Chapter Three
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3.0: Negombo City—an analysis of the city form and its Transformation

Negombo is a city which has a long history and it is interesting to note the evolution of the city form which has occurred due to the impacts of social and cultural changes happening in the area throughout a long period of time. Therefore, this situation is an important aspect to study and analyse for it would provide vital clues to understanding the city better.

After studying the transformation from time to time the major transformation could be observed from one era to another. These changes occurred in the city form and has affected every component of the city. This transformation can be further described as an outward urban growth of the city, movement of the commercial center from one place to another, haphazard developments, urban infills and demolitions within the old monuments, and the change of the activities within the city.

When analysing the changes which occurred, it is important to study every component of the city form from one era to another.

3.1 The Physical fabric
The character of the physical fabric had been changed from one period to another.

3.1.1: First settlement of Negombo

When studying the first settlement the indicates that the settlement grouped in three areas. But it does not indicate enough clues about the nature of the physical fabric of the settlement. According to the information the settlement consisted basically of the residences of the three clans. Accordingly the physical, fabric of that period cannot be considered as a 'city fabric'.

3.1.2: Negombo during Portuguese period

During the Portuguese period the introduction of new built components can
be seen. They are the Fort, the churches, and the residences built here and there. But development or formation of a physical fabric which consist the characteristics of a city cannot be seen during this period because the residences and the churches had been built in large isolated sites. Other buildings indicated in maps were not densely located to form a city fabric.

3.1.3: Dutch period city of Negombo.
Dutch period city had a properly planned city adjacent to the Fort. The Dutch town which is existing till today had a considerable density within the city to form a physical fabric which can be considered as a 'city fabric'.

3.1.4: The city of Negombo during the British period.
Some streets formed a fabric with commercial developments along the main roads outside the Dutch town. Considerable urban growth was there during the British period. Many residential areas which were emerged during this period contributed the formation of the city fabric.

3.1.5: Neaombo after the Independence.
After the independence the city grew outward from the Dutch town. Along each and every road the commercial developments started to come up. This extended the physical fabric throughout the city except in the area closer to the Dutch Fort. This area had been occupied by administration buildings. So the commercial centre had less chance to penetrate into this part of the city. The density increased in the areas which were formed after the independence.

3.1.2: The Objects

3.1.2.1: First settlement of Negombo
There is no evidence to identify the clear image of the built elements of the first settlement. Because of this it is difficult to describe the nature of the objects of the first settlement.
3.1.2.2: Negombo during Portuguese period
The Fort itself became an object within the settlements of the inhabitants. The Churches built can also be considered as objects of the city.

3.1.2.3: Dutch period city of Negombo.
The elevations drawn of the Dutch fort indicates a dome-like structure in the Fort. This can be considered as an object of the city. In this city the Fort itself can be considered as an object. Within the city the Churches were larger in scale and the dominating architectural styles made them to be seen as objects.

3.1.2.4: The city of Negombo during the British period.
The Dutch Fort and the Churches were the objects within the British period city of Negombo.

3.1.2.5: Negombo after the Independence.
Old churches, Buddhist as well as the Hindu religious places can be identified as the present city of Negombo.

3.1.3: The public spaces
3.1.3.1: Public open spaces.
The public spaces first appear as a design component in the Dutch city of Negombo. Esplanade can be considered as a public open space. These areas were used for the recreational activities, parades and for trade fairs during this period.

Although, with the increased population and the their cultural changes caused changes in the nature of the usage of open public areas. The people who lived in the period after the independence found the beach as the best place to spend their leisure time. This society did not have parades in public spaces. In the present city the Esplanade is considered as another playground.

Although with the open economy many tourist hotels and activities of the fishing industry encroached to these open public spaces. Thereafter the form of the city was changed to a certain degree. This was the main obstruction to create interesting spaces facing the lagoon viewing the sensitive natural setting around it. At the same time the character of the activities of a city.
center being deteriorated by the fishing activities happening closer proximity to the city center.

3.1.4: Streets

3.1.4.1: First settlement of Negombo
The streets were the regional linkages with links to the port of Negombo.

3.1.4.2: Negombo during Portuguese period
The old settlements did not change with the Portuguese invasion. The street layout was not changed during this period.

3.1.4.3: Dutch period city of Negombo.
The streets were arranged in a grid pattern in the Dutch City plan.

3.1.4.4: The city of Negombo during the British period.
The streets were not laid in a particular pattern, but they had links with the lagoon and with other regions around Negombo. The laws and regulations had determined Road widths.

3.1.4.5: Negombo after the Independence.
With the growth of the city new urban areas were created and the street layout was determined by the land ownership and the subdivision of land. Only the road widths were controlled by the regulations.

