

# ETHNOSCAPE TO PEACESCAPE : PROSPECTS OF ETHNIFIED CITYSPACES AND URBAN PEACEBUILDING IN SRI LANKA

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## Abstract

Racially polarized communities insensitive to multicultural tolerance are a major hindrance to lasting peace in Sri Lanka. Such Ethnified Cityspaces are termed as Ethnoscapes. In an Ethnoscape, ethnic identity becomes the undertone for power structures, resource allocation and land use decisions within an urban spatial arrangement. This research problematizes the role of ethnified cityspaces in relation to the rise of extremism through the prism of the urban space of Kattankudy in Sri Lanka. With statistical and factual establishments, the author has identified Kattankudy as an epic specimen of an Ethnoscape. Wahhabism, as an ideology propagating Arabization, exclusivism and non-tolerance towards non-Muslim communities has been identified as a determinant factor in sustaining Ethnoscopic characteristics in Kattankudy. This research therein stresses on the importance of a customized Peacebuilding process to Sri Lanka, focusing on Urban Peacebuilding, and a way forward is proposed towards the ultimate Peacescape. A Peacescape is a spatial arrangement which reflects socio-cultural tolerance and harmony, whose power relations are based on non-ethnic lines. Though an absolute Peacescape is utopian in its sense, Sri Lanka could adjust its Peacebuilding process to promote voluntary inter-ethnic integration. To foster a positive attitudinal transformation towards voluntary multicultural tolerance, the author proposes two major redressal mechanisms; Local Ownership and Policy-Neutral approach. This research stresses that it is high time for Sri Lanka to deviate from mainstream harsh division of war and peace and develop Peace as an everyday norm to materialize the peace dividend to its full potential.

**Key Words :** *Ethnoscape, Racial Polarization, Wahhabism, Peacescape, Urban Peacebuilding*

## 1.0 Introduction

The best antidote to ethnic conflicts is to break the imagined walls of socially constructed differences. The urban space and the inevitable propinquity it offers are therein ideal to develop multi-communal harmony. However, it is unfortunate to see the flourishing of urban spaces whose foundation of urbanization itself, motivates and promotes harsh ethnic divisions in Sri Lanka. Those urban arrangements are Ethnoscapes, which refers to an urban space whose main basis for power and resource allocation is ethnic identity forms<sup>1</sup>. With the territorializing of ethnic memory and spatial belonging, a link has created between people (ethnos) and space. This link produces ethnified cityspaces where space becomes a legitimizing factor for power, identity and societal structures of a particular ethnic group. This research equates the city of Kattankudy as an Ethnoscape with factual and statistical establishment, and analyzes how the Ethnoscopic characteristics of the city has been a determinant factor in the rise of Islamist extremism in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. One of its most unfortunate by-products was the Easter attacks of 2019, which is unarguably one of the world's worst terrorist attacks of the century. The carnage took place on April 21, 2019, as a series of coordinated bombings targeting Easter Sunday church services and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka. The death toll was recorded as 275 and 500 were left injured<sup>2</sup>. The mastermind of the attack was Moulvi Mohamed Cassim Mohamed Zahran, and his operational planning continued uninterrupted in the safe haven of Kattankudy, with the firm foundation of Wahhabi ideology and unique ethnic composition of the city.

Therein, this research problematizes the role of ethnified cityspaces such as Kattankudy in relation to the rise of extremism. The solution provided by the author is the incorporation of Urban Peacebuilding to the reconciliation process of Sri Lanka. The theory of Urban Peacebuilding itself focuses on transforming of "... ethno-nationally contested urban space divided by a conflict... and explore ways to "... mitigate conflict, undermine divisions and strengthen interdependencies of everyday life..."<sup>3</sup>. The ultimate outcome of this process is the formation of Peacescapes. They account to urban spaces which promotes, "... socio-cultural tolerance, diversity, spatial, temporal as well as political dimensions of power..."<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Annika Björkdahl, "Urban Peacebuilding," *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (May 2, 2013): pp. 207-221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783254>.

