

## **LANKA LEARNING CENTER**

### **An Education and Meeting Centre in Parangiyamadu (District Kiran), Sri Lanka**

The idea for an Education and Meeting Centre originated through a cooperation with the aid organisation S.T.E.P.S. e.V. from Greifswald, and its partner organisation People Helping People Foundation from Sri Lanka and the Institut für Raumkonzeptionen und Grundlagen des Entwerfens (Prof. Markus Allmann).

The goal was to create a place where disadvantaged children of different ethnic and religious affiliations can come together through various communal educational and sporting activities, and thus to make a better future possible.

The essential departure point for the development of the Centre was an interdisciplinary place study with a workshop in Sri Lanka organised and carried out by the students with 80 participants. Those involved – such as children and youths, parents, teachers as well as representatives from the educational system and representatives of all resident religions – had the opportunity to express their views and wishes for the “Lanka Learning Centre” in open working groups.

The result is a Centre, constituting a mix of school, job-centre, adult education, and community centre. The following activity rooms and operations should be made possible:  
**for children** – a free offer of educational advancement, sports area for different sports uses.  
**for youths / young adults** – state accredited career courses and life orientation advice  
**for parents** – psychological help and adult educational classes for widows and single women  
**for all** – cross community peace work across all barriers of society and a yearly childrens festival with approx. 2500 children from all denominations and ethnicities from the whole of Sri Lanka.

The site of the Lanka Learning Centre is situated about 2km from the eastern Sri Lankan coastline. All buildings are located around a circular central courtyard, which acts as a room of open possibilities (playspace, event area, fairground) in the middle of the conglomeration. A continuous wall marks the spatial boundary, creating a linear interplay of internal rooms to the inside with interstitial spaces outside, and generates a protective enclosure for the whole complex.

The methods of construction take local possibilities into account and connect with the learned knowledge of the craftsmen. A concrete frame construction with continuous ring beams provides the necessary earthquake protection and forms a secure framework for the infill of traditionally produced brickwork. Robust, locally sourced building materials make a fundamental contribution to a practical and sustainable compound, where no large follow-up costs are entailed. Building elements should be easily repaired or replaced without requiring previous knowledge.

In order to optimise the climatic precondition, the whole building complex is kept as open and porous as possible. Special ventilation openings in the walls are generously proportioned with lamellae and all roofs raised with as large a clearance as possible to the external walls, thus maximising air circulation throughout the building.