3.1.5: The Landmarks
The value of the Dutch Fort for the British was just another built element. Because of that they had removed some parts of the fort and used the land for other activities.

Although the passage of time had given a historical value given by the meaning inherited in those structures which is identical to a particular time. Therefore almost all the elements belonging to the past have an archaeological value as well as a meaning to the people. Because of that the
whole area of the historical city center has become a monument. The Fort, the market, the Grand church can be considered as few of them.

3.1.5.1: British period and the changes in the development.
Fort was not considered as a security zone. Because of that the fort, Dutch town and the rest of the area was interconnected to form a single entity. On the contrary during the British period moats were neglected and because of that the old city had lost its original elements as well as the discipline.

A church that is still very outstanding with its elevated locations was built on top of the southern bastion. Courthouse was built on the bastion facing the north Rampart wall to the right of the entrance gate was modified and remoulded into a base on which Victoria jubilee clock tower was raised. A significant incident which took place during 1803 was the construction of Robert Percival Gateway and arched cupola for the bell.

Because of these new buildings the fort had changed in its original function and the character. Therefore, earlier security zone of the Fort area gradually became an area constituting of a number of public places. Residential buildings added new character to the townscape. New administrative center made the city an important city center for the surrounding regions.

3.1.5.2: Post independent period developments and their impact to the original historical city.
Earlier the location for the fishing activities was encroached by the hotels and guesthouses. Because of that the fishing related activities moved towards the fort area.

By means of that beach around the fort was totally occupied by the fishing related activities Heavy transportation required for fish transportation created traffic conditions along the old narrow streets which are incapable to accommodate such a large number of vehicles during the particular hours of the day.

The beach was linked with the esplanade and formed a recreational open space before the fishing activities shifted to this area.
3.1.6: Physical and legal boundaries

The first settlement had separate areas. But they belonged to the same nation though they were named as separate clans. The three areas were not separated by built walls, but there could have been some kind of natural boundary to separate or identify them as separate from other regions. But in the Portuguese period, a clear boundary was built for the purpose of defence. This was the wall of the fort. The Dutch fort city had a clear boundary for defence purposes. There were two walls and one wall was to protect the fort and the other one was for the protection of the whole city. The wall was integrated with a moat.

The British Period City did not need protection from external forces. Because of that they neglected and abandoned the city walls they considered only about the legal boundary of the city. After the independence the city limits further expanded according to the urban growth.

3.1.7: Social and cultural change of Negombo

Source of income and the city

The seafaring community was the first settlers of Negombo. They were occupied with few activities such as port activities and fishing. The Portuguese brought in new religious activities and new trade activities. They also brought in educational, leisure and development activities for the city. Canal development of the streets can be considered as being carried out by them.

British period city had administration related activities, They also had commercial activities in addition to the port activities. Defence related activities were not prominent as Dutch, Portuguese and the early settlement periods.

Post independent city has brought in larger group of activities such as tourism.

The fishing activity has grown fast covering the whole strip of the lagoon. These two activities became outstanding activities in the city.
3.2: The City Form of Negombo

The city has formed throughout a long period of time. The present city form has different sections, planned and unplanned. Only the fort has identifiable planned city component while the rest of the city has been developed organically.

First settlement of Negombo can be seen as a scattered settlement. Therefore it did not have a clear geometrical shape. The Dutch City form had a clear geometrical form Dutch period brought in a city form, which was designed. Similar shapes can be seen in many colonies in the coastal area in the island as well as in another colonies in the world.

3.3: Evolution of the City of Negombo.

The city of Negombo can be categorized as a city which had originated as a port city with a unplanned settlement which cannot be considered as a city due to the components of the city. This first settlement had been introduced with new components during the Portuguese period. The settlement was further changed by the introduction of the Dutch City. This had replaced some parts of the original settlement. These were the results of the political power over the inhabitants.

The growth of the city during the British period can be identified as occurring in a few ways. The growth within the city, the changes done to the previous city form and the outward growth of the city.

Although the British period has introduced many developments in the city some of them had caused impacts to the elements of the Dutch City. During this period the city had extended its urban areas. The geometric city form started to take an odd shape with these developments. The growth resulted by the introduction of administrative and commercial activities, introduction of social infrastructure such as schools hospitals and the transportation during this period.

Changes made to the political aspects can be considered as positive aspects.
to the inhabitants when compared to the Dutch period. The City transformed continuously with time. The evolution pattern changed and accelerated with the political and social aspects of the post independent period, followed by the open economy.

Unlike the other periods, the industries and associated developments caused major changes in the city form. The fishing industry associated with many different aspects introduced activities to the city. Tourism also had similar impact to the city.

Illustration 50: Change of the city character from time to time.