<sup>2</sup>Theresa Malone and Cath Levett, "Sri Lanka Bombings – A Timeline and Visual Guide," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, April 22, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/22/sri-lanka-bombings-a-timeline-and-visual-guide>.

<sup>3</sup>Annika Björkdahl, "Urban Peacebuilding," *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (May 2, 2013): pp. 207-221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783254>.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*

Though the idea of an absolute Peacescape is utopian in its sense, Sri Lanka could adjust its Peacebuilding process to promote voluntary inter-ethnic integration. Therein, development of mechanisms to harness positive attitudinal transformation is of paramount importance. Therein, this research dissects the case study of Kattankudy, to analyze the impact of Ethnoscape in rise of extremism in Sri Lanka and suggest ways in which the essence of Urban Peacebuilding can be incorporated to the local Peacebuilding process, and move coherently towards sustainable peace.

Therein, the author argues that Urban Peacebuilding through the promotion of multi-ethnic integration is a determinant solution to overcome racial exclusivism caused by Ethnoscapes. When ethnic lines become the main basis of urbanization of a space, peace dividend is not materialized in full potential<sup>5</sup>. Hence, when moving towards sustainable peace, it is of paramount importance to transform the root causes of the formation of Ethnoscapes, by constraining racial exclusivism. In what follows, the author would lay down several root causes for the formation of an ethnoscape in Kattankudy. Then, the author has also proposed ways in which the collective consciousness of an Ethnoscaphic community can be transformed towards a positive potential.

## **2.0 Methodology and Methods**

Mainstreaming of peace, in fact, have diminished the context-specificity of peace to match post-conflict scenarios. Hence, it should be admitted that peace is subjective in its sense and creates multiple realities. Therefore, the ontological question lies in the fact that peace is in fact not a stagnant state but a constantly evolving process, which is contextually sensitive. The epistemological aspect can also be viewed through the interpretivist paradigm, where bodies of knowledge related to Peacebuilding is predicated on beliefs, values, reasons and understandings. The author thus feels the rigid classification of state of war and peace is befitting to comprehend the negative peace that exists in post-war Sri Lanka. Hence, the main methodological consideration is to explore ways to position peace in a holistic context, to produce an 'everyday peace'.

<sup>5</sup>Annika Björkdahl, "Urban Peacebuilding," *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (May 2, 2013): pp. 207-221, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783254>.

## Methods

Based on the above methodological and philosophical considerations, qualitative research will be conducted, where quantitative figures will be used to add weight to the research findings. Sources of Primary data for the research will be personal interviews conducted with two resource persons adhering to research ethics. The interviewees were chosen through Judgmental sampling technique, to maintain the impartiality of the research outcome. Secondary sources are scholarly articles, newspaper articles, books on the field of Peace Studies and data from relevant government authorities.

In what follows the author will present an integrated results and a discussion section. An analysis is developed by relating the theoretical foundations of Ethnoscape to the ground realities of Kattankudy. After carving out the core of the issue, author then discusses a possible way forward catering to local needs of a negative peace context.

### 3.0 Dissecting the demographic composition under Kattankudy Urban Council

The case study of interest in this research is the urban fabric of Kattankudy. Kattankudy Urban Council Administrative Area (KUC AA)<sup>6</sup>, which consists of 18 Grama Niladhari Divisions, is located in the Batticaloa district of Sri Lanka. To improve the clarity of the demographic profile of KUC AA, the researcher conjugated 2007 and 2012 statistics reports, given the lacuna of updated facts and figures.

**Table 1.0-Population statistics of KUC AA**

Variable	Value
Population	40356 <sup>7</sup>
KUC Administrative Area in sq. km	4.1071km <sup>2</sup> <sup>8</sup>
Calculated Population Density (Population/Administrative area)	9825.91

Source: Author

<sup>6</sup> Hereafter, 'Kattankudy' is equivalent to the whole Kattankudy Grama Niladhari Division.

