Accommodating the Informal Sector Street Activities in Urban Design.
An Examination Of The Relationship Between Street Spaces And Street Operated Informal Sector Activities Within The Urban Built Environment In Sri Lanka.

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ABSTRACT

Up to recent times the street operated in formal sector enterprises are mostly regarded as a nuisance to a city. At present a positive attitude towards their presence in the street tend to grow, viewing their contribution to the economy as well as to the character of the street.

In the case of urban design the main actors in the play are the square, the street and the buildings that make up the public face of our towns and cities. The meaning and the role, these elements play in urban design. The street operated informal sector trading activities are come under street architecture that part of the urban design.

In the designing and development of streets or their fragments, the designer has to bear in mind a street becomes a comfortable built environment, when the user senses and perceives it appropriately and in turn orientates himself within it.

A street, which can be identified as a series of integrated spaces, is an attraction to informal sector activities, specially in some of its spaces. Out of observation it is found walkways, transitional spaces and squares as the most attractive spaces for street operated informal sector for many reasons.

Selected examples shows how will be the informal sector incorporated to the built environment in successful way. Also what aspects should be considered? Some of the examples over come the problems they face in the site while some have to rethink and arrange to make a meaningful one.

Informal sector activities in street and how they accommodate to the Urban design will be the study are of this dissertation and it may pave the way for creating a new outlook to the Urban built fabric.

In the organization of these spaces the users perceivebility is a more appropriate approach. In this manner, the physical elements of a space can be organized to form relations to a center, enclosure and continuity as illustrated by many scholars. Within an organization of this nature the informal sector activities too has a place. They can be comfortably accommodated within this following the proper guidelines as discussed in this study.
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Location map of the Borella junction

The five major paths come and open outs at the center giving sense of arrival to user.

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INTRODUCTION

TOPIC EXPLANATION

Architecture, urban design and planning become the key words in the studies of urban built environments. Physical design comes into the existence either as a product of architecture or as a product of urban design.

It is physical design that matters for the average man’s understanding where as structuring and identifying the environment while orientating himself with it is of vital importance to human existence. Therefore the creation, preservation and maintenance of distinctive character in human environments are of great importance.

Most of the cities of Sri Lanka being urbanized and as a result of that physical change of the cities being exposed to the evolution taking place with urbanization. Space is getting more restricted and affected while human made objects and buildings are appearing in every bit of space filling the gaps to house man’s needs in this congested world. Therefore the designers having a thorough understanding of responding to a good urban environment and having designed good physical environmental situations considering and fulfilling the man’s needs in terms of physical and mental satisfaction is a must.

Now, physical environment of the urban areas getting polluted and making complex the social and economic system of its occupants.

“Of course cities are not only physical environment, in which smoke, dust, heat, noise filth and darkness threaten the human organism they also social systems in which the circulation of goods and people is a central function”

(Jaqualine. R.1985; Preface)
A social system of this nature, trade and commerce has an essential part in which the informal sector plays an important role. Informal sector refers to scattered economic units, producing, distributing goods and services, consists of self-employed employers. Which utilizes a low level of technology and skills, low and irregular incomes and highly unstable employment to those who work in it.

As in any developing country the informal sector activities are an integral part of the Sri Lanka economy, which specially dominates the rural economy, one extensively in towns, play vital role in cities and one indispensable in the metropolis Colombo.

The informal sector activities deviates in to many categories of trading activities which expanse from home based small enterprise to large-scale manufacturing and services. The street operated enterprises are one of the different types coming under the informal sector trading activities.

In this context, it is not only a component of the social system, but also an activator of the built environment and hence, in the Architecture of city, is vital and immense.

This importance leads to understand that, a sufficient consideration must be given to these activities and to accommodate them in suitable way and designing and development by built environment in order to achieve meaningful urban spaces, which is the ultimate goal of the architect.

The designer for the built environment as a consumer for the space has a greater impact on the livability of space, which is the belonging of every human being to sustain. Man in the first place imagines the space and apprehends through the experience encountered in the physical environment. Experience strengthen the
man's emotion to get in to the active life of being which is the blood running through the vessels of physical environment to give life. Therefore man it seems that man and his environment to be the sprit and physique of living earth. Man responds to the environment and behaves himself as a part of it. Environment becomes the moderating factor for man's living attitude and his behavior. Thus, to make the cities better place for well being habitation, development of meaningful. Environment is more important for the man's growth and positive approach towards his own kind. Architect who creates spaces to become places of livelihood has to be alternative towards the urbanization process where he may put considerable impetus upon human inspirations and imaginations with the spaces that he creates in an urban environment.

