existence of people who have "filtered up" to a better living environment with the funds they have gained from the sale and purchase of Sahaspura dwellings. Sahaspura people believe that they are no longer marginalized, which means that they have gained a place and dignity in society [Note 3].

Samaratunga[6] also sees high-rise, high-density settlements through urban redevelopment, including STPs, as essential to the rationalization of land use in Colombo, and hails Sahaspura as a "successful" example of resettlement; see Charles Stokes' discussion "Slums of Hope, Slums of Despair"[7] [Note 4], presents the view that those who continue to live in Sahaspura are the "chosen ones" for high-rise settlement [Note 5]. In other words, there are two types of slum dwellers: (1) those who see resettlement as an opportunity to improve their lives and overcome the slum lifestyle, and (2) those who do not understand the value of the Sahaspura environment and show no signs of improvement in their lives, the former being the "chosen ones" for the Sahaspura environment. He also states that the "unchosen ones" may sell their Sahaspura dwellings and return to their original place of residence, which is the worst-case scenario. Samaratunga's point of view of the existence of "opportunities for improvement" and inhabitants' "hope" corresponds to the "willingness to leave the slum" that Wickrema identified as one of the conditions supporting resettlement. Samaratunga also points out the limitations of the slum improvement projects implemented in the 1970s and 1980s in terms of the lack

of "social mobility" of people. Slum people have been socially excluded and vulnerable as long as they have remained on the land, even when their living conditions have improved. The government treats those resettled in Sahaspura as "slum exiles," and this attitude has freed them from social stigma and increased the momentum for "social upliftment" [Note 6].

The second position is that the STPs violate the basic rights of slum dwellers and that the project objective of "rationalizing land use" has also "failed."

Dhammika and Wijayasinghe[8] conducted a survey not only of current residents of Sahaspura, but also of those who refused to move into Sahaspura (161 households in total) and those who once moved in but later moved out (100–150 households in total, moving to the suburbs or returning to their former slum). The results showed that the factors that attracted residents to the former slum included accessibility to affordable services, tenure security and abundant social capital. They also point to the lack of consideration and compensation for their livelihoods based on the abovementioned resources as a reason for their refusal to move into or continue living in Sahaspura. A particular source of frustration for slum people is that compensation is only available to households with legal land ownership [Note 7]. On the contrary, residents with legal land ownership tend not to want to resettle in Sahaspura in the first place; those who agree to move to Sahaspura are those who do not have legally guaranteed ownership rights and who have weak links with neighbors and relatives (little social relational capital) [Note 8]. This suggests that many residents feel that the physical and financial compensation proposed by the STP is insufficient for them and that they have rather more to lose by moving to Sahaspura.

Other limitations pointed out by many researchers on this position are the limitations of STPs and Sahaspura due to their assumption of the use of market forces. USSs located in areas of threatened ecological impact, such as rivers and wetlands, are a particular priority for improvement. However, such sites have low land prices and do not fit into the STP mechanism, which uses the profits from the redevelopment of the site as a source of funding for relocation. In addition, most of the USSs in Colombo occupy small communities of <40–50 households, and the sites are dispersed, making it difficult to ensure profitability. Furthermore, STPs have been persistently criticized for being insensitive to the society, culture, and social relations of the slums. STPs are said to unilaterally destroy the close social relations that have been formed over time, without replacing them with other communities and values.[9] Some even argue that STP seeks to rip people out of their existing communities and, in so doing, deprive them of social dynamics and means of resistance.[10] Others have pointed out that the opacity of the criteria used in selecting the developer to grant land and the arbitrariness of the selection of beneficiaries and the distribution of housing units have made the population distrustful.[11]

Of the two positions presented above, the former emphasizes market principles and land-use rationalization, while the latter emphasizes the rights of the poor and residential welfare. The two are ideologically polarized, and they argue incompatibly with each other over the pros and cons of STPs and Sahaspura. On the contrary, in recent years, in discussions on tenure security in slums, a more flexible concept of property rights has become more prevalent than in the past, such as recognizing rights that are not limited to formal property rights protected by law but are accepted by the people and whose legitimacy is recognized, as equal to formal property rights [Note 9]. Considering these recent discussions, this paper is unique in that it focuses on the actions of Sahaspura residents to improve their given living environment themselves, and the impact of such actions on the housing and land rights granted to them as formal property rights.

1.3 Research methods

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, Sahaspura and its neighboring existing slums within Wanathamulla district are surveyed to analyze the inhabitants and changes in their living environment.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the changes in the residential environment in the study area: Changes after the construction of Sahaspura are examined in detail, including the resettlement of residents, changes in socio-economic characteristics, and changes in the residential environment, based on surveys conducted by the author in two phases in the area in 2005–2006 and 2016–2017.

Chapter 3 looks at the actual situation of housing improvement by residents. First, the needs for housing are read from the activities of improving the living environment that are typical of Sahaspura and the existing slums. Next, the various responses of the residents to the living environment, including the dwellings in Sahaspura, are clarified. From these realities, the various responses of the residents to the "housing ladder" are explored.

Chapter 4 looks at the relationship between the improvement of the living environment by residents and land and house ownership. First, the state of housing and land rights relations in the slums of Colombo, including the study area, is reviewed. Next, the various social networks that guarantee access to housing and land for people without formal property rights are summarized. The actors and social relations involved in the exchange of land and housing through transactions between residents in the study area are then analyzed.

Chapter 5 attempts to interpret the acceptance and transformation of the housing "ladder" based on the actual situation of housing environment improvement and reorganization of land and housing rights by residents in the surveyed districts, and considers the nature of interventions in urban informal areas and the resettlement of residents.

2. Trends of Dwellings before and after the Resettlement Project in Wanathamulla District

2.1 Overview of the survey area

Wanathamulla district is located on the eastern edge of Colombo city, between the Base Line Road, a main road, and the Kinda canal, which was excavated during the colonial period. It is about 4–5 km from Pettah, Colombo's old commercial center, and is surrounded by new commercial areas such as Borella and Dematagoda, and public facilities related to health and education are in the vicinity.

2.1.1 Halgahakumbura settlement

In the 1970s, with the urban expansion of Colombo, the Wanathamulla area saw an influx of people from central Colombo and surrounding villages, who occupied public land along canals and railway tracks and built barracks. Since the 1980s, government and NGOs have implemented projects to improve the living environment, including infrastructure development and stabilization of land tenure. In Halgahakumbura, a settlement in the district, 556 dwellings were built on approximately 3 ha of land in 2003, housing 623 households and 2742 people[12] (Figures 2 and 3). More than half of the houses
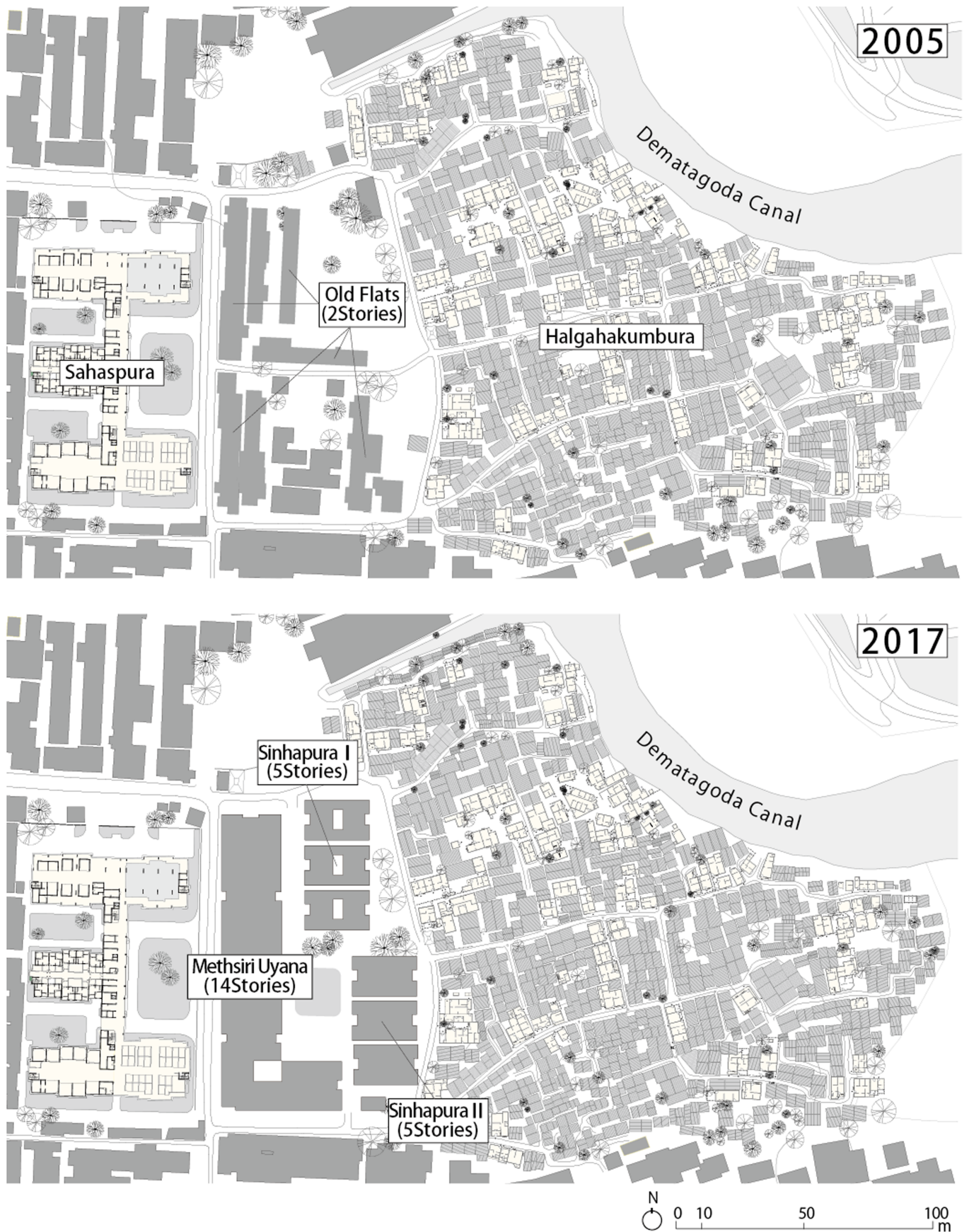
FIGURE 2. Building layout of case study area

