

**“Towards a Cohesive City”:
Coherence' of Built Fabric And User-perception on Urban
Environment**

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ABSTRACT

'Cohere' is a need of man and so his environment too should be coherent. By the same need of 'cohere', of human habitation, make the surrounded environment entirely urban day by day. The process of Urbanization adds up built elements to the city and creates the Built Fabric which is the layer of built elements interwoven by infrastructure and human activities etc. Coherence of built fabric make city well composed, which creates user-perception on urban environment a 'whole', and thereby making it well integrated with its habitable living-built mechanism.

From 'Pragmatic Space' to 'urban space' (Existential Space) people have lived through the dimension of time. From the caves to mega-cities it is a continuation which added up many 'new' elements to the people's surrounding. The change of the space surrounded therefore becomes a complex-urban-space which people's perception on space has become a combination of different elements. As time goes by, in an additive transformation, 'building anew building' is not only 'building it individually new' but, integrating the 'new building' in 'existing built fabric'. Present day, contemporary Sri Lankan urban environments have become collection-of-disintegrated-individual elements which do not facilitate human cohabitation (Ex: Colombo Fort) due to these individually thought and built building which has been created many restrictions physically and psychologically, by destroying city's character, identity and flow of human activities. This is mainly due to the lack of understanding as to what coherence is and how to get about achieving it.

The wholeness in user-perception in a city, makes it work: Simply, if the perception of users, of city is 'a whole', by the means of its built fabric, the human co-habitation with built environment and the flow of functions will happen effectively. Therefore making 'the sense of whole' in user perception on urban built environment is the goal. To create sense of whole in perception, the physical built elements (Paths, Nodes, Buildings, city edges etc.) should be coherently integrated. The Coherence could be achieved in two ways: how it physically arranged as cohered(Physical Coherence) and how to make psychologically perceived by user as cohered(Psychological/Experiential Coherence).