<sup>7</sup> "Kattankudy Urban Council: Cities," SoSLC, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.soslc.lk/en/cities/kattankudy-urban-council>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

**Table 2.0-Population Composition of KUC AA**

<b>KUC AA Ethnicity Distribution<sup>9</sup></b>		
<b>Total Population-39,529</b>		
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>In Numbers</b>	<b>In Percentage(%)</b>
Sinhalese	0	0
Sri Lankan Tamil	5	0
Sri Lankan Moor	39,517	100

Source: Author

A mere surface analysis of the above statistics exposes that Kattankudy is a heavily populous urban area polarized on the basis of ethnic lines. Non-Muslims are prohibited from settling in the area, whereas it recorded the highest Muslim population density in Asia as of 2009. With 65 mosques, the city is also marked as the city with largest number of mosques per 1sq.km<sup>10</sup>.

Considering the spatial consideration of Kattankudy, it is the major city of the Eastern Province, with a significantly high build up area of 74.84% (303.81 ha) against a non-built-up area of 25.51% (104.06 ha)<sup>11</sup>. Commercialized agriculture is allocated to 192.58 ha from the non-built-up area, whereas marine fishing is the second main livelihood. Commercial activities and land ownership is exclusive to Muslim community<sup>12</sup>, which is also evidentiary from the statistics of Table 2.0 which reflects a unique ethno-exclusive population composition. According to the 2012 census report, Batticaloa is marked as the district with lowest distribution of internal migrant population which account to 0.73% out of the total Sri Lankan migrant population of 3<sup>861,787</sup><sup>13</sup>. As a major city in the Eastern province with a high population density, Kattankudy could rationally be related to low rates of migration within Sri Lanka.

<sup>9</sup> “Basic Population on Batticaloa District-2007 (Preliminary Report),” accessed September 30, 2021, <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/Preliminary%20Reports%20Special%20Enumeration%202007/Basic%20Population%20Information%20of%20Batticaloa%20District%202007.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> “The Commission of Inquiry to Investigate and Inquire into and Report or Take Necessary Action on the Bomb Attacks on 21st April 2019,” January 31, 2021, <https://easterattackreport.org/report/>.

<sup>11</sup> “Kattankudy Urban Council: Cities,” SoSLC, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.soslc.lk/en/cities/kattankudy-urban-council>.

<sup>12</sup> Chris Kamalendran and Asif Fuard, “Unholy Tensions in Lanka’s Muslim East,” The Sunday Times, August 16, 2009, [https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws\\_23.html](https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws_23.html).

<sup>13</sup> “Census of Population and Housing,” accessed September 30, 2021, [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/pophousat/cph2011/pages/activities/reports/cph\\_2012\\_5per\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/pophousat/cph2011/pages/activities/reports/cph_2012_5per_rpt.pdf).

Three major observations could be made based on the above statistical establishments.

01. KUC AA accounts for a significant urban arrangement where the Muslim community holds an absolute population hegemony.
02. Such a population arrangement is not a result of a state-induced settlement policy and a self-imposed deterrence is evident amongst the settlers considering the low rates of internal migration.
03. General pull factors which attract people towards urban settlements are the push factors in their resident settlement. However, this theory does not explain the above unique population composition. Therein, it can be logically admitted that ethnicity of Muslims acts as a determinant factor in exploring the point of gravity of the unique population composition of Kattankudy.

Therein based on the third observation, the author considers the societal component as a basis factor which leads to the development of an ethno-exclusive urban arrangement. As one interviewee pointed out, when a group of individuals are concentrated around a certain opinion or an ideology, that collective perception becomes the bar of standard which measures the holistic collective behavior of that particular community<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, in the next section the researcher would analyze the societal component of KUC AA, in relation to extreme religious ideologies.

#### **4.0 Kattankudy as an Ethnoscape : Role of Wahhabism**

Wahhabism can be defined as "... a puritanical form of Sunni Islam, aimed at the 'purification' and the return to the Islam of the Prophet Mohammed and three successive generations of followers..."<sup>15</sup>. Wahhabi ideology, which consisted of the teachings of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahhab, is aimed at cleansing the Muslims they label as heretics.

