

## People's Perception of Revitalized Public Spaces: The Case of Independence Square, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

*The increasing tendency of enhancing the quality of public spaces in developing countries, for example by promoting strong visual identity, is a crucial government policy instrument in economic and urban revitalization, while generating threats against the 'inclusive' qualities of these public spaces. Concerning that matter this study was designed to fulfill two main objectives: Identify the different community perceptions regarding current public space revitalization actions that are going on in Colombo and to find out how it vary with different social levels in order to discover the social inclusive/exclusive nature of those particular projects selecting Independence Square as the case study.*

*This paper concludes with the following results: The revitalization activities leads to further shrink the limited city space that has been used by the marginal groups while diminishing the 'inclusive' character of the public space and the city. Further, it challenges several current government policy assumptions concerning public space and give clues for urban planners and policy makers about the need of broad definition to the term "community" recognizing the so called marginal or problem groups are also a part of the community.*

**Keywords:** Public Spaces, Urban revitalization, People Perceptions, Social Inclusion

### 1. Introduction

The establishment of truly 'vital and viable public spaces' which can guarantee the creation of inclusive cities has been the focus of many developed countries and more recently of developing countries too (WangP., 2002). Revitalization of public spaces is comparably new and is presently a popular phenomenon in Sri Lanka subsequent to the end of 30-years of civil conflicts. Until year 2009 during which the war came to end, the government's first priority was war rather than city development. With the end of the war, political establishments and the government have focused on developing the cities through revitalization programmes. This is to drive economic growth, improve quality of life (including health status) and images of cities, mainly in Colombo. Hence, currently, revitalization of public spaces is the central concern of most urban planners. One can witness workers being busy making roads, pavements, gardens etc, to give Colombo a much needed face lift under the city improvement and beatification programme led by the Ministry of Defense and Urban Development. Many kinds of resources have been allocated for these programmes which are top down; often led by political leaders. A question often asked is "Whether current urban revitalization programmes in Colombo fulfill the objectives and needs of all city users?".

However, it is well understood that revitalization of public spaces should be carefully considered to cater to all the urban dwellers of its use. It is also believed that only careful planning can ensure reasonable and efficient use of public spaces by all city users and avoid the negative impacts which may come about. The challenge for local authorities, planners, architects and others involved in revitalization initiatives is to take into consideration everyday people's needs, and the wider civic functions of public spaces in cities (Akkar, 2006). Thus, it is useful to have information of the community's point of view regarding public space revitalization projects.

Cities are no more homogeneous entities and have become dynamic due to diverse inhabitants. In Sri Lanka, current government urban revitalization priority is to improve the urban landscape quality by city beautification actions as a strategy for urban development. Yet different social groups have different opinions regarding these projects in the context of benefits which they perceive. Thus, this study poses the question, "What are the different community perceptions of current public space revitalization attempts in Colombo city in the context of perceived benefits to their quality of life?" It thereby raises the question "how inclusive these projects are?". The paper aims to address these questions by examining the public open spaces in Colombo. The main objective of the study is to identify the community perceptions regarding current public space revitalization actions in Colombo in terms of benefits which they perceived and to find out, how they vary at different social levels. This is expected to discover the inclusive/exclusive nature of those particular projects.

This research study focused only on the urban revitalization attempts in Colombo (urban landscaping and city beautification programmes). The study is based on a single case study with a limited sample. It does not deal with other stakeholder perceptions beyond the project boundary.

## 2. Background Studies

### *Identification of Community impacts of public space revitalization*

Different countries have adapted urban revitalization processes with a variety of objectives. According to reviewed literature, successful urban revitalization should incorporate social and environmental policies and it should facilitate better physical change and urban development (Waever, 1973 as cited in Dayaratne 1981). Further, urban revitalization can have many positive effects. It might have economic, social and environmental benefits and improve quality of public spaces of the city. Although it has been recognized as a city development strategy, many opinions were emerged contradictory due to its bias performances favoring special social groups (Wang, 2002). Through the literature review on the impacts of similar kind of projects, following impacts can be summarized:

