

"ARCHITECTURE AS A SOCIO- SPATIAL PROCESS: "
A STUDY OF PERTINENT QUALITATIVE ATTRIBUTES TO FACILITATE
THE PUBLIC DOMAIN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
SRI LANKAN URBAN STREET.

A Dissertation presented to the
 Faculty of architecture,
 University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
 As a partial fulfillment of the
 M.Sc (Architecture) final examination

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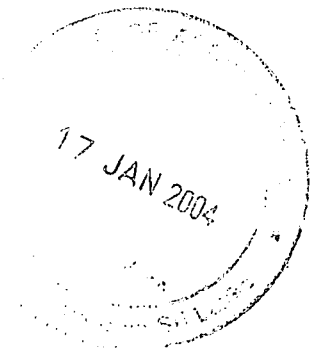
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JANUARY 2004



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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgements are made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.



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ABSTRACT

Architecture is an unavoidable art. Every time we captured, enclosed, and experience the space, Architecture happens. So, throughout the civilization, we are constantly participating to the endless process of Architecture.

This process of Architecture is the Socio- Spatial process. It is the most fundamental basis for the all spatial creations of the man. (fromdwelling up to the cityscape/ Geography)



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We as individually and collectively part of this process which happens every time in every where. Yet the 'collection' is the most important, being the ultimate context of our existence. In this social, spatial process the urban public domain is the most crucial. The good or badness of the public Architecture, ultimately affects on every individual.

This good or badness is determined by 'Architectural qualities' of a particular space/ place. So this study is an attempt to identify, the Architectural qualities and their applications on the urban public domain, specially referring to the urban street, which is the most fundamental urban element.



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY PREMISE

"...Architecture is the process and the product of human Habitation."

Habraken (1983)

Architectural product is a spatial entity, created by comprehensively interrelated spaces. Man's environment / surrounding space, helps him to orientate himself in the earth. Man experiences his life within the context of that environment. As architecture an art of space making it creates the space, to happen all individual and social activities. So architecture is not only determine human behavior, but also is a co-production of both human action and thought. It provides meaningful experiences, relationships helping man to connect himself to the environment and help to dwell on earth.

The spatial arrangement of the built environment or the architecture, deals with the social dimensions and interrelationships of the characteristics of the people who build, use and value, that environment. As a creation of the man, this spatial fabric is produced and conditioned by different **social** procedures/patterns. At the same time, the form of the space, once built, can adjust and change upon the way these procedures continuing. So the man is recreated by the **space/spatial** patterns. This two way process between **architecture and society**, which this study is based on, happens continuously and thus **the architectural product is a result of long human habitation.**

Within this social spatial process, the result; architecture appears giving certain **character** to the place. It compounds with social and spatial characteristics, which one can perceive as architectural qualities of the place. So the power of architecture in a place is determine by the degree of the quality of each attribute (**qualitative attributes**) in there.

The socio- spatial process happens both in micro and macro levels, as individuals and in the whole society. Identifiable two categories as **private domain and public domain**, form in this social spatial process. These two

cannot be taken in separation, because they bound to each other and one facilitate and justifies to the existence of the other.

Among them public **domain** is the most significant in the socio-spatial fabric. That is where the drama of communal life unfolds. It is a dynamic space, which allow movement and interaction among the public. So it can be identify as a place where, Architecture - the socio spatial process happens in so powerfully.

Streets are most significant component in the public realm. In this study it take as in special reference to examine the socio- spatial relationship. Streets act as linking spaces of a urban space. It is a place for interaction, communication, transportation and so many other communal and individual needs. In this study streets would be taken as an architectural entity with identifiable architectural qualities, according to the argument formed; the socio- spatial process.

Sri Lankan urban street is significant, as its significant urban situation, which is, based on its social, cultural, political reasons. Architectural qualities of the Sri Lankan urban street seems to be less noticeable today, poor attention given to the inherent social spatial relationship in the manipulating of such spaces. So today this Sri Lankan urban streets get detached from its users because the architectural product in there, has been enforce to users and it is not facilitate to its human habitation.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Man as a social animal exists in relation to one another. They make relationships to exist in the act of living with one another and with the physical environment. So architecture has the most significant role to play, because it creates the 'space' and 'place' to happen this in macro and micro context. As indicate in above the public realm is the most significant in that process.