<sup>14</sup> KithminiRanaweera, *Ethnoscape to Peacescape: Prospects of Ethnified Cityspaces and Urban Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*. Personal, July 14, 2021.

<sup>15</sup>Ranga Jayasuriya, "The Easter Sunday Attack: Unpacking Islamic Radicalization in Sri Lanka," in *INSSSL Defence Review 2020*, pp. 39-70, accessed September 30, 2021, [http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021\\_01\\_27/Defence\\_Review\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021_01_27/Defence_Review_compressed.pdf)

Wahhabism is the state ideology of Saudi Arabia and was later exported to non-Arabic Muslim societies with the oil boom. The increased migration of Sri Lankan Muslim youth to Middle East for the purpose of religious education, the proactive role of foreign clerics and local Madrasas harnessed the unprecedented adhesion of native Muslim

Hence, it is evident that with the capitalization of the Islamist polarization by Thowheed movement, the situation of Kattankudy was ideal for the cultivation of radicalization, which will be analyzed in detail in the next section.

## **5.0 Zahran's early stages of radicalization**

With the religious space made ripe with the absolute Islamist polarization, Kattankudy was already a fully-fledged ethnoscape, by the time of Zahran's birth. Within the territories of Kattankudy, one could see the developing traits of Arabization catalyzed through Wahhabism, which induced drastic changes in life-style, dress code and religiosity<sup>19</sup>.

Limited movement of women, food and beverages with close resemblance to Arabian cuisine and exclusivity of Muslims in land ownership<sup>20</sup> reflects the Ethnoscopic character of the area. The already firm foundation of Wahhabi ideology and Arabized culture fostering in Kattankudy molded Zahran's extremist ideology since the early phases of his education.

Zahran's early stages of pre-radicalization and indoctrination was harbored by the time he was educated in Kattankudy. He met Nauferin Kattankudy in 2001 and later in 2005/06 he cultivated the Naufer's teachings by establishing a Wahhabi organization in Kattankudy. Zahran then played a crucial role in Nation-

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Ranga Jayasuriya, "The Easter Sunday Attack: Unpacking Islamic Radicalization in Sri Lanka," in INSSSL Defence Review 2020, pp. 39-70, accessed September 30, 2021, [http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021\\_01\\_27/Defence\\_Review\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021_01_27/Defence_Review_compressed.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>Buddhika Samaraweera, Wahhabists in Sri Lanka Propagate Ideology Through Thowheed Organisations – PCoI, March 15, 2021, <https://ceylontoday.lk/news/wahhabists-in-sri-lanka-propagate-ideology-through-thowheed-organisations-pcoi>

<sup>19</sup>Ranga Jayasuriya, "The Easter Sunday Attack: Unpacking Islamic Radicalization in Sri Lanka," in INSSSL Defence Review 2020, pp. 39-70, accessed September 30, 2021, [http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021\\_01\\_27/Defence\\_Review\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.insssl.lk/assets/images/publication/other/images/2021/january/2021_01_27/Defence_Review_compressed.pdf)

al ThowheedJamaath (NTJ); a split of Sri Lanka ThowheedJamaath (SLTJ) in Kattankudy by 2012<sup>21</sup>. NTJ was the epitome of Wahhabi proliferation in Kattankudy, which developed the skeletal planning of Easter attacks in 2019.

## **6.0 Connecting dots : Possibility of incubation of terrorism within an Ethnoscape**

From the factual and analytical discussion developed so far, Wahhabi polarization within Kattankudy is evident. In such an outset, the author would like to bring about several incidents and attempt to develop a cause- and-effect link between fact and logic in relation to the Ethnoscopic context of Kattankudy and Islamic extremism of the Eastern province.

### **(i.) Security culture endowed with the concept of ‘Home Guards’.**

The system of ‘Home Guards’ was implemented by the Government of Sri Lanka in 1985, as a self-help military strategy to protect Sinhala and Muslim border villagers from the LTTE. Home Guards were basically a civilian group of male adults who has undergone a rapid training of weapons to contain a terrorist attack when the need arises<sup>22</sup>.

