

The Impact of Urban Morphological Transformation on Legibility of Old Neighbourhoods with Special Reference to Old Colombo-Kandy Main Road in Mawanella

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Mawanella is a small suburb in Sri Lanka that has been developed as a transitional town since the colonial period. The historical layers of the town were reflected as traditional buildings on either side of the old Colombo-Kandy main road. The development of road widening projects resulted in drastic changes to the existing urban form and many old settlements were erased by uncontrollable development, practiced during the last 20 years. The study explores how the gradual changes in urban morphology impact on legibility of older neighbourhoods, considering Mawanella as a model case. The literature review synthesised the parameters such as the pattern of urban morphology, serial vision along the main artery and the façade articulation to study the transformation of the city form. The methodology was adopted to identify the aspects that contribute to the city's identity, how the urban morphology has been transformed over the last 20 years and how it impacts city legibility through visual survey and a perception study. The research confirmed that people were strongly attached with the old city elements and the unique morphology of the old neighbourhood which visually and physically contributed to achieve the city legibility though currently, it was unable to gain through the modernised environment. The outcomes of the study were formed as an urban design toolkit, to be used for future developments of older neighbourhoods.

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