

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

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Abstract : Sri Lanka is a developing country where hydrology plays an important role in its economic and social growth, followed by irrigation and power generation. Therefore, reservoirs are a principal element of the culture and social status of Sri Lankans. The emergence of a newly built reservoir goes along with a community relocation process which eventually causes alterations in the cultural landscape around it. From the 18th century, the emergence of reservoirs has caused major impacts on the landscape of Sri Lanka. Foremost aspects can be identified as the increased and decreased value of the cultural landscape around a reservoir. Community relocation in regard to reservoir projects is discussed as a key factor in the research. The study further carries out observations and findings of the relocation process of reservoirs in global and local contexts. Consequently, the study discusses the vast study area of 'cultural landscape' in brief and its behavior overall. Besides, specific data about reservoir-related cultural landscapes in a worldwide context, along with facts about the evolution, has been discussed. The significance and diversity of the Sri Lankan reservoir-related cultural landscape are explored in the succeeding study. This study will mainly identify the existing constraints and tendencies regarding the relocation process in an overall status. The base for the research has been laid thereafter by broadening the study on alterations which occur in the cultural landscape in relevance to reservoir-related relocation. 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 the 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 suitable 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. And it also shows a clear alteration pattern of physical environment changes. 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, physical aspects, relocation, reservoirs, socio-economic aspects

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