Residents of Kattankudy had also undergone such screening and training, where batches of 300 participants were enlisted time to time under the police<sup>23</sup>. Amidst measures from government to disarm Homeguards after 2009, civil militancy continued under the wing of Wahhabism. Two reporters who wrote an article on the situation of Kattankudy in 2009 testified at PCoI, seeing T-56 weapons at the premises of Zahran when they were interviewing him<sup>24</sup>. The remnants of the Home Guards culture and the voluntary isolation made Kattankudy a breeding ground for Wahhabi terrorists and their operational planning.

<sup>20</sup>Chris Kamalendran and Asif Fuard, “Unholy Tensions in Lanka’s Muslim East,” *The Sunday Times*, August 16, 2009, [https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws\\_23.html](https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws_23.html).

<sup>21</sup> “The Commission of Inquiry to Investigate and Inquire into and Report or Take Necessary Action on the Bomb Attacks on 21st April 2019,” January 31, 2021, <https://easterattackreport.org/report/>

<sup>22</sup> Kalinga Tudor Silva, “Home Guards in Sri Lanka: Guardians of Peace or Threat to Human Security?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45 (September 4, 2010): pp. 31-33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25742041>.



## **(ii.) Dealing in support in the form of electoral allegiance**

Baccini et.al. developed an intellection which developed a link between implications of terrorism and election outcomes. Furthermore, it was deduced that terrorists' actions are not random, rather strategically calculated, where they "... target populations that are more likely to respond in the desired manner..."<sup>25</sup>. The author sees a similar undertone in the context of NTJ in Kattankudy. Targeting the General Elections of August, 2015, Zahran and NTJ issued an open declaration setting up several conditions for the attention of all the political parties contesting. Upon acceptance of the conditions, Zahran agreed to support the campaigns of the agreed political party<sup>26</sup>.

Therein, the author would like to argue that a major determinant factor which caused the possession of such bargaining power by the Zahran and NTJ were the strength of Wahhabi ideology propagating through the NTJ. The undertone of Wahhabism violently blemished the fabric of Sufi Islam, by creating a political climate which justified a societal system of repression through their fundamental teachings. This system was hostile to rights of freedom of expression and bearing contradicting political views. Hence, as per the deductions of Baccini et. al, Zaharan properly understood the interests and positions of his target; political parties desirous of votes, leaving no space for a miscalculation.

## **(iii.) Attaching Ethnonationalism to a physical space**

One of the many detrimental impacts of colonialism in Sri Lanka would be the rise of Ethnonationalism in the place of an overarching Sri Lankan nationalistic identity. In 2003, Oluwil declaration came into being as a result, where Muslim activist groups rendered community demands on self-determination for a Muslim nation in the East<sup>27</sup>. These narratives further muscled the idea of a Muslim nation to the Eastern province and Kattankudy later became the point of gravity, which fueled Muslim Exclusivism on the basis of the Oluwil declaration.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Kamalendran and Asif Fuard, "Unholy Tensions in Lanka's Muslim East," *The Sunday Times*, August 16, 2009, [https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws\\_23.html](https://www.sundaytimes.lk/090816/News/nws_23.html).

<sup>24</sup> "The Commission of Inquiry to Investigate and Inquire into and Report or Take Necessary Action on the Bomb Attacks on 21st April 2019," January 31, 2021, <https://easterattackreport.org/report/>

<sup>25</sup> Leonardo Baccini et al., "Terrorism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from the United States," *Research & Politics* 8, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168020987333>

<sup>26</sup> "The Commission of Inquiry to Investigate and Inquire into and Report or Take Necessary Action on the Bomb Attacks on 21st April 2019," January 31, 2021, <https://easterattackreport.org/report/>

Salafist concepts such as Al-Wala' wal bara' which portrays non-Muslims as potential enemies of Islam, added fuel to the fire<sup>28</sup>. Hence, it is evident that ethno-nationalistic thinking which was endowed with the Oluwil Declaration later nursed Kattankudy as a stronghold of Muslim exclusivism which resulted in the enhancing of its Ethnoscopic character.