FIGURE 3. Existing slums: Halgahakumbura (2005)

FIGURE 4. Sahaspura (2005)

are temporary structures, many households share water supply, toilets, and bathrooms [Note 10], and services such as electricity, sewage disposal, and waste collection are inadequate. Since around 2003, the Municipality of Colombo has been implementing a project to improve the living environment in cooperation with NGOs and private sectors. Through discussions with the residents, the problems facing the settlements [Note 11] and the priorities for their solution were identified, and measures were implemented. As a result, by the end of 2005, improvements such as the granting of land title deeds (which, however, do not guarantee legal ownership, as discussed below) and house numbers to residents, the construction

of water supply and drainage facilities, and the widening of main roads were realized.

2.1.2 Sahaspura

In the STP, the Wanathamulla area was one of the relocation sites for evicted residents in central Colombo, and several mid- and high-rise apartment blocks for resettlement were built in the area [Note 12]. Sahaspura was the first pilot project of the STP, completed in 2001 [Note 13] (Figures 2 and 4). Residents of 14 slum areas in central Colombo and the original inhabitants of the Sahaspura construction site moved into Sahaspura.
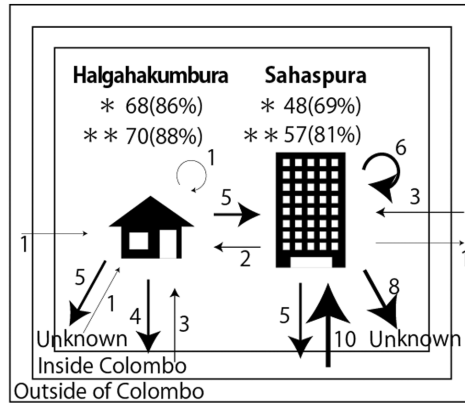
FIGURE 5. Detail of household movement (2005→2017)

Three 14-storey residential buildings are arranged in parallel across the open space, connected to each other by corridors on each floor. The ground floor contains tenant spaces, a nursery, a meeting hall, a management office, and a park, while the 2nd to 14th floors are occupied by residences and small tenant spaces. The corridors leading to the dwellings are named "main roads," "junctions," and "streets," with a spatial scale and hierarchy that mimics the streets of previous settlement spaces. Along these "roads" are shop spaces and common spaces for washing, drying clothes, resting, etc. In addition, semi-outdoor verandah spaces are provided in front of the dwelling units.

2.2 | Overview of the survey

Two field surveys were conducted in Sahaspura and Halgahakumbura in 2005–2006 (Phase I) and 2016–2017 (Phase II) [Note 14]. The households surveyed were selected to ensure that there was as little bias as possible in the demographics of the residents, resulting in 70 cases in Sahaspura and 79 cases in Halgahakumbura where changes from the first phase to the second phase could be ascertained. In the survey, the basic attributes of the inhabitants (family structure, occupation, ethnicity, and religion, etc.) and social relations were ascertained through interviews, while changes in the living environment were ascertained through the collection of dwelling plans and observation of living arrangements. In addition, a similar survey was conducted in 2006 by visiting residents who had moved out of Sahaspura and returned to their previous place of residence.

2.3 | Resident resettlement and settlement rates

In Sahaspura and Halgahakumbura, approximately 69% and 86% of households, respectively, were still living in the same dwelling unit at the time of the second phase of the survey, indicating a greater turnover of residents in Sahaspura than in Halgahakumbura (Figure 5). On the contrary, approximately 81% and 88% of households continued to live in either Sahaspura or Halgahakumbura, respectively, whether in the same dwelling or not, indicating that among households that moved out of their dwelling in Sahaspura, some remained in other dwelling units in Sahaspura or in houses in the district. A certain number of households were found to remain in other dwellings in Sahaspura and in the district.

2.4 | Changes in socio-economic characteristics of residents

Household income increased between the first and second periods in both Sahaspura and Halgahakumbura, but at both points in time it was still well below the average household income in urban areas in Sri Lanka (Figure 6). On the contrary, for households that moved in after 2005, the average monthly household income was approximately Rs 40 000 in Halgahakumbura and Rs 38 333 in Sahaspura, indicating relatively high-income levels. This suggests an influx of middle-income earners and the consequent economic disparity within the district.

In terms of occupation, the number of unskilled workers (cleaners, security guards, three-wheeled taxi drivers, etc.) decreased from the first to the second period, while the number of employees in shops, companies, etc. increased. In addition, self-employment has decreased in Sahaspura. This is thought to be since Sahaspura is far from the commercial center of Colombo and the upper floors of high-rise residential complexes have limited pedestrian traffic, which was disadvantageous for shop management, food processing and sales, etc., which were conducted at home.

In terms of family structure, the proportion of nuclear family households has decreased, and the proportion of extended family households has increased. The proportion of households with eight or more members has also increased slightly. This is thought to be since grown children continue to live with their parents after marriage or childbirth, and that family members and relatives are brought in from other places to live with them.

The composition of Colombo's population by ethnicity and religion directly reflects the characteristics of Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, a trend that also applies to Wanathamulla district. However, in Sahaspura, the proportion of Muslims is high. This is due to the inclusion of Muslim-majority neighborhoods in the eviction targets. Muslims in general tend to favor large families, which may have influenced the increase in extended families and household size in Sahaspura.

2.5 | Changes in living conditions

Overcrowding persists in both Sahaspura and Halgahakumbura, with many households still living below 5 m² per person, the UN-Habitat criterion for "overcrowding." On the contrary, an increasing number of households in Sahaspura have a relatively generous area of 15–19 m² per person and more than 20 m² per person.

In Halgahakumbura, the proportion of houses with temporary structures (wooden) has decreased. In addition, the proportion of households with private toilets in their homes has increased because of the provision of water and sewerage systems in the housing improvement project. Although the
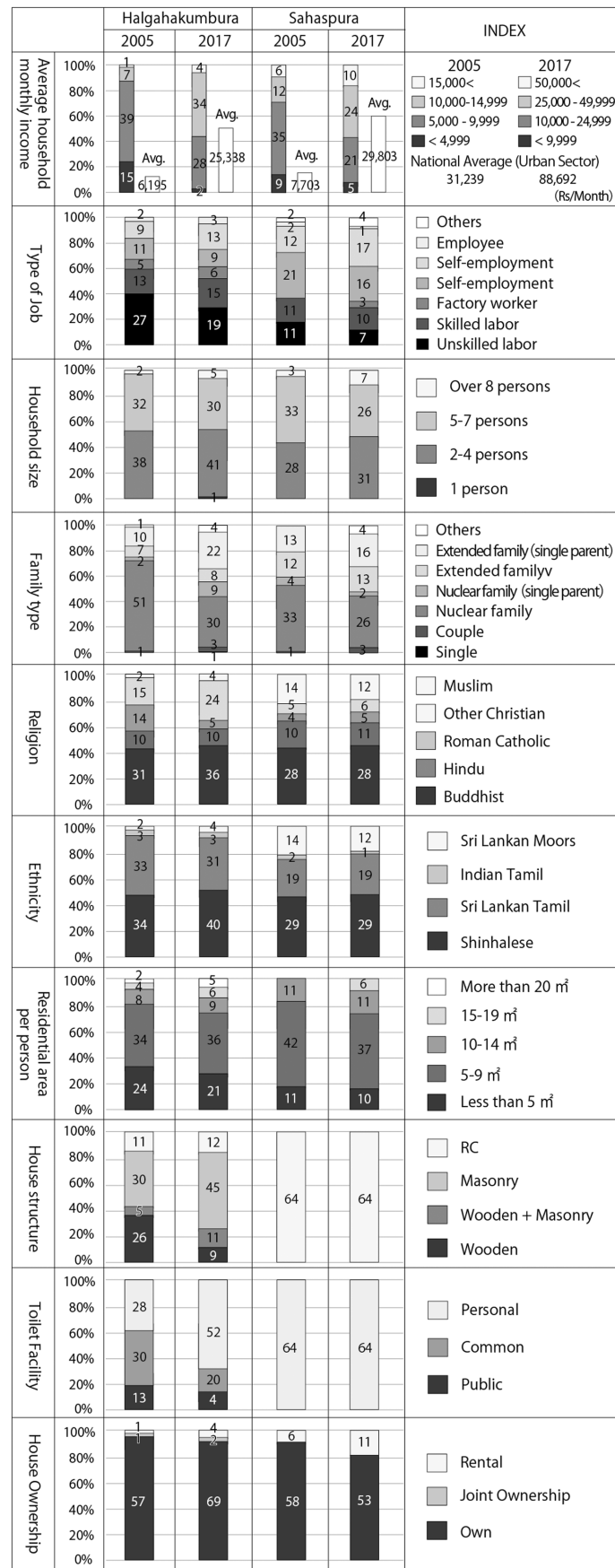
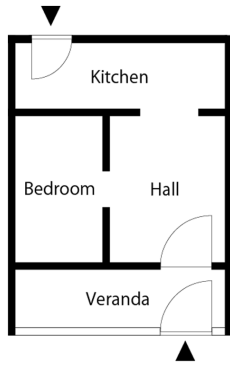**FIGURE 6.** Basic information of households

