

Compact City as a Response to the New Normal: Designing Resilience to Encounter Pandemics

SMM Sanjune^{1#} and H Munasinghe²

¹Faculty of Built Environment and Spatial Sciences, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

²School of Architectural Studies, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada

#smmsanjune@kdu.ac.lk

The Coronavirus is a pandemic that defined the greatest crisis of the modern world, and it is the most critical challenge that the world has faced since World War II. Considering the effect and the scale of the outbreak, WHO declared Covid-19 as a global pandemic and identified the epidemic as an unprecedented socio-economic crisis and not just a health challenge. From early 2020, most of the countries in the world have been in lockdowns to prevent the spread, and these lockdowns critically restricted mobility resulting in empty city-scapes. The critical problem of the present is the incompatibility of the city forms to cope with the pandemic triggered by the inability to locate the 'New Normal' concept in the field of Urban Design. Non-resilience of cities is not a unique case to this pandemic but was common in the pre-pandemic world too. Modern cities being dependent on auto-mobiles had created an urban crisis, and the desire of the designers to initiate sustainable alternatives was always defeated by automobile transportation. The pandemic has however created a temporary momentum towards active transportation restricting car-travel, and the study identifies the necessity of concreting these temporary trends for the long run. Analysing the initiatives that the cities of the globe have taken, three main concepts could be identified as cycling, Avoid-Shift-Improve paradigm and 15-Minute city. The latter part of the study brings these concepts to the city fabric of Colombo and concludes by stressing the compatibilities of adapting these concepts to Colombo city.

Keywords: COVID-19, walkability, cycling, 15 - minute city