The author so far presented an array of socio-political factors which enhanced the Ethnoscopic character of Kattankudy. This raises the question on the remunerative nature of the reconciliation process of Sri Lanka for the past 12 years. It lacks a comprehensive framework to prioritize and treat the root causes of ethnic divisions and the creation of Ethnoscapes in the Eastern province itself. In what follows, the author intends to propose ways in which Urban Peacebuilding could be adjusted to the Sri Lankan context as a way of dissolving rigid ethnified cityspaces through voluntary action of communities.

## **7.0 Conceptualizing the application of Urban Peacebuilding to the Sri Lankan reconciliation process**

The author views the urban space as a prism, crucial in navigating a customized peace processes relevant to post-conflict contexts. As per Bollens, "... qualities of the urban system such as social interaction, economic interdependence may assist to advance peace after a large settlement is negotiated"<sup>29</sup>.

When rival parties of a conflict share the same urban space, their daily engagements will undermine harsh ethnic divisions and lead to the development of a multi-ethnic collective consciousness. In this regard, the author would like to align the conceptual core of Urban Peacebuilding to the views of Robert Park. As per Park, competition and communication are the two fundamental interactions which shape the social order and organizational characteristics of the society. Further he added that, "... social institutions are the... effects of the ef-

<sup>27</sup> "Sri Lanka's Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire," May 29, 2007, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/32062/134\\_sri\\_lanka\\_s\\_muslims\\_caught\\_in\\_the\\_crossfire.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/32062/134_sri_lanka_s_muslims_caught_in_the_crossfire.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Mohamed Bin Ali, "Forging Muslim and Non-Muslim Relationship: Contesting the Doctrine of Al-Wala' Wal Bara," S. Rajarathnam School of International Studies, November 19, 2015, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/srp/co15251-forging-muslim-and-non-muslim-relationship-contesting-the-doctrine-of-al-wala-wal-bara>

<sup>29</sup> Maureen Moriarty-Lempke, "Review on 'Urban Peacebuilding in Divided Societies,' by Scott A. Bollens," *Journal of Planning, Education and Research* 19 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0739456X0001900420>

forts of societies to act collectively. The so-called group mind is merely a body of traditions, understandings, sentiments and ideologies accumulated through conversation and communication...<sup>30</sup>. Hence, the authors view that Urban Peacebuilding targets the transformation of the said 'group-mind' of an urban space to foster multi-ethnic co-existence.

## 8.0 Enhancing local ownership of Sri Lankan peace process through Urban Peacebuilding

Many theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Peacebuilding are often criticized for being foreign to the context and oblivious to inherent socio-cultural currents of torn down societies. The occidental lens towards Peacebuilding and the inability to customize local frameworks for Peacebuilding has caused the said failure. As an interviewee pointed out... "I did get to meet many people but they were all brainwashed into looking at peace and building peace from a superficial western 'NGO' lens"<sup>31</sup>.

In customizing the Sri Lankan peace process through Urban Peacebuilding, the author suggests the incorporation of two main components; namely,

1. enhancing local ownership
2. adopting a policy-neutral approach.

Local Ownership of a peace process in a nutshell is "... the commitment to build capacity of local actors through inclusive participatory processes ... as a critical part of restoring trust and consolidating peace..."<sup>32</sup>. Through localizing Peacebuilding initiatives, peace could be internalized as a norm into everyday lives of communities.