It is in the urban public spaces, a good amount of time is spent of the people. Specially urban dwellers spend more time in urban public spaces such as streets, parks, playgrounds, markets etc by working, traveling eating,

relaxing etc. These can be say as very dynamic spaces which the communal life takes place and are accessible to all.

Among them streets are very significant almost all communities. Because it signifies the movement, extension and growth of the world around man. They direct us from place to place. Constantly it is apart of mans existence and a 'place' of being. Urban street is a place where the social-spatial relationship (and thus architecture) takes place constantly. Then it becomes impertinent to identify attributes, which determine the qualities of such a place.

Today it seems to be that street has become less integral part of mans urban lives. Today we concern it as a purely 'utilitarian object' and we have been neglecting the street experiences from our lives. Even in the Sri Lankan situation that is true.

That is because the spatial patterns are not facilitating to the human habitation. So that the socio- spatial relationship not take place in streets properly. So the social and spatial patterns will divorced from each other and that will effect to the all social, physical and psychological processes. Then the meaning and the sense of belonging is loss there. So to day we are fast loosing our attachment and sensitivity to the urban street. . It ultimately leads to create disorientation in people.

The reason may be, to day in most occasions architecture has bee reduce to utilitarian, economic and aesthetic values. Designers less awareness of architectural and urban design fundamentals, which are facilitating to the socio- special process may be the problem exists at present in this context. It also may be due to the attitude to neglect or the inability to recognize the importance of this socio – specials relationship may be the cause.

On the other hand inappropriate coping from the West, which are having very different socio spatial basis, can be seen, as a big problem exists in today.

Sadly ... external materialistic forces such as economic and political powers seems to be caused to get out of the focus of designers. Poverty may be the prominent reason in that aspect. The rapid population

growth, activities increased after the industrial revolution specially in developing countries seems to be challenging in a one particular situation. They had gained negative aspects leads the present day places, rapidly in to "similar standardization" and it had effect to lost the identity of streets.

So its time to look at Architecture, as a social spatial process which facilitates the public domain. Also must concern the possible architectural qualitative attributes in that respect.

THE INTENTION OF THE STUDY

The intention of this study is to identify the qualitative attributes in an architectural viewpoint, which are facilitating to the socio- spatial process of the public domain. And to find out how it applies to streets. Then, how those have been changed in the contemporary Sri Lankan situation and why.

In there, the architectural viewpoint will form within a socio-spatial perspective. The study will attempt to find out how these architectural qualitative attributes are link with the social- spatial process. The urban street will be identified as an important element of the public life of the man. Then will discuss how these qualitative attributes are reflect in the urban street.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The subject area, selected to study is more qualitative and experiential. It has comparatively little weighting on quantitative analyze. Since the study is focus on the social, spatial qualities, still there is a physical aspect.

So the first phase of the study reviews 'Architecture' as a derivative of socio- spatial relationship. It defines architecture and will discuss the socio spatial process as an interpretation of architecture. The way this socio- spatial process generates, the architectural characteristics and qualitative attributes will be discuss. In there various theoretical arguments and definitions will review to derive; 'character', 'characteristics', and 'qualities'

At the end conclusions will be drawn out of the facts that be observed. in each of the example studies and in some theoretical backgrounds will get in to conclusion.

In order to identify the architectural qualitative attributes in urban street, in the second phase of the study, importance of the public domain, and how the urban space is significant in that aspect will be consider. The element of street, and its significance in urban space need to be study in there. The nature of the socio- spatial process (as the basis for the qualitative attributes), both in the urban situation and respect to the urban street need to consider too.

In the third phase, the study will generally specify in respect to the urban street. Its social spatial characteristics and the application of qualitative attributes have to broadly discussed in there. Then in order to examine a wide range of streets a theoretical basis for case studies; a calcification of streets will be introduce there.

In the last phase, few Sri Lankan urban streets hope to be studied as example studies. In reference to their social-spatial characteristics and degree of qualitative attributes application in the practical situation in Sri Lanka.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to examine mainly a small number of situations in the local urban context. The study will mainly focused to identify the curtail issues and factors determine the architectural qualities of the urban street. Factors like politics will not get in to comprehensive analysis, although they are largely contributes to the socio- spatial process.

Factors like environmental issues, technical, historical are playing a crucial role in this aspect, but focus given in this study is very little in such issues.

The study has mainly done in an observation basis; hence it may result of a personal bias. Also the time had given and the lack of sources in available for the study, was a limitation to achieve a more refine product.