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CONCLUSION

Human need is the cause for all buildings from single cells to entire cities. We are social animals and our nature and our psyche are as important as our physical needs when it comes to requirements for built provisions. Man as a living being , requires certain needs to be satisfied in order to survive in the environment . They can be analysed as physical and psychological needs. Habitability of such environments depends on its capacity to cater for these deeper needs of man kind. In the same way , habitability of an environment is a variable, within given cultural , spatial and time parameters . Therefore habitability is a quality of an environment which can be achieved with specific conditions of culture, space and time.

Towns and cities are strategic places around which the human habitations revolves . The habitability in towns comprises the sum of all encounters , relationships and experiences with other people during the course of the day. Well being arises from " connections" that are satisfying and enjoyable that affirms persons as individuals and as members of a community. A habitable city provides occasions and spaces for such good experiences to occur .Towns are composed with a collection of spaces. Centre is the main space at the heart of that collection. If the centre is thoughtfully designed to generate and sustain life, it would affect the habitability of the entire form. This study was carried out along this line of thought.

The study is mainly focussed on the qualitative attributes which deals with the psychological aspect of the habitability. The perception of the environment is directly a consequence of its physical organization. It is the psychological interpretation of the experienced built environment by the man kind. Therefore the qualitative attributes gained from this composition of physical organization can influence the psychological comfort through the sensible imagination. Quantitative attributes also effect the habitability of a town centre to a grater

extent. They are physical and there are limitless possibilities to improve them. But these were not considered within our scope.

Habitability is the complex phenomenon which depends on the capability of a person to sense and perceive a particular space. This is a personal factor which varies from person to person and the other changing parameters may be responsible for that. Hence one cannot spell out universally acceptable whole to design a habitable space.

But as architects it is possible to discuss how a particular space could be designed to give a potential of evoking a connectedness between itself and its inhabitants. As the approach to designing of such places without a firm basis would lead to placeless places which far from giving healthy psychological satisfaction. Hence the notion of "placemaking" was used to derive a set of factors which can be used as a criterion in designing a habitable space. They were identified as qualities of High imageability and Meanings associated of an environment.

The following are the main design principles which was identified in this study that could be used to create such highly imageable and meaningful town centres. Firstly, the connection between the meaning (function) of the town and its main centre must be given consideration. Different towns are assigned with different functions to perform. These functions bring meaning to the town and they are captured by the inhabitants. Town centre must reflect this meaning. When there are more than one centre available in the town, the hierarchical order should be considered. On top of it is the main climax centre, which reflects the assigned meaning of the town. Other centres or supportive needs should be organized in such a way that they help the climax centre to perform its duty. What is important here is to organise these centres and nodes within a walkable distance with each other.

Secondly , imageability of the town centre must be concerned. A highly imageable built fabric should be created to represent the meaning of the town. A clear image emerges when the town is seen as a whole and its structure comprises a point of orientation or reference as in an 'axis mundi' from which the structure can be assembled. In this case the town centre and its central elements and spaces act for this. This is further aided by a definite enclosure and proximity created by the built mass and a definite edge of bounded building surfaces. When the town center corresponds to this structure, the image formed has a morphological sense. But when the buildings do not relate to the edge or if the edge is broken too frequently or the buildings fail to form an enclosure and are arbitrarily scattered , the image evoking capacity of the central space reduces the importance of easily identifying places and integrating them into strong mental images is that it allows people to function effectively. That is , a strong sense of place supports our sense of personal identity and provides a source of emotional security, pleasure and understanding.



Thirdly, life of the town centre must also be considered . Town centre should have an ability to generate and sustain life. For this purpose it should have a certain quality or a potential to build up a relationship or connectedness with its inhabitants . This quality is identified as personalization. In urban centres , personalization is directly determined by the variety provided by the three dimensional space and the physical and psychological demarcation of the territory. Personalization is closely associated with privacy, security etc. But in urban context , these two qualities can be ignored and what should be considered are territoriality and variety. Although these two qualities were discussed separately, they are very much interconnected. People demarcate their territory either physically or psychologically. But in the urban public situations it is more related to the psychological side. Urban centres conducive to public life should provide spaces which has a potential for such demarcations.

Both static and moving conditions of a territoriality should be considered for the design of a habitable town centre. In order to give a territorial feeling, the constituents of the town centre should be detailed according to the human scale and proportion. It is directly proportionate with the number of people who occupy the space. Vividness or the variety of the environment gives people a greater choice to personalize the town centre. In the design process this vividness can be created by means of function and the texture. For functional variety, the relationship between the centres and their hierarchy should be taken into account. For textural variety, the designers should pay their attention to the smaller constituents of the different layers of the space. It brings down the scale and proportion of the public space to a perceivable human scale.

For the creation of new towns also, these design principals are applicable. But here the theoretical question that there are no meanings in the new town must be classified. It is true that new towns do not have major history evolved through time. But there may be special assigned meanings for new towns, generated from the specific purpose for which they are designed. Coupled with the high imageable built fabric, these assigned meanings can generate habitable new towns. But new towns, as it is mostly experienced in Sri Lanka, always seem to be dead places. Lack of imageable strong built fabric, improperly connected nodes, lack of life generating factors can be seen as prime causes for this failure. However other than these qualitative aspects there may be some quantitative problems such as inadequate infrastructure, weak economic and social structure etc. as some important secondary causes for this problem in new towns. As the study is mainly focussed on the qualitative attributes of the habitability, further studies should be done on this quantitative aspects of the habitability of towns.

Urban places and urban living can be changed from community to community depending on their socio-cultural differences. This cultural authenticity of the urbanity was not discussed in this study. Our attempt is a broad based one to

identify important principles of designing habitable town centres. But their application to a particular community and locality needs deeper involvement of the cultural undercurrents of that society. This is mainly important in defining the parameters for the personalisation of spaces and creating potential spaces for that. Therefore, the study of it's findings must be suitably re-interprited for each given projects of town centre designs. Perhaps further studies based on same line of thought and different cultural groups and localities must be encouraged.

Today, most of the architects and urban designers are accustomed to look at the artifact rather than at the life force which generated the artefact. Thus most town and city centres have their own share of high prestige but do not meet the community needs. Thus it is clear that built environment cannot be concerned only with building individual blocks considering the scientific and technical aspects , but that emphasis should be laid on the human factor too, in the creation of a habitable town centre.



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