

**RECLAIMING TRAFFIC INFLUENCED
URBAN RESIDUAL SPACES FOR THE PUBLIC:
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLOMBO DISTRICT.**

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Masters Degree in Urban Design

Department of Architecture

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own work and this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other university or institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text.

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Date

The above candidate has carried out research for the dissertation under my supervision.

.....

Signature (Dr. Janaka Wijeesundara)

.....

Date

ABSTRACT

Although modern cities suffer from lack of open public spaces, there are many unused areas within the same city without being taken its full potential. Most of them are created to solve traffic related issues. The attention given to revitalize them is questionable. Therefore the study aims to identify the possibilities of traffic related urban residual spaces being reclaimed for public use. The study will explore most suitable reclaiming possibilities in selected urban residual spaces. Usage qualities, spatial qualities of existing residual spaces and revitalization possibilities were tested in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted for this study. Data collection was done via questionnaires, interviews and systematic observations. Four cases were selected with variation in its physical layouts and locations to represent the traffic related urban residual spaces in Colombo district.

The study reveals spatial and usage qualities of traffic related residual spaces which vary mainly due to location type and size of the site; people feel unsafe in residual spaces due to vehicular movement and that feeling could be mitigated by physical separations and strategies. Lack of accessibility affects the users to be limited in to a particular category based on gender and age. With reducing the size of the residual space, the reclaim possibility is being changed. Due to traffic movement, most of traffic related spaces has higher visibility, defined site boundaries and it's a potential for reclaiming. Lack of management and control is the main reasons behind the residually. Although the traffic related residual spaces have residual symptoms, respondents believed that there is a possibility to reclaiming those spaces for public use. Every residual space has unique appropriation /intervention by users. By evaluating these appropriations it's possible to select most suitable reclaiming possibility for residual space.

Key words- *Residual space, Reclaiming, Traffic related, Spatial and usage qualities, appropriation*

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INTRODUCTION

Background/Introduction

Nowadays, urban land demand is very high due to rapid population growth. Urban Open lands for public spaces are rapidly decreasing. The smart usage of urban lands is becoming an urban need. Although the overcrowded cities suffer from lack of open public spaces, there are many unused areas within the same city. At the first glance; most of residual spaces within the city limits are created as a result of traffic related solutions.

Need for the study

- Urban development agencies are mostly involved and encouraged in developing large vacant open lands as public spaces.
- But it is observed that the general attitude towards urban residual open space is that it couldn't be used for any other useful manner.

Research issue (hypothesis)

- Although modern cities suffer from lack of open public spaces, there are many unused areas within the same city. Most of unused within the city are created due to traffic related issues. The attention for revitalizing them is questionable.
- Town Planners, Urban designers, traffic engineers suggest their proposals don't pay much attention about those residual spaces which are being created by them.

Research gap

- Many studies are available regarding urban spaces and its characteristics in Sri Lankan context. But the extension of such researches towards urban residual spaces is scarce.
- A study found on "reclaiming residual spaces for the public: a case study from the city of Cairo" (2013), it's a qualitative study which is based on

observations. But there is a potential to develop and apply that study for reclaiming possibilities of residual spaces for the public in Sri Lanka.

Main research problem

- What are the possibilities of traffic related urban residual spaces for reclaiming for public use?

Objectives of the study are as follows;

- Examine the definitions of URS and revitalizing approach – Literature review
- Examine a theoretical framework to identify revitalization possibilities — Literature Review
- Explore the occupants' perceptions and author's observations on existing usage or and proposed revitalization possibilities (Interviews, questioners)- case studies
- Explore most suitable reclaiming possibilities in selected urban residual spaces – conclusion

Method of Study

The above objectives are operationalized using following methods

- *Objective 1* - Examine a theoretical framework to identify the Residual spaces, their social-spatial characteristics. – Literature review
- *Objective 2*- Examine a theoretical framework to measure the impact level of identified social-spatial characteristics for reclaiming urban residual spaces. – Structured close ended questionnaire, systematic observations
- *Objective 3*- Identify the reclaiming possibilities for selected urban residual spaces as public space. Case Study will be done in 4 cases selected based on its variation in characteristics. The data to identify the reclaiming possibilities identified through the Literature Review (Objective 1 and 2) will be collected via Questionnaire, Interviews and Systematic Observations. Identifying the reclaiming possibilities through analysis and Interpretation of data

Research out come

- Identify reasons behind the residually and most relevant reclaiming possibilities in selected traffic related urban residual spaces.

Limitations

- Only consider the residual open spaces (Open side space and Open middle space and open underneath space) in urban areas of Colombo district which are being created by traffic related issues.
- The study will be limited to analyze reclaiming possibilities for public. Other factors will not be within the scope of this study.
- Since this is a basic study, five cases are being selected as a representative sample of reclaiming possibilities for the public. But the validity of the study will enchase by selecting more cases for different types.