CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE STANDARDS OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES FOR RECREATION IN URBAN AREAS OF SRI LANKA IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION

W.L.R. Amarathunge

University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.
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ABSTRACT
Public open space is a vital component of the urban environment which is under increasing pressure due to urban development. It is an essential part of the urban heritage and infrastructure. It not only provides a pleasant and natural environment but also improves the quality of life in urban areas by performing essential environmental functions. Potential economic benefits also accrue by increasing the attractiveness of a place to live and work.

In 1990 Urban Development Authority formulated a standard of "1 ha of public open space per 1000 people" to provide adequate amount of public open space in urban areas. This standard has been introduced mainly focusing on the urban development pattern of Colombo City. Although the prepared development plans for Colombo City had envisaged to provide sufficient amount of public open spaces, it was still not become a fruitful effort due to various reasons. It can be seen that people use the available public open spaces without seeking more spaces.

Although the standard cannot reach the extent of public open space which the urban area actually needs, a direct demand for more spaces of urban people is not visible Therefore, it appears that the lack of public open spaces has not been felt considering the life pattern of the urban dwellers. But the perception of urban people on public open spaces differs from what can be seen on the surface. Because of that, the objective of this study is to review the existing situation in regard to public open spaces in urban areas according to the standard. The study is mainly based on the public perception of the urban people. Although there are several studies on public open spaces relating to urban designing and urban planning aspects, there have been no studies done on urban public open space standards. Therefore this study will add new knowledge to the field of urban designing and urban planning.

The evaluation of this study enables to identify the existing situation of the public open spaces in urban areas in terms of the current standard light of public perception and it was help to review the current urban public open spaces standard of "1 ha of land per 1 000 people". The standard is reviewed through its application upon Mattakkuliya Ward of the Colombo Municipal Council area, which is the selected urban development area for the purpose.