ABSTRACT

Living in a modern city, the automobile is an ubiquitous object that we encounter daily. It is a rapid and convenient mode of transportation for many, allowing them to commute to work from their residences at the periphery of the city to the office establishments located in the core every morning, and vice versa in the evenings. It is an apparent necessity for others, when they use it to transfer the loads of commodities they have hauled from supermarkets and large shopping complexes. Current urban living has been so bound up by the automobile that it becomes difficult for us to envisage life without it.

Urban developments today have to include parking provisions to accommodate the automobile. Road and highway construction has been an on-going effort to contain the ever-increasing volume of traffic. Buildings and streets are of a distinctively different scale and configuration from a traditional city. The automobile with its supporting automotive infrastructure has certainly changed the external appearance and the internal functioning of the city. The objective of this paper is therefore to investigate the physical changes effected by the automobile on our cities; it is an exploration of the relationship between the automobile and the urban built environment.

The paper will undertake to account the allegations of the automobile turning the modern city into an increasingly intolerable environment for the all-important humanistic activities of informal social interaction and communal living; of how it had in its quest for space in motion as well as at rest, eroded our cities and seriously affected the urban street. By examining the problem of automobile dependence, it will suggest attempts that could appease the tension between automobile and the city. The conflict apparently could only be resolved with an understanding of how our living pattern is associated with the need for the automobile; a complex cause and effect relationship between the automobile and the city form.