

ETHNIC SEGREGATION IN CITIES: A CASE STUDY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

The City of Colombo, Sri Lanka, has a multi-ethnic composition with Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Burghers and Malays comprising the key ethnic groups. During the late 20th century, the concentration of two minority ethnic groups, i.e. the Tamils and the Moors, has steadily increased in a few wards. Spatial and temporal changes in the pattern of ethnic segregation within the city are traced using a segregation index. Reasons for the rise in ethnic segregation within the city include in-migration of people displaced following ethnic conflicts in other parts of the country, high natural growth rates particularly within the Moor community and low socio-economic conditions leading to congestion. The wards exhibiting a high segregation index value have a large proportion of under-served settlements and are located close to the Central Business District. Urban land use zoning regulations need to be redefined to discourage segregation and to upgrade under-served settlements.

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