FIGURE 7. Basic house plan in Sri Lanka

shortage of toilets has been eliminated, the increase in the number of indoor toilets has put pressure on the living area, further increasing overcrowding.

In Sahaspura, an increasing number of households stated that they own their homes as "rented," as housing transactions are prohibited in Sahaspura in principle, except for transfers to relatives (children). It is assumed that informal transactions such as buying, selling, and renting of houses are carried out between residents without going through the formal administrative procedures.

3. Response to "Ladders" in the Improvement of Living Conditions by Residents

3.1 Residents' housing needs

Sri Lankan dwellings are said to have three basic elements: verandah, hall and kitchen, and no matter how small the dwelling is, these three rooms are said to be secured[15] (Figure 7). The veranda at the front of the dwelling is used for resting and serving guests, the hall at the back of the veranda is for eating and family relaxation, and the kitchen is placed at the far end of the dwelling. The plan of Sahaspura's dwellings is also designed with these characteristics in mind (Figure 8).

3.1.1 Sleeping and resting

If there is enough space, a private room for sleeping is provided (Figure 9, case A), but if there is not enough space, the hall or kitchen is used as a sleeping place at night (Figure 9, case D). In some cases, the sleeping place may change

between day and night. For example, during the day when the sunlight is strong, people take a nap in a private room at the back of the house and sleep in the well-ventilated hall at night. In Halgahakumbura, adult males sleep near the entrance at night because of security concerns, while women and young children sleep in the back room; in Sahaspura, there were cases where the back veranda was converted into a room to increase the sleeping space if there was not enough space (Figure 9, Case E). In some large Muslim families, furniture was cleared away as night approached, and cloths were spread on the hall floor for six or more people to sleep on.

3.1.2 Cooking and eating

In some Sinhalese and Tamil families in Halgahakumbura, there were cases of multiple kitchens in the residential compound, with separate cooking areas for each household (Figure 9, Case B). This may be due to the influence of norms commonly found in Sri Lanka and South India. In the traditional values of these regions, eating is symbolically associated with sex, and there is a norm that the place of cooking should be separated between the parent and child households after the child's marriage.[16] In Sahaspura, on the contrary, multiple kitchens are difficult to establish due to space constraints.

In Sri Lanka, kitchens tend to be located at the back of the house to avoid direct visibility from the entrance or living room.[8] Many residents in Sahaspura complained about the design of their dwellings, where the kitchen is directly visible from the entrance or hall (Figure 9, Case E).

In the rare cases where a dining space was provided (Figure 9, Case C), in most cases the hall or veranda served as the eating space. Sinhalese and Tamils do not have the custom of eating meals around the table with their families, but eat at their own time and place, each holding a plate of food in his or her hand. Muslims sit on the floor and eat meals with the whole family together.

3.1.3 Water facilities

In Halgahakumbura, many households previously used water taps and water facilities such as toilets and bathrooms in communal facilities in the settlement. Since 2005, when water and sewerage systems were installed in the settlement, water and drainage pipes were extended from the street to the house, and more households have private water facilities in their houses. Although the new facilities have made it more convenient, there have been cases where, on the contrary, living space has
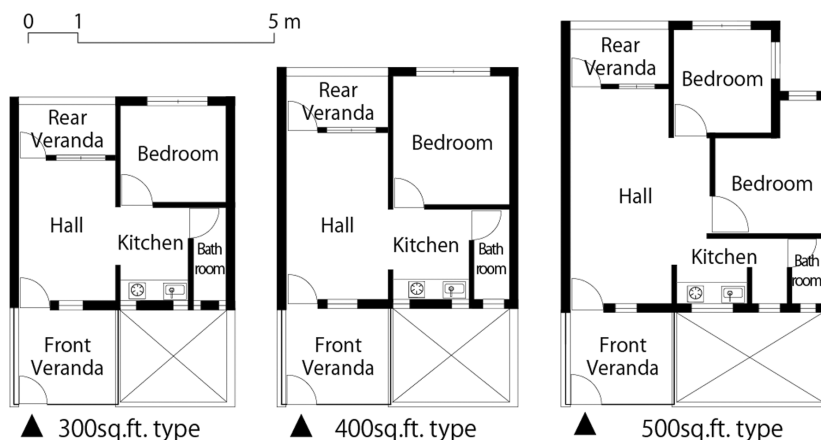

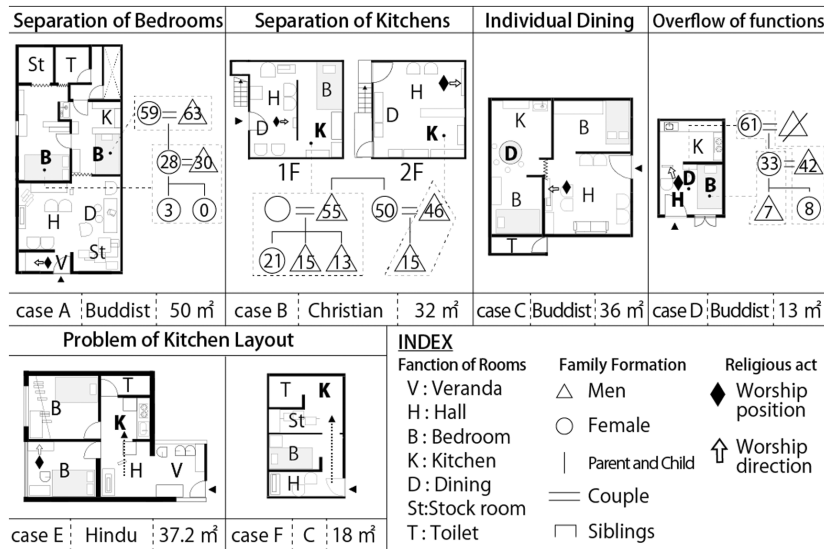FIGURE 8. Sahaspura typical unit plan

FIGURE 9. Examples of dwelling style

been squeezed due to the installation of these facilities, resulting in a more serious shortage of floor space.

3.1.4 Faith and worship

Buddhists set up an altar to enshrine a statue of Buddha on a front veranda or in a corner of the hall and perform prayers such as reciting sutras in front of the altar (Figure 9, Cases A, B, C, D). Hindu's dislike having an altar in a place that can be seen from the entrance and the family of Case E set up an altar in a corner of a private room at the back of the house (Figure 9, case E). If there is sufficient space, a room dedicated to the altar is provided. However, in many houses, due to lack of space, the altar is in a corner of the hall and is covered with a cloth to blindfold it. Christians also sometimes have space for worship in their homes, but in some cases, worship is held only in neighboring churches (Figure 9, Case F). Muslims spread a cloth in the hall of their homes and kneel there to pray at set times, in addition to which the men attend a mosque.