**Table 1: List of potential impacts of PSRP**

Dimensions	Positive	Negative
Socio cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment and social opportunities for local residents</li> <li>• Increase in the level of local interest in the activity associated with the project</li> <li>• Increasing social cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissatisfaction especially where the theme of the project does not fit the socio-cultural level of the community</li> <li>• Benefits are more bias towards one social group ex: elite</li> <li>• Exclusion of some social groups</li> </ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regeneration and beautification of public areas</li> <li>• Construction of new facilities and infrastructure</li> <li>• Improving city image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent of this benefit depends on the long term usefulness of these facilities to the community</li> <li>• neglecting lower socioeconomic groups during the creation of new 'desirable middle/high class environments'</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring a sense of belonging and sharing to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid development may bring disruptions which may lead to feelings of alienation, and the loss of a sense of belonging or attachment to the community</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased local authority revenue</li> <li>• Increased demand for local goods and services</li> <li>• Creation of direct and indirect employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability issues</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving &amp; managing city environmental resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental damage due to over use</li> </ul>

*Source:* Compiled by Author based on literature

All together these underlying principles, objectives and criticisms suggested that any PSRP should consider the aspirations regarding the quality of life of all citizens to become a successful or sustainable public space revitalization programme. The research is designed to identify different perceptions of community on current public space revitalization projects based on these theoretical findings.

### 3.0 Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Selection of the Case Study

City of Colombo is the capital of Sri Lanka and famed by neglected, deteriorating but potentially magnificent resource in terms of national development. Therefore, several attempts were taken in the recent years through massive development programs to modernize Colombo city and its surrounding. In a study of this nature Colombo will become an obvious choice in terms of above reasons as well as population, population density, multi ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi income nature in the society. Such variation leads to the diverse socio economic requirements, perceptions and ultimately distributes a heterogeneous character in Colombo. Hence public space revitalization attempts under the Metro Colombo Urban Development Project (MCUDP) were selected for study.

***Selection of the case study project from Colombo city – Public space revitalization Project***

Under the programme of Urban Landscaping for Recreation and City Beautification (for which the government has given priority) several revitalization projects including development of Independence Square, refurbishment of Old Dutch Hospital building at Colombo Fort, revitalization of Beira Lake and its surroundings, and development of Pettah bus terminal have been assessed with the objective of selection of case study. Finally based on below mentioned criteria, Independent / Torrington Square public space revitalization project was selected for further study.

**Table 2: Case study selection Criteria & specifications**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Specification</b>
Project type, objective and impact	Public open space regeneration projects , which were implemented with a purpose of improve the quality of life promoting diverse uses
Nature Project impacted area	Part of an urban area which is having enormous community heterogeneity
Type of access	Since the objective is to investigate community perceptions, priority was given to the common access projects which are not purposely exclusive part of community using it
Level of completion	Action project should have been completed to usable level.

**3.2. Revitalization of the Independence Square Project (Project description and location)**

This project is being carried out by the UDA with the aim of enhancing the stature and protecting the nobility of the Independence hall and establishing a green zone. Project is planned to be carried out over 12 stages, is anticipated to cost of Rs 350 million. Consequently work has been accelerated on the third and fourth stages of this project, which are a proposed Cultural Avenue from Bauddhaloka Mawatha to the Independence Square Development area and work in connection with the Ceremonial Entrance to the Independence Square and different kind of walking tracks.

**3.3. Selection of Study Area**

Based on the rationale of "Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things" (Kolb L. W. 1954) which is known as first law of geography, the study area has been expanded to one kilometer radius towards different settlements from the independent square for the purpose of getting public perceptions.



