

COMMUNITY SPACES IN URBAN LOW-INCOME RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS IN SRI LANKA AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO HIGH-DENSITY LIVING

A dissertation presented to the
Faculty of Architecture
University of Moratuwa
For the
Final Examination in M. Sc. Architecture



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ABSTRACT

From the history of civilization community spaces have been playing an important role in establishing the 'sense of community' within residential neighbourhoods. However, with urbanization communal life has become a very complicated, decreasing its importance. Due to the lack of proper environment for rich communal life, people have to live within a situation where the people and the places are unknown and instances where the information is unreliable. This has led people to live individually. Within such a situation it has become a challenge to achieve community cohesion.

Nevertheless, the community experts have understood the importance of community spaces as objects of creating healthy interaction among people of the community and therefore generating community cohesion. Their opinion is to use architecture to achieve this. It has been revealed that high-density residential areas are the most crucial in that problem.

Therefore this study is basically aimed at exploring the strategies that have been adopted to create healthy social interaction and identifying the contribution of built environment in terms of the design of community spaces. The study will specifically examine the contention that such community spaces are used variously by the inhabitants of the residences and that certain strategies used in these spaces are more conducive to the interaction than others.

Therefore, the first stage of this study traces the value of urban public spaces as community spaces. The second part examines the role community spaces play within residential communities. At this the vitality of communal life as a key social binder and the forces shaping the communal life is discussed.

Finally the study considers about the importance of community spaces within low-income residential environments for their well-being. It identifies how the mechanisms of social interaction and generating a sense of community together could promote an architecture, which could uplift the neighbourly attitudes of people. The absence of above mechanisms had resulted in a number of problems in high-density areas. Lack of 'sense of community' is one of those. The study reveals the applicability of community spaces as a solution for that problem.

From the total study, it tries to explain the importance of the built - environment generating social interaction. Hence gives a clear knowledge of its accepted mores, and predictable guidelines for behaviour, an essential framework for social stability. So that, architects should understand the importance of built environment in terms of organization of space as a vehicle of behaviour for sense of control and collective coherent among the people, in creating a neighbourhood. Therefore it explains the applicability of community spaces for the creation of meaningful and habitable environments in high - density-housing schemes, to create sense of community within those neighbourhoods.



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