3.2 Actual conditions for improvement of the living environment by residents

3.2.1 Dwelling unit extensions and alterations

The Fernando family lived with their family of five (husband, wife, and three daughters) in 2005 and ran a general store in a space inside their home. (Figure 10, left). At that time, there was no water or sewerage connection, and they used the communal water tap and toilets in the settlement. The veranda at the front of the house was a place for shoppers and neighbors to rest and chat. In 2016, they closed their grocery store because their eldest and second daughters left home to get married, and they were short-staffed. The space between the general shop and the hall was enlarged by removing the internal wall (Figure 10, middle). As a result of the living environment improvement project, the water and sewerage systems were connected, and a toilet and bathroom were installed in the backyard. Later, when the third daughter married, the daughter-in-law and grandchildren joined the family and space
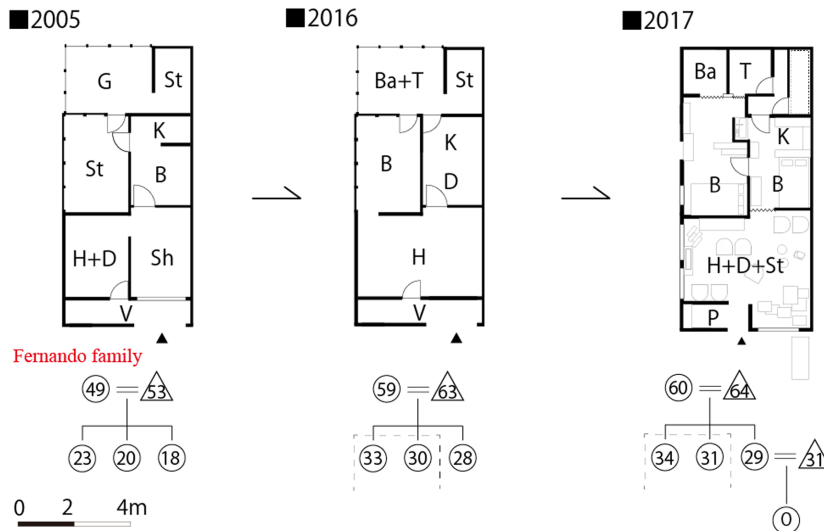

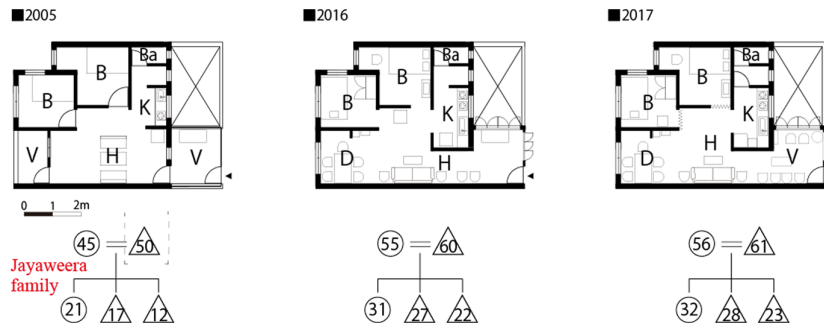**FIGURE 10.** Extension of dwelling units

FIGURE 11. Extension of dwelling units

became insufficient, the dining room was converted into a bedroom and the hall was also used as a dining room (Figure 10, right). In addition, the front veranda has been converted into an indoor space, partly for storage and partly as a worship space. A further building was extended to the rear, and the outdoor toilet and bathroom were brought indoors. Because of a previous burglary, the back door has been sealed with a closet on the inside.

Jayaweera's family (husband, wife, and their three children) have lived in the area adjacent to Sahaspura, formerly known as 66th Watta, since around 1986. They moved to Sahaspura in 2002, after their house was demolished to make way for the construction of a high-rise housing complex by the government (Figure 11, left). As her husband was then migrating abroad (to the Middle East), his wife and three children (eldest daughter aged 21, eldest son aged 17, and second son aged 12) lived in the 500 sq. ft. type dwelling unit given to them in Sahaspura. Later, when the husband returned home around 2014, part of the inner wall was demolished to make the room as spacious as possible, the rear verandah was made indoor, and the front verandah was repositioned so that it could be used as an integral part of the hall (Figure 11, middle). Furthermore, as the kitchen could be seen directly from the hall, a partition was installed to block the line of sight. The husband works at an agency facilitating migrant workers abroad and the children have regular jobs (eldest daughter: accounting assistant, eldest son: textiles, second son: hotel work); in 2017, the rooms were

further improved with wallpaper, light fittings, and furniture, and the dwelling was well maintained (Figure 11, right). On the contrary, the smallness of the rooms has not been resolved and the shared space facing the corridor is used for washing and drying clothes.

3.2.2 Division and integration of dwelling units

Ranjith used to live with his family of three (husband, wife, and son), but around 2005 his son got married and the family grew, so the house was divided to provide living space for both the parent and son households (Figure 12, middle). Subsequently, the son's household moved to another area, and Ranjith was separated from his wife; Ranjith's brother came to live with them and occasionally takes care of his son's eldest son in this house. The space occupied by the son's household has been extended upstairs and rented to a Tamil family (Figure 12, right).

The Sakurdeen family (husband, wife, and three children) lived in Panchikawatta, near the center of Colombo, from around 1999, but moved to Sahaspura in 2002 after their house was subject to demolition (Figure 13, top). Her husband continued to drive a three-wheeled taxi while in Sahaspura he renovated the front veranda of their house and opened a stationery shop. However, the shop was located a little off the "main street," making it difficult to be seen by the public, and the business was difficult. Around 2010, the shop was relocated to a location facing a "main street" and "junction."
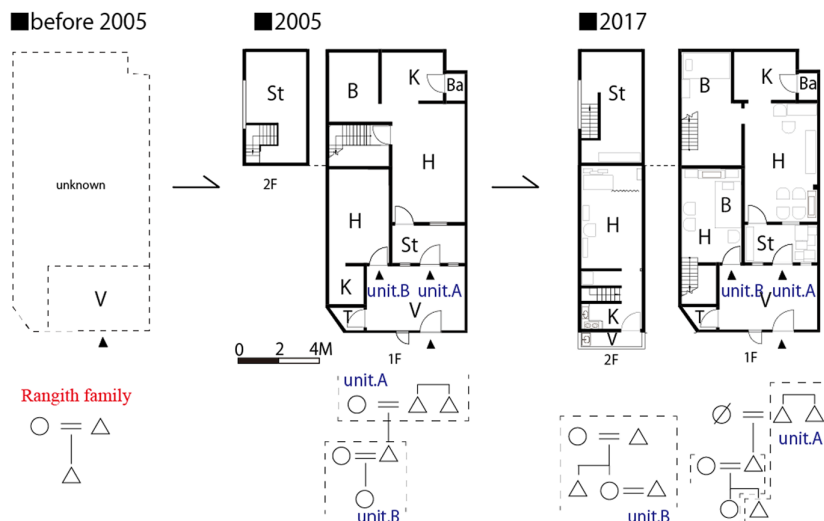

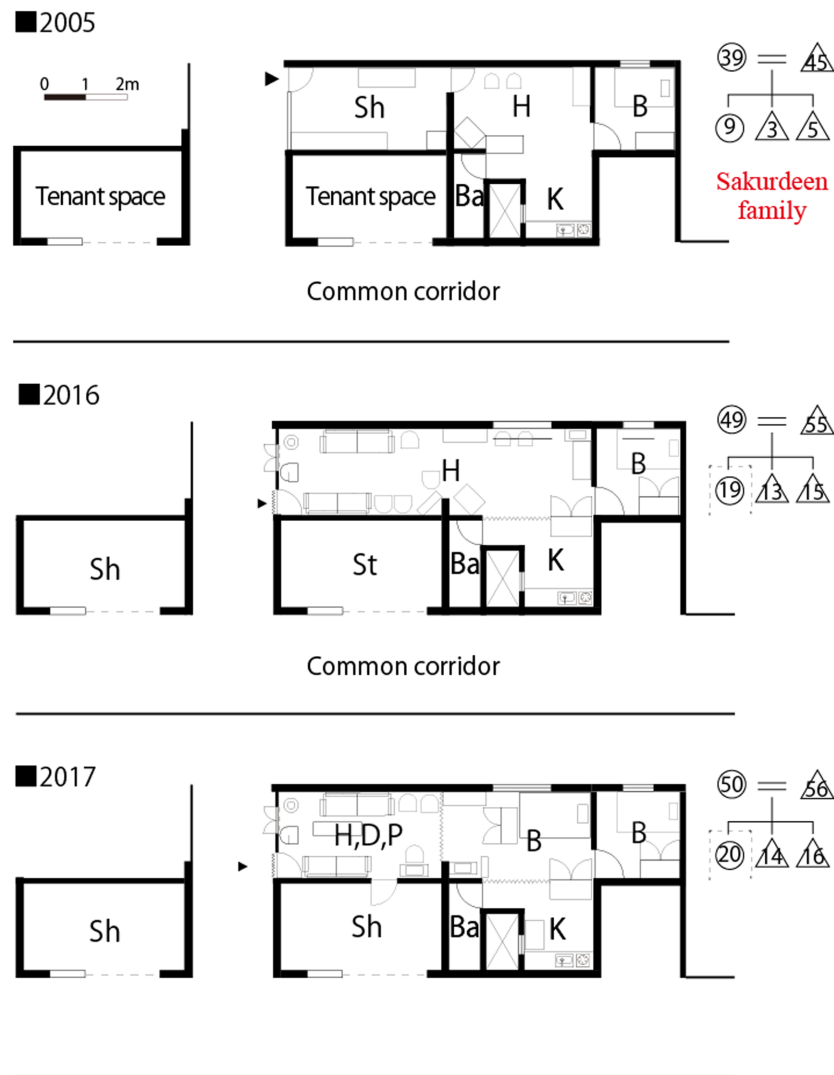**FIGURE 12.** Division and integration of dwelling units

FIGURE 13. Division and integration of dwelling units

(Figure 13, middle). In addition, as the home became too small for the growing children, the wall between the front veranda and the hall was removed to extend the space. The Sakurdeen family are Muslims, and daily prayers are held in the enlarged hall. The rooms are loosely partitioned by wardrobes and curtains depending on their use (prayer, sleeping, etc.). One of the shops was closed for a while as the daughter left home for marriage but reopened in 2017 and four members of the family are now manning the shop. In addition, a hole was made in the wall of the shop adjacent to the home to allow direct access from the hall of the home (Figure 13, bottom). When making the hole, they obtained permission from the manager on the condition that they would restore the shop to its original condition when they left.