A major prerequisite in ensuring local ownership of a peace process would be to adopt policy-neutral approaches. As per Bollens, in such an approach, "... government official role is not biased towards either ethnic group, ... and policies developed do not address the divergent perceived needs of the two communities..."<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Robert E. Park, "Symbiosis and Socialization: A Frame of Reference for the Study of Society," *American Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 1 (1939): pp. 1-25, <https://doi.org/10.1086/218206>

<sup>31</sup> Kithmini. Ranaweera, *Ethnoscape to Peacescape: Prospects of Ethnified Cityspaces and Urban Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*. Personal, July 16, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> "Local Leadership to Local Ownership – An Essential Element for Effective Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention," September 2018, [https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Why\\_Local\\_ownership\\_matters-policy\\_note-21-Sept.pdf](https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Why_Local_ownership_matters-policy_note-21-Sept.pdf)

Based on the foundations laid by the two components mentioned, the author has developed several policy recommendations related to diluting the racial polarization in ethnified cityspaces such as Kattankudy. Therein, when relating to the ground realities of Kattankudy and the basis of local ownership, a sudden policy to scatter the polarization would create a chaotic status quo. As the influence of Wahhabism has created a toxic climate sensitive to external intervention and multi-cultural tolerance, it would be imprudent to intervene directly into the urban space as per the author. Creative strategies need to be developed where change commences within the majority of the public of Kattankudy. Therein, the author agrees with the views of an interviewee where he stated, "... setting boundaries and reinforcements could be implemented, however, if we want to have a long-lasting sustainable change, those engagements should be voluntary..."<sup>34</sup>. Therein, herculean efforts had to be made from the end of policy makers to make the isolated communities reach a point of self-realization on the harmful impacts of their non-integration with the rest of the society.

In order to achieve this, the government strategy should be to develop push factors to creatively draw out portions of communities from the polarized space. Such strategies may include,

1. Appointment of personnel who are residents or anyhow related to Kattankudy to implement the strategies developed by the government, as a confidence building mechanism and to enhance local ownership of the process.
2. Developing opportunities of educational engagements in Colombo or other multi-ethnic urban spaces for the youth of Kattankudy and promotion of such opportunities through the personnel appointed from Kattankudy. Such educational arrangements may include undergraduate programs outside of Kattankudy with attractive scholarships, exchange outreach programs and offers related to vocational training.
3. Promoting the concept of Youth Activism and Volunteerism in racially polarized spaces. Activism and volunteerism could facilitate meaningful dialogue amongst youth across different ethnic divisions. Through enhancing cooperation and unity in addressing non-ethnic related issues such as Climate Change, Sexual Violence, Bribery and Corruption etc. where its participants could understand another individual beyond ethnic divisions.

<sup>33</sup> Maureen Moriarty-Lempke, "Review on 'Urban Peacebuilding in Divided Societies,'" by Scott A. Bollens," *Journal of Planning, Education and Research* 19 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0739456X0001900420>

<sup>34</sup> Kithmini. Ranaweera, *Ethnoscape to Peacescape: Prospects of Ethnified Cityspaces and Urban Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*. Personal, July 14, 2021.

4. Development of a national framework for Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. In the crafting of a framework a hybrid model should be adopted, to enhance local ownership and policy-neutral nature. Lessons learnt from the past failures in Sri Lanka along with success stories of Peacebuilding globally should also be considered.

## 9.0 Conclusion

Ethnoscape of Kattankudy is the ultimate bi-product of the crystallization of historicized ethnic hostilities, attachment of Muslim nationalism to the spatial arrangement of the Eastern province (and therein, Kattankudy), security vacuum and political quagmire created in the Eastern province as a result of the war between GoSL and LTTE and proliferation of Wahhabism oblivious to policy-makers. 2019 Easter attacks were the tragedy that could have been avoided if Ethnoscaping in the East were handled with prudence. Yet, underlying currents of racial polarization are left unnoticed by policymakers. It is high time that Sri Lanka replaces tailor-made conventional Peacebuilding processes with a customized setting which grasps the ground realities of the negative peace context of Sri Lanka after the war in 2009. Urban Peacebuilding is not focused on structuring the tangibles of an urban space, rather it positively transforms the ethnic memory, sense of belonging and collective conscience which is attached to the space. Only then the island wide community of Sri Lanka could be empowered to genuinely own the peace process as a way of redressing the Sri Lankan psyche torn by separatism.

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