INTENTION OF THE STUDY

This study can be consideration as an attempt to make a "Positive attitude" towards the informal sector as an essential, indispensable component of a city. Specially for the economy, while contributing much to the physical character of its environment.

Among many informal sector activities operated trading activities are one important area come under the preview of street Architecture. This study concentrate its view mainly on the street operated informal sector activities, their contribution to built the urban environment, the present views towards them and the importance of their existence. In the light of the above the intension of the study is to develop a hypothetical guideline to accommodate the informal sector activities with the streetscapes in an urban context, In order to achieve an Architecturally sound built environment
IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

"Livelihood of the urban poor particularly the informal sector activities operating on street and other public places are usually seen as undesirable for environmental management by urban authorities, which are preoccupied with keeping their cities clean. Hence informal sector activities are often seen as 'eye sores' and evicted from city centers in the name of public cleanliness and orderliness" (Perera L.S.A.R and Amin.N, 1996. Pag.3)

Infact informal sector considered as a nuisance and retardant to the positive growth of a city. With new development plans the informal sector activities are expelled from the city area. Anyhow in the urban economy informal sector provides employment, buying capacities for the urban poor and rich and offering services at the cheaper rate. According to their life styles and behaviors a diverse literature has emerge and it always connected to the common literature, which is used by the scholars. At the same time there are and growing interest in the fields of urban designing and Architecture towards making meaningful spaces in the process of developing cities.

When making meaningful spaces and cities these informal sector activities contribute more for it. Therefore responsible government bodies must try their best to give some form of assistant through credit, technological or any suitable form, to get better result for their own upliftment and as well has country economy.

The meaningfulness is what resulted by the overall management of the components of a city. The informal sector activities, specially the street operated enterprises are one important component as it has been discussed earlier for the sustainable growth of a city.
In this sense, the study has an importance from the urban designers point of view, as a guidance to incorporate and amalgamate the activities with the other components of an urban design.

METHODOLOGY

As it has been stated earlier, this study, from its inception, is developed on a *positive attitude* towards accommodating the informal sector entrepreneurs (legally accepted) within the designed urban spaces. The intension too is to bring out possible meanings of incorporating their activities with the other components.

In order to achieve the said, the study;

a) Discuss the urban design and Architecture, need and importance of the urban design and effect of the informal sector to the urban design.

b) Introduce the informal sector activities, its nature characteristics as well as its importance to be located within the urban built environment.

c) Thirdly, it will bring down its scope to street operated enterprises, as the informal sector activities are a widely spread component, that needs much wider research are to be studied.

d) The type of urban spaces in which the street operated informal sector activities are functioning, are identified at the next step.

e) The development of a hypothetical guidance for a better incorporation by activities in the identified urban spaces is the key issue of this study. The essential spatial compositions of the said space are subjected to analysis.
develop the above and the position that is reserved by the said activities are then bring to view.

f) The hypothesis developed, is subject to examination for their validity with some selected practical situations from the city of Colombo at the end of the study and the conclusions are derived out of this examination.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

As the informal sector is a collection of several of activities in the city life or elsewhere, ranging from underground activities to highly profitable micro enterprises. The due consideration is given only to the street and circulation route operated entrepreneurs who are the most visible and vital component to the physical planning aspects, such as pavement vendors, hawkers etc.

The identification of spaces the places for street operated informal sector, are purely, based on observations made of present day urban situations, while the literature on this subject are also involved to a greater extent.

The analysis of spaces, based or the selected philosophy by the author, as for its suitability to a study of this nature, as well as for its intention.

The selected examples for illustrations are from Colombo and its suburbs due to the convenience of research and further there randomly selected.

Sources of written materials available on this subject specially regarding the design aspects, is proved to be rather in adequate. Hence this study had to be restricted, most towards the first hand information, observations, sketches and photographic surveys. In addition materials has drawn from, journals, newspaper clippings and other related sources.