3.2.3 Use of multiple dwellings by one household

As of 2005, the Sebastian family split their house into two units, with the family of five living in the rear unit (unit A) of approximately 12 m², and the front unit (unit B) rented to the Colein family. The son and daughter households live in Sahaspura and other areas (Figure 14, left); the Sahaspura unit was acquired as compensation for eviction because Sebastian's

grandmother had land in Halgahakumbura on which the Sahaspura was to be built. 2016. When the lease with the Colein family expired, the boundary wall with unit B was repositioned to enlarge the space (Figure 14, middle). In 2017, Sebastian's sister's family returned to Halgahakumbura and added a second-floor extension to unit A to house them (Figure 14, right). Unit B is also rented to another family (the Kumar family).

3.2.4 Rotation by multiple households in multiple dwellings

The Thresa family (mother and three children) moved into a 500 sq. ft.-type unit in Sahaspura in 2002 (Figure 15, top). From 2005, they rented the unit to an acquaintance who also wanted to move to Sahaspura from the Wanathamulla area for Rs 7000/month. They themselves rented a 300 sq. ft. dwelling unit in Sahaspura owned by their acquaintance for Rs 2500/month and made a profit of Rs 4500/month, which was the difference between the income from the rental of their home as described above (Figure 15, middle). Incidentally, the Neerasingha family (husband, wife, and their four children), who had rented a dwelling to Thresa's family, were to move to Sahaspura in 2002. However, they decided not to move into
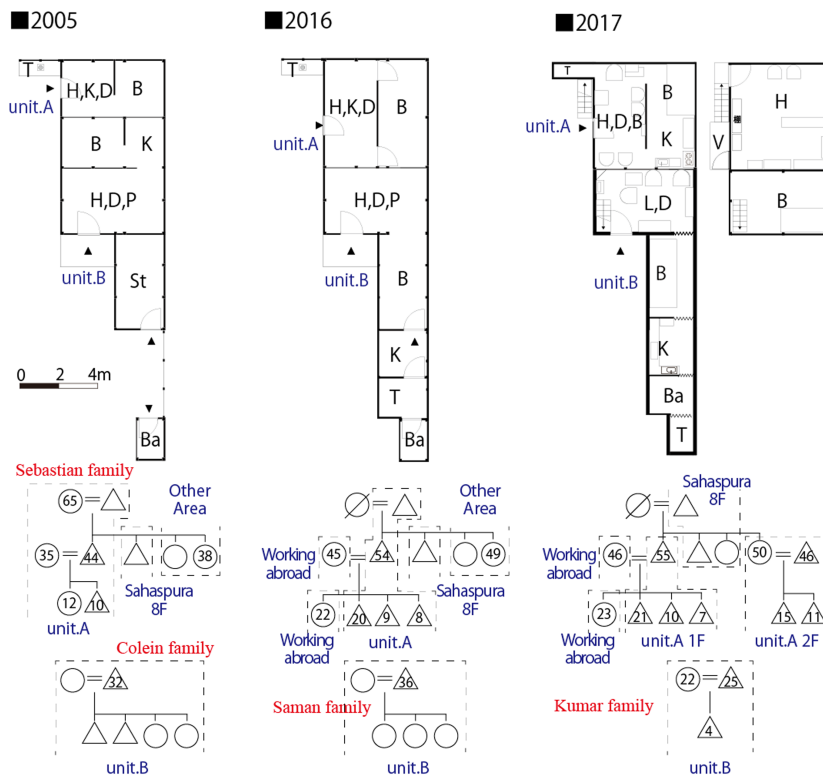
FIGURE 14. Use of multiple dwelling units

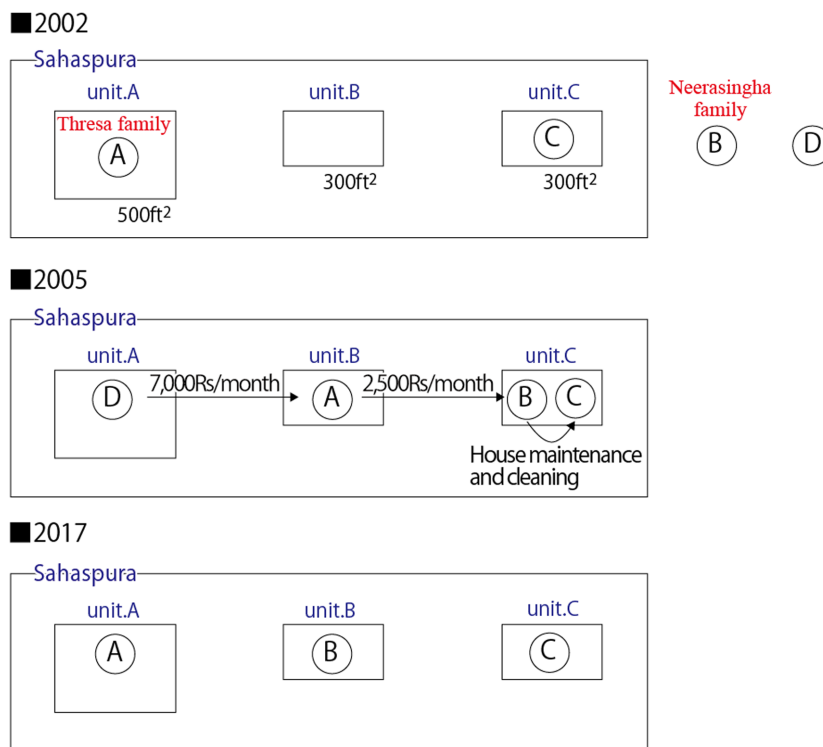**FIGURE 15.** Carrying around multiple dwelling units

Sahaspura for a while due to the death of her husband, the family breadwinner, in an accident, and during that time, they moved in with a friend in the Wanathamulla area (Figure 15, top). She then moved into her sister's dwelling in Sahaspura free of charge on the condition that she would clean the room on her sister's behalf. As a result, the Neerasingha family
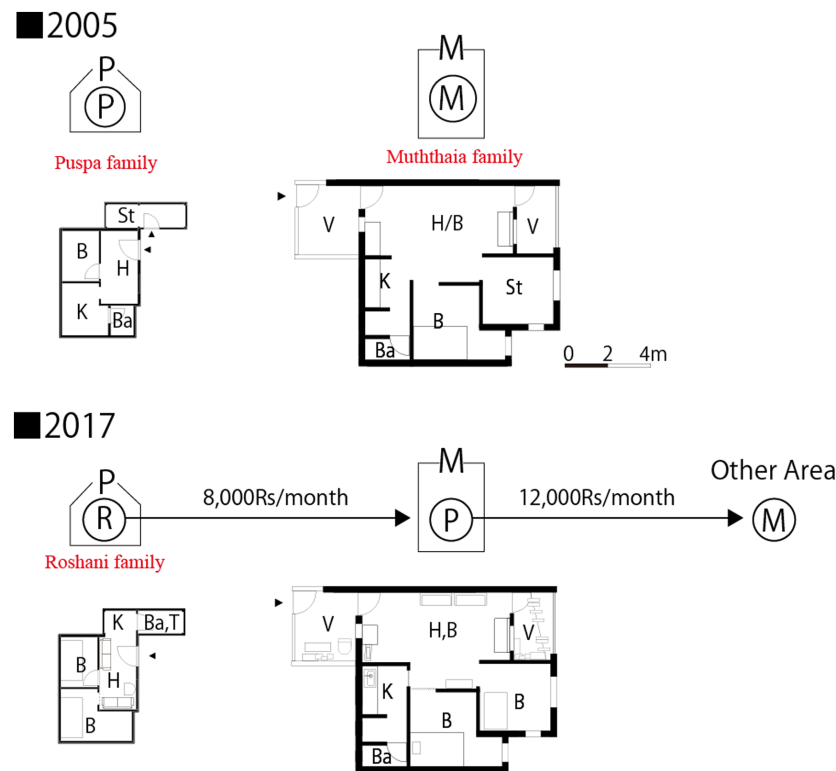
FIGURE 16. Moving out of the district by subletting dwelling units

benefited from a rental of Rs 2500/month (later increased to Rs 10 000/month) for their home to the Thresa family (Figure 15, middle). Subsequently, the Thresa family saved enough money to send their son abroad, and the Neerasingh family now live in their own units, as their children have grown up and obtained regular jobs (Figure 15, bottom).

