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**SOCIAL MALAISE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON  
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

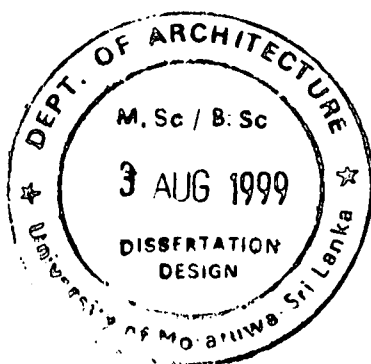
**A study of public housing in Colombo**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Moratuwa  
As a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science in Architecture**



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**B.H.M.P. WIJESINGHE**  
Department of Architecture  
University of Moratuwa

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## ABSTRACT

Cities are in the threat due to dissolute behaviour of its occupants. Social Malaise, one of those is observed mostly in urban neighbourhoods. Stress and frustration is believed to be one of the major causes of social malaise that emerge as a result of social, economic and environmental conflicts in the urban environment. Whatever the cause, the result comes out either as emotional or behavioural reactions. Social malaise, in this study is identified as behavioural reactions against (a) individuals (e.g. theft, robbery etc.) and (b) the built environment (e.g. Vandalism, graffiti etc.) Several scholars have attributed such behaviour to poor settlement planning and building design. According to Newman (1973), anonymity, lack of surveillance and presence of alternative escape routes of space are vital in deterring offences against the people and the built environment. He called these characteristics as essential qualities of a 'Defensible Space'. This study examines the notion of 'Defensible Space' with reference to the built environment of public housing in Colombo. In this endeavour, the first chapter deals with different theories related to social malaise and the built environment, thus preparing the theoretical base for the rest of the study. The second chapter deals with offences against the built environment, its motives and meanings giving emphasis on the destructive behaviour of people. The third chapter deals with the existing spatial and environmental approaches for the prevention of social malaise and vandalism. The latter part of the study concentrates on the findings and analysis of a field research, conducted in 38 public housing schemes in Colombo and two case studies done in Jumma Masjid and Maligawatta Housing Schemes. This reveals that design disadvantages as well as social aspects are having positive correlation between the offences against the built environment. Finally the study pinpoints these disadvantages in residential design, and forwards a set of guidelines that would assist the architects and planners to prevent such problems in the design of housing neighbourhoods in the future.

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