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Impact of Relocation on Cultural Landscape around Reservoir Projects in Sri Lanka: A Case Study on Uma Oya Multipurpose Development Project

Kavindya P.L.M.* , Dharmasena S.W.J.H.

Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
**madhushi1996@gmail.com*

Abstract

Sri Lanka is a developing country where hydrology plays an important role in its economic and social growth. Therefore, reservoirs are a principal element of culture and social status of Sri Lankans. Emergence of a reservoir goes along with a community relocation process which eventually causes alterations in the cultural landscape around it. The study discusses about the vast study area of 'cultural landscape' and its behavior. This study will mainly identify the existing constraints and tendencies regarding the relocation process in an overall status. Uma Oya multipurpose development project is selected as the exemplary study area considering its visible impacts. This analysis will indicate strategies, theories and methods that can be applied to apprehend the impact of relocation process on the cultural landscape of reservoirs. The research was carried out by conducting the Uma Oya multipurpose development project case study and by defining its cultural landscape and process of relocation. A new theoretical framework is developed in order to assess the set of vulnerable areas of a cultural landscape which are likely to change due to relocation. A questionnaire survey is done in order to assess socio-economic aspects and a GIS data analysis is conducted to analyze the impact on physical aspects. Findings show that the impacts of the cultural landscape fall under both positive and negative categories. It also shows that the previous condition before resettlement and post stages have significant changes, where the previous condition had more socio-economic benefits for the community. These specifically developed theories, areas of assessment and strategies along with the outcomes, can be used for any location with geographical similarities worldwide.

Keywords: Cultural diffusion theory, Cultural landscape, Relocation, Reservoirs, Socio-economic aspects