3.2.5 Moving out of the district through subletting of dwellings

The Puspa family (couple and three children) lived in their own dwelling (15 sq. ft.) in Halgahakumbura but were considering moving to a larger dwelling as it had become too cramped with the birth and growth of their children. On the contrary, the Muththaia family (husband, wife, and four children) had moved into a dwelling (500 sq. ft. type) in Sahaspura from Panchikawatta, near the center of Colombo, but were considering moving out as they felt uncomfortable with having to move up and down by lift (Figure 16, above). Subsequently, the Puspa family was introduced to the Muththaia family through a broker and rented a dwelling unit in Sahaspura owned by Muththaia for Rs 12 000/month. The Puspa family was also introduced by the same broker to the Roshani family for Rs 8000/month, and the Puspa family was to benefit from the difference of Rs 4000/month. The Muththaia family moved out to other areas as they wished, using the income from the rental of their unit in Sahaspura (Figure 16, bottom).

3.2.6 Refusal of resettlement, return to previous place of residence

In Punchi Borella, some 80 houses had previously been demolished, and by August 2006, the number had been reduced to about 10. According to Jayaratha's family (husband and wife, husband's mother, son, and wife), who have lived in the area since around 1986, many houses were targeted for demolition

under the STP's plan and husband's brother-in-law and son-in-law's family was also targeted. Jayaratha's family was also targeted for relocation, but they could not come up with the Rs 25 000 to pay for administrative costs and decided against it. One of the conditions for moving into Sahaspura is the removal of the original house. However, the government does not manage the houses well, and in many cases, other families have built houses on the relocated sites and continue to use them. For example, the Kalaf family (husband and wife, husband's mother, and eldest son) bought a dwelling (400 sq. ft. type) in Sahaspura in 2002 for Rs 65 000 through a broker acquaintance but sold it the following year for Rs 300 000 and returned to Punchi Borella. He then moved from one rented house to another and rented his present house for Rs 5000/month for about five months. Derick's family (husband, wife, his wife's father, and two children) also moved into a dwelling (300 sq. ft. type) in Sahaspura in 2002, but as the rooms were too small for their business, they sold that and they moved to Punchi Borella. The Derick family separated from their son's family when they moved out of Sahaspura, and the son's family now lives in a rented house in Maradana, where they originally lived. The Derick family renovated the building and installed a large kitchen and kettle for making string hoppers (rice flour noodles) and selling the products made in their home at markets and on the street.

There are three types of housing in Panchikawatta: two-storey flats built by the government in 1979, barracks built by the residents themselves in the past, and barracks built recently by people who have returned from Sahaspura. The land is owned by the government and the residents of the flats still pay the same rent of Rs 35/month as they did when they were first built. The dwelling in Sahaspura has not been disposed of, and the husband's mother still lives there. The Mawatha family
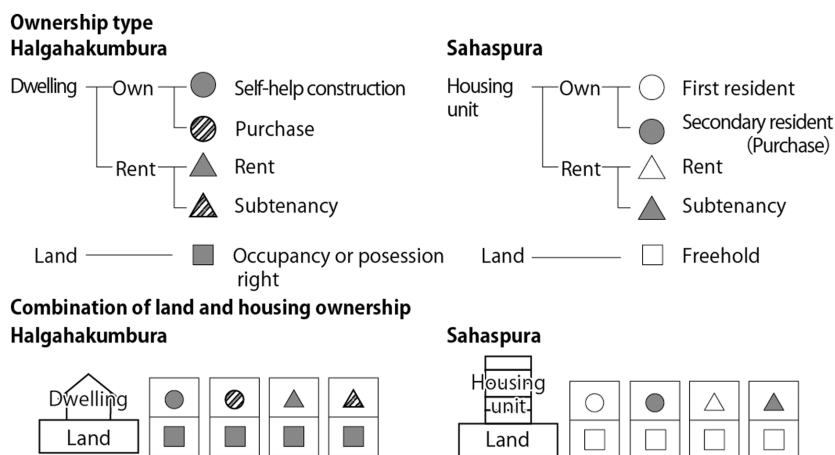
FIGURE 17. Classification of house and land ownership

(husband and wife, eldest son, five members of the eldest daughter's family, and six members of the second daughter's family), a large family with three households living together, refused to move to Sahaspura as they were only given one dwelling unit in the area. Remea's family (husband, wife, and eldest son) were abroad for work when the idea of relocating to Sahaspura came up. They wanted to move into Sahaspura after their return but were told that they would have to pay Rs 300 000 for this, so they decided against it. It is unclear from whom and how the amount of Rs 300 000 was requested.

4. The Relationship between Housing and Land Ownership and the Improvement of the Living Environment

4.1 Housing and land rights in informal areas

In Sri Lanka, as in the cities of many other developing countries, in addition to legal land tenure, various other forms of equivalent rights exist, and a large proportion of the urban population is said to live on land with complex and ambiguous rights relations.[17] The first form of title equivalent to legal land tenure is the title deed, which originated during British rule and is still widespread in urban areas of Sri Lanka [Note 15]. The title deeds provide evidence of a history of changes in land ownership but are only a record and do not guarantee exclusive rights like legal land ownership. Often, disputes arise when several owners claim rights to the same land based on a title deed. If this occurs, it quickly becomes difficult to enforce the rights. Next, there is documentation to prove possession of the land. In the 1970s and 1980s, when projects to improve the living environment in slums were promoted, the government issued a document called an enumeration card to prove that the slum people were in possession of the land. However, this document, too, was incomplete in guaranteeing rights and even weaker than the title deed mentioned above [Note 16]. Nevertheless, residents with these documents have access to public services such as water and electricity. Gunetillek et al. also point out the reality that houses and land are sold and bought through the transfer of enumeration cards, which function as de facto ownership [Note 17].

Of the districts surveyed, Halgahakumbura was originally a settlement that began as an illegal occupation of land. Residents now claim rights over the buildings/land they each use. When residents are asked whether they have ownership of their houses and land, they are often shown documents stating their permission to occupy. They bear the signatures of authorities, politicians, and lawyers. Although these rights are only a legal equivalent of ownership, they are the basis on which houses and land are actively sold and rented. In Sahaspura, on the contrary, the ownership of the dwelling given to the initial occupants is called freehold, which is a legally protected, legitimate right of ownership. However, as mentioned above, the sale and renting of dwelling units, which is normally prohibited, has been taking place in Sahaspura over time since its construction. REEL, the manager of Sahaspura, does not intervene in the secondary acquisition of dwelling units, and informal housing transactions are repeated between residents. The rights to the units in Sahaspura are complex and ambiguous as the units are passed on to people other than the original rights holders.

Figure 17 summarizes the relationship between the acquisition of housing by residents and the form of housing and land rights in the surveyed districts, based on the abovementioned realities: in Halgahakumbura, legally imperfect land rights function as "de facto ownership" among residents, and housing and land are bought, sold and rented. In Sahaspura, on the contrary, secondary house acquisitions occur as units pass from the original owner to the next acquirer, as the government's rules on housing transactions are broken by the residents.

4.2 Social relations that guarantee access to housing and land

It is not uncommon for houses and land to be traded in slums in developing countries, despite ownership rights not being based on law. In some cases, the acquisition of legal title by slum dwellers may even mean that they are at risk of being incorporated into the formal market, exposing them to excessive competition and the threat of eviction in the event of redevelopment projects, etc. Slum dwellers can establish housing and land transactions without legal ownership because of the existence of actors and social relations that guarantee access to land and housing on behalf of public actors.

Gunetillek and Dhammika and others have identified networks that support residents' activities in informal areas of Colombo [Note 18]. They can be organized into four categories.