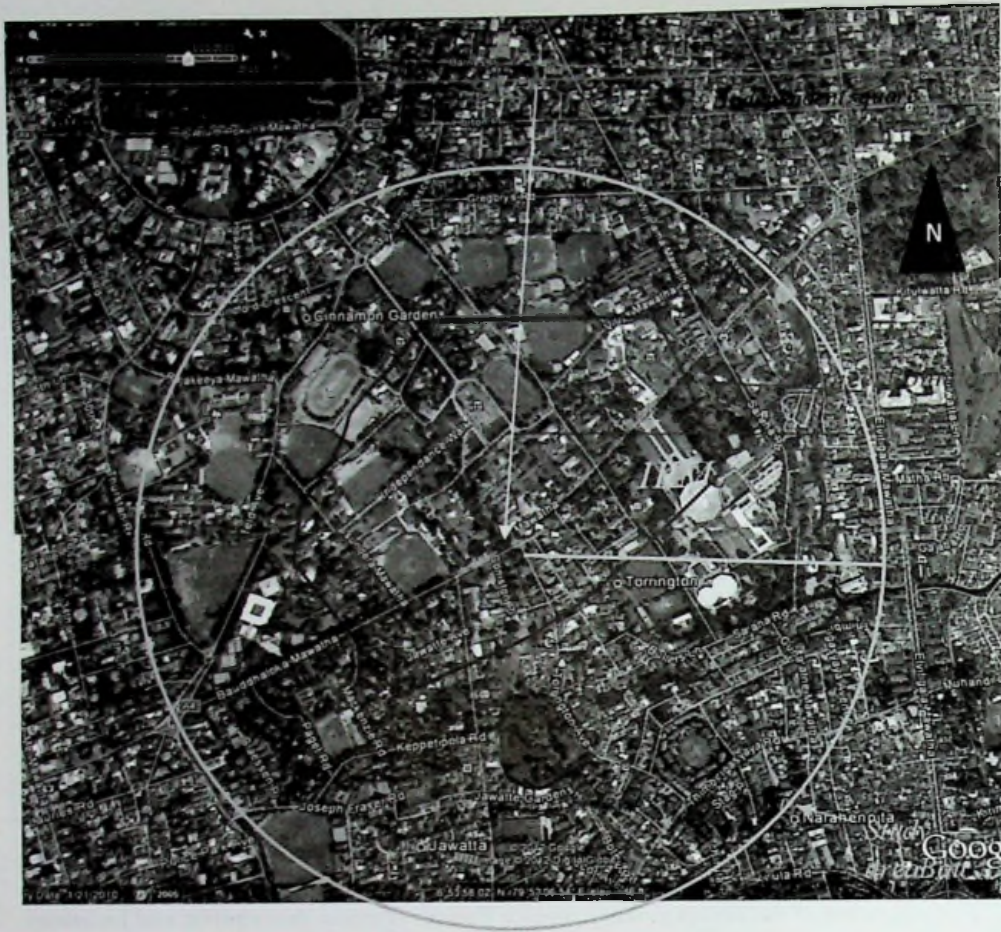


Figure1: Location of the study area

### 3.4. Systematic identification of deferent social groups in study area

The main objective of this research was identification of different user perceptions on selected PSRP especially from different socio economic groups. Therefore, major communities within 1km study area boundary have been selected as participants shown as in table 3.

Table 3: Specification and location of target group for study

Target group	specification	Selected area
On site participants	from people who are using project site	Independent square project site
Off site participant - City users	People who are working & gathering around study area	Torrington place, Maitland place and surrounding
Off site participant- city inhabitants	Areas selected according to the income status	Low income – 60 watta Middle income- Gunarathne rd, jawatta rd High income- Gregory rd, Torrington

Above mentioned community groups were selected to obtain true sample to get perceptions by all diverse city owners. Those community groups were identified as target group after preliminary visits to the project site and surrounding areas and according to the consultation of project maintenance team, GND officer and officers of UDA.

### 3.5. Survey Methods and Sampling

#### Observations

There are two main purposes for conducting observations in this study: one is to identify users and user behaviours and investigate the use pattern around square and observation was conducted on square site from 6:00am to 10:00pm on weekdays and weekends. The information recorded on the site includes who use the squares (i.e. age, gender, social class and tourists or local), the purpose (i.e. how do they use it), and the use density. Here the term 'use density' is describe the volume of use of squares. A 10-point scale was adapted to measure use density by the researcher, from 0.5 to 5 (every 0.5 point), in which 0.5 means that there are few people (<40) on the square, while 5 means that it is full (>400) of people.

#### Questionnaire survey

By considering the circumstances of this particular research, especially neediness of the identification of different perceptions on public space revitalization project, questionnaire survey adopted as main technique to collect data. Furthermore, observations and semi structured interviews were used to fill the gap creating by the questioner survey. Table 4 shows the sample method, sample size and the targeted group for experimental study.

**Table 4: Specification of target group for study**

Type of group	Method used for survey	Method of sampling
On site participants project users	QA, Observations & Interview, temporal basis within a weak	Stratified random sample survey
Off site participant-city inhabitants	QA & Interview	Stratified random sample survey
Offsite participant - City users (workers & consumers)	QA & Interview	Non probabilistic random sample survey

*Source:* Compiled by Author

Overall sample size is 104 and it consists with 38 people of high income respondents (monthly income is above Rs. 50,000), 34 and 32 samples of middle (Rs. 15,000- 50,000) and low income (monthly income is below Rs. 15,000) respondents respectively. Since perceptions of respondents of different income groups were decided to take for comparison, sample also mainly based on this categorical variable.

#### Preparation of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was structured with many close ended and few open ended questions to get perception of three main sections (Questionnaire is attached in Appendix B). The first was intended to get respondents profile. The second section was intended to gather perception on the particular project according to the criterions which were collected through the literature survey. And the third section mainly focused to get the overall idea about the revitalization project implementing in Colombo