

TALKING STREETS
THE FUNCTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STREET
AS A SOCIAL ARENA

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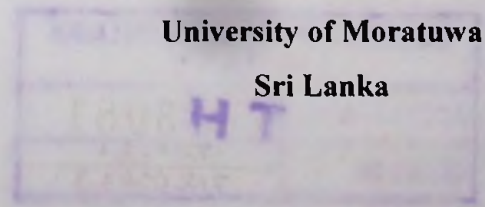


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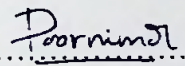
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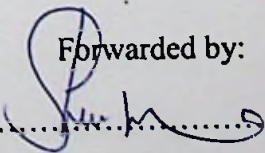
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This is to declare that this dissertation presented to the University of Moratuwa
for the Master of Science Degree in Landscape Design has written by me.


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INTRODUCTION

A space that stays deep rooted in one's mind, is a place, accessed by all senses, one that stimulates and gets the attention of all senses. To touch all senses the place must have dynamism. A place stagnates with unchanging visual elements, with unchanging audible noise and with the wind carrying the same smell and it will not access the senses as much as a constantly changing, dynamic space will do. Any settlement, thus to become a place of interest has to have the qualities needed to stimulate most of the senses if not all.

A street as its best, must have dynamic, constantly changing qualities. Changing facades and people, the flow of traffic, all provide a new experience each day, touching the senses with their changing elements. The street is a place where all senses should engage dynamically.

I believe streets deserve respect – they shape the form of the city and how we move through it. They accommodate buildings, people, vehicles, utilities, vegetation, storm water, signage, street furniture and lighting. Streets are the most used and most visible public asset a city has. To build great cities and towns, first build great streets.

In the recent past, many streets have been designed with vehicle movement as priority. This tends to diminish the potential of streets to function as social space and has resulted in some streets that are hostile environments for people. Streets make up the majority of the public realm in our towns and cities. How we feel about and value a place has much to do with how we move around it and perceive it at ground level, because a city is its streets.

A street is a play of drama during ones progression from one place to the other serving its main purpose of accessibility in harmony with characters call elements, activities, and functions. Sometimes the streets bear strong character while sometimes being very humble. When streets bear prominent buildings, gathering spaces, social cultural importance then they become vital.

Street is a pathway which connects people, and supports them in every aspect in their day today life. At this purpose they serve for human requirement and in reverse they build their character in a probable way where it is most suitable. Street is a manmade space where it is responsible for the human safety, social connectivity, and a stream for learning.

A street carries safety precautions for the people using symbols, built structures, texture and use of colours, so that the streets always communicate with people in a very induce manner where people make their disciplines and being courteous for the others. This is a

visual synthesis where the street shows a systematic progression in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Streets create spaces for the public in their work according to their locality, geological setting, historical importance & commercial aspects. Depending on their importance streets get their shape, according to the time of the day, or the time of the weather, which can create moods and make changes in the visual scene.

For a street to function properly and safely it should carry particular elements to make it a well functioned place in combination with flora.

With the distribution of street elements, topography, building density and population and their activities, a street get different from one to the other and show off their own identity. If a street can function well in all parameters such as safety , good communication, social gatherings, easy access, and have an additional importance with regards to cultural or historical or recreational value, it can be the most articulated streets of all.

So in this dissertation the historical background of the street and its evolution is described in the first chapter by taking references from books, novels, stories and personal opinions. Then its functions, characteristics and spatial attributes are discussed in the second chapter taking the street as total stimulus. Third chapter will discuss about the theories and use of theories to enhance the liveliness of the streets. Potentials for apply those theories and design solutions in landscape and the functional significance of the street as a social arena are discussed in the fourth chapter by taking case studies in local context.