4.2.1 Political networks

Political networks are the relationships between slum residents and politicians, the state and public administration (Colombo
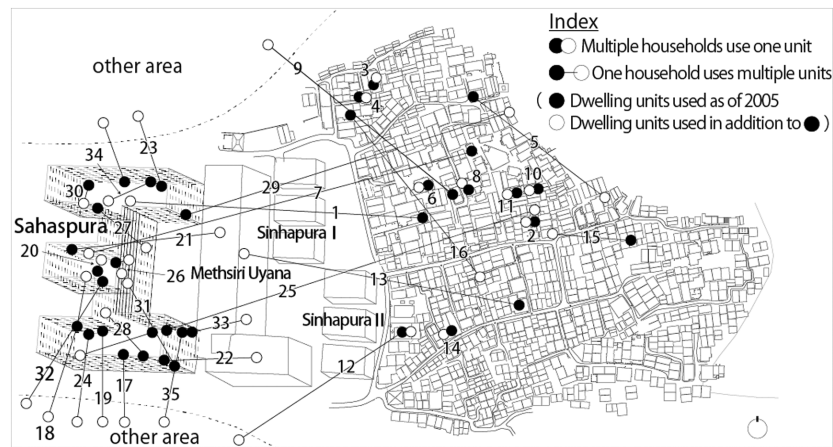
FIGURE 18.   Distribution of multiple dwelling units

City Hall), service providers, NGOs, and others. Politicians enable slum dwellers to access state and public services by facilitating land occupation permits, provision of toilets, water supply, construction of meeting places and sports grounds, etc. Political networks are the most important and influential relations in improving the slum environment, but they are often used to solve personal rather than local issues, leading to conflicts between residents.[18]

4.2.2   Institutional networks
Institutional networks are the most formalized relationships in the slum. Due to the legal challenges and resource constraints faced by the local administration in improving the slum environment, the administration has established partnerships with government agencies such as the Water Board and UDA, international aid agencies such as UNICEF and local NGOs, etc. In improving the living conditions in Halgahakumbura, Colombo city worked with Sevanatha, a Colombo-based NGO, and developed networks with the UDA, the Water Authority, district community councils, relevant politicians, and others.

4.2.3   Livelihood networks
Livelihood networks are personal relationships created through work and employment. Slum dwellers may work as housekeepers, mechanics, etc. for people who influence policy and public works. Connections with influential people can consequently be a means of resisting pressure such as evictions.[18] In addition, "brokers" often intervene regarding housing and land transactions. They are familiar with the situation in informal areas and bring owners and prospective buyers/tenants together and receive a commission when a deal is concluded.

4.2.4   Social networks
Social networks include family and relatives, friends, ethnic and religious groups, etc., which provide both physical and financial security in the lives of the inhabitants. Regarding geographical relations, neighborhood groups are often referred to as "wattas" in Sri Lanka. Especially in urban areas such as Colombo, people of the same ethnicity, religion, occupation, caste, etc. form wattas (watta means "garden" in Sinhalese) as relatively small neighborhoods of 30 to 50 households. Some residents of Sahaspura may continue to have relationships with people from the same previous watta or those who remained in the previous watta after relocation.

4.3   Actual conditions of use of multi-family and multi-unit dwellings
As discussed in Chapter 3, the inhabitants of the study area have repeatedly extended and renovated their dwellings and conducted housing and land transactions among themselves, responding flexibly to changes in the number of family members living with them and changes in their livelihoods. Figure 18 shows the distribution of the split-use of dwellings and the use of multiple dwellings. In Halgahakumbura, where there is some spatial space around the houses, there are cases of multiple households using the same house (nine cases in total) by extending and renovating the house or splitting the dwellings. In Sahaspura, on the contrary, there is almost no room for expanding living space by extending and renovating dwellings. Therefore, there are cases of people acquiring new dwellings in addition to their original dwellings and using more than one dwelling. These additional dwellings included other dwellings in Sahaspura (nine in total), in Halgahakumbura (two) and even outside the district (eight in total). Incidentally, a high-rise housing complex (called Methsiri Uyana) for low-income people, also resettled, has been built to the east of Sahaspura, and the additional housing includes these units; Halgahakumbura residents have acquired units in Sahaspura and Shinhapura (three cases in total). Thus, in addition to the dwellings in Sahaspura, the use of multiple dwellings has occurred, including dwellings in the surrounding area.

A total of 40 cases were found where several households used the same housing unit. In 33 of these cases, all or part of the living space (kitchen) was shared. Furthermore, in 32 of the 33 cases, the households sharing the living space were relatives. On the contrary, two of the seven cases where the living space was completely divided were with non-relatives. Note that the cases judged as "divided" were those where each household had its own kitchen. As mentioned earlier, among Sinhalese and Tamils, there is a custom of dividing the kitchen even between the parent and child households. However, due to economic circumstances and space constraints, joint use as described above is unavoidable. Muslims, on the contrary, tend to form large families and all living space in the house was shared.

Figure 19 shows the actual situation of multiple dwelling use and the actors and social relations that enabled access to rights when acquiring a dwelling: residents in Halgahakumbura (many of whom have lived there for a relatively long time)
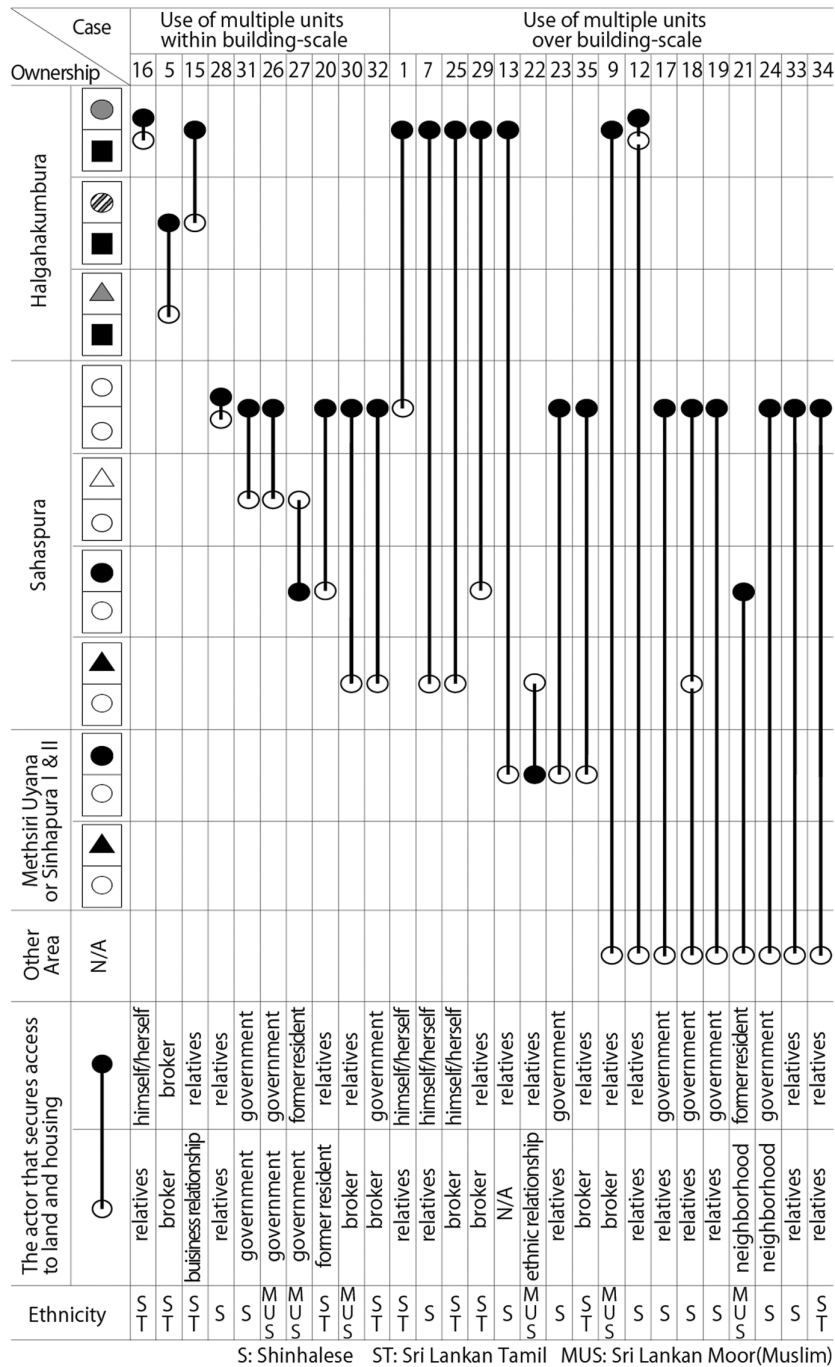
FIGURE 19. Use of multiple dwelling units and social relationships

first acquired a dwelling by themselves (occupation of land, self-help construction of a dwelling: cases 1, 7, 16, 25). In Sahaspura, in 2005, soon after the construction was completed, the acquisition of a dwelling unit was done by the government (compensation for eviction: cases 23, 26, 31, 32, etc.) or by relatives (living with the parent's household, transfer from the parent: cases 20, 26, 31, 32, etc.). After 2005, there was an increasing variation in the actors guaranteeing access to new housing and land use. The first is the "brokers," who are often well-informed and trusted residents of the neighborhood. They search for vacant buildings and land on behalf of their clients and mediate negotiations between owners and clients (e.g., cases 5, 30, 32, 25). Secondly, there are relatives, whose

children marry and move to the family home of the marriage partner when the household separates, or live in housing provided by the parents (e.g., cases 1, 7, 12, 28). Third, cases were identified where the householder, who has an employer and employs a housekeeper or mechanic, buys and gives a house in the district (case 15). Fourth, there are neighborhood relationships in previous settlements: Some residents of Sahaspura continue to associate with residents who refused to move to Sahaspura and remained in their original places, and through their introductions acquire houses and land in their previous settlements (cases 21, 24). Fifth, there are ethnic networks, especially among Muslims, who may assist with housing and household goods through their temple and believer networks

(case 22). These networks also seem to function in providing shelter and supplies in the event of a disaster.

5. Conclusion

A survey in Wanathamulla district, where the Sahaspura is located, some 15 years after its construction, revealed the following realities. First, a certain number of households in both existing slums (Halgahakumbura) and Sahaspura in the district are below the criteria for "overcrowding" or well below the average income, indicating that the problems of overcrowding and poverty still exist and are further deepening. On the contrary, particularly in Sahaspura since 2006, there has been an influx of households that fall into the middle-income bracket and households with a different history of resettlement from the slums of the urban centers. This reveals that, in Sahaspura in particular, the income disparity between residents is widening and that the population is becoming increasingly mixed, with residents from different backgrounds.

The diversity of the inhabitants can also be seen in their actions to improve their living environment, and how they "accept" the housing "ladder" given to them by these actions. In other words, the housing improvement actions intervene in various ways and reflect housing needs in relation to the "ladder" of Sahaspura. People who "stay" on the "ladder" by extending and renovating their dwellings or rotating multiple dwellings; people who "climb" the ladder by acquiring funds for their next home through inter-dwelling transactions; and people who "get off" the ladder by using transactions to return to their former place of residence, or who stay in their former place of residence and do not "climb" the ladder. Factors such as the loose management of Sahaspura dwellings and projects to improve the living environment in existing slums, in addition to internal factors such as changes in the family structure and lifestyle of the residents, restrictions imposed by housing structures and the needs of different ethnic and religious groups, are involved in the various forms of acceptance. Among these, the various forms of housing and land rights in the district were analyzed in more detail, as they were considered to provide the residents with an environment conducive to the abovementioned practices.

The study organized the diverse and complex forms of rights that have historically been formed in the city of Colombo, including the districts under study, and which do not depend solely on formal property rights guaranteed by law. In addition, the study focused on the actors and social relations that guarantee access to rights, and from the combination of these actors and rights forms, the background to the diverse "acceptance" of the abovementioned people was grasped. As a result, it became clear that the "ladder" of Sahaspura, which was provided as a set of formal ownership and dwelling units, became part of a system that could be described as a hybrid of ownership and various actors and relations without legal security that originally existed in the district, and became an object of secondary transactions among the residents. This is a result of the acceptance of the housing "ladder" by the population, which has been "transformed," rather than realizing the objective of the government, as the provider, to bring the population into the formal housing market and join the "mainstream" of society by granting them formal ownership rights and social status. The results show that the "ladder" as a basis for the governmental goals has been "transformed."

Among the Sahaspura people, there is currently a concept of "ownership" shared through their social relations,

and housing and land transactions in their own market, in line with their relationships, are based on such "de facto tenure." Such transactions in the housing market, which can be described as indigenous, can respond quickly to the detailed needs of the people and, unlike the formal housing market, which is an endless nexus based on the principles of capital and competition, appears to be rooted in the relationships of the slum people and within their means.

Thus, the reality of the transformation of the "ladder" through people's acts of improving their living environment and the formation of an indigenous housing market that is not based solely on formal property rights was revealed. These realities are suggestive in exploring the compatibility of the two positions of "emphasis on market principles and rationalization of land use" and "people's rights and residential welfare," and in discussing the future direction of slum resettlement. For policymaking and planning academics, it is essential to first acknowledge the existence of such a hybrid, indigenous housing market, which is the starting point for discussion. In the past, slum clearance measures have taken the form of regularization of tenure security, which is based on the existing relationship between people and land. On the contrary, how can tenure security be achieved based on people's resettlement and their relationship with new land? The key issue is how to create a situation where multiple tenures are stacked, as we have seen in this paper. In the case of Sahaspura, the unique factors that resulted in the stacking of tenure include (i) a location that is not too far from urban areas and living facilities; (ii) loose management that allows residents to intervene to improve their living environment; (iii) the existence and possibility of choice among multiple forms of housing and land ownership and housing forms; and (iv) the existence of social relations that guarantee access to housing and land.

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Disclosure

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Data Availability Statement
Research data are not shared.

Notes

Note 1) See reference [4], pp. 55–56 and reference [6], pp. 177–178.

Note 2) Reference [5] is of the view that many residents of Sahaspura perceive that their lives have "improved," based on an understanding of the actual situation in the housing complexes where they were resettled (including Sahaspura) and in the previous slums. Here, "improved livelihoods" refers to the private use of infrastructure (water, toilets, etc.), permanent housing structures, the acquisition of legal land tenure that ensures individual and family privacy and a life free from the interference of neighbors, as well as freedom from the social stigma of being a "slum dweller" (Reference [5, p. 4]).

Note 3) Reference [5, p. 93].

Note 4) In the 1960s, when slums were widely studied, Stokes argued that there were two types of slums: "slums of hope" and "slums of despair." In the former, many of the inhabitants regard the slum as a

transitional settlement, marginalized but optimistic about the future, believing that they will eventually enjoy urban life as legitimate citizens. In the latter category, many inhabitants are pessimistic, as they consider the slum to be their destination and have resigned themselves to the fact that they have nowhere else to go. Regarding the location trends of these two types of slums, some studies have pointed out that the former type is relatively newly formed in the peri-urban areas, while the latter type has formed and remained in the urban centers Reference [19].

Note 5) Reference [6, p. 21].

Note 6) Reference [6, pp. 190–191].

Note 7) Reference [8, pp. 40–41].

Note 8) Reference [8, pp. 43–44].

Note 9) The emphasis is not only on the distinction between whether the right of possession is legal or illegal, but also on the distinction between how people perceive and accept their rights (Reference [13, p. 16]). De facto tenure security refers to substantial control over land and housing, with or without legal tenure security (de jure tenure security), and formed by factors such as length of occupation, social legitimacy, and involvement of community organizations (Reference [14, p. 2]). Where there is sufficient security of de facto ownership, the grant of titling is not always necessary. On the contrary, it has been noted that the granting of tenure can even reduce tenure security by increasing the vulnerability of poor people to forced evictions and market-driven development (Reference [13, p. 16]). It is also pointed out that security of tenure is not achieved through the granting of tenure alone, but in combination with other means, such as infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity, and services for urban living, and that local communities can control the land market themselves, for example through social relations with brokers who give legitimacy to land transactions (Reference [13, pp. 16–17]).

Note 10) Of the 556 households, 48 have water connections to their homes, while the remaining 508 households share eight water taps in the settlement. 168 households have private latrines, while the rest use communal latrines in the settlement.

Note 11) In order of priority for resolution of housing environment problems, the following were listed in order of priority: lack of land ownership, lack of water distribution facilities (sewage treatment, flood control), lack of door-to-door taps, poor road conditions (pavements, lack of access roads), lack of door-to-door toilets, lack of postal services, power lines close to the ground, illegal construction activities, and lack of unity among the residents. Other problems mentioned included lack of refuse collection services, high unemployment and underemployment rates among residents and lack of financial support for improving the living environment.

Note 12) Sahaspura (14 stories, 671 dwellings) was completed in 2001. Subsequently, the existing flats were demolished on the land to the east of Sahaspura, and the first phase of Shinhapura (5 stories, 60 dwellings) was completed in 2007 and the second phase of Shinhapura (5 stories, 60 dwellings) in 2011.

Note 13) Although the maximum height of housing complexes for low-income residents in Sri Lanka used to be four to five stories, starting with Sahaspura, high-rise housing complexes of 10 or more stories were constructed and planned at six locations in the city. The plan was to gradually relocate 6273 households living in USSs in the city, but the project was suspended due to the civil war between the government and the Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that had been going on since the 1980s. The plan was then resumed after the end of the civil war in 2009.

Note 14) The periods were as follows: first phase: August 15–18, 2005, August 28-September 4, 2005, and August 14–16, 2006; second phase: March 13–21, 2016, and July 19-August 3, 2017. The first phase was conducted by the author and one postgraduate student, the second phase by the author and two postgraduate students, and the interviews were assisted (Sinhala and English interpretation) by students from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Moratuwa.

Note 15) Reference [20, p. 75].

Note 16) Reference [20, pp. 75–76].

Note 17) Reference [18, pp. 42–43].

Note 18) Reference [18, pp. 55–59] and Reference [8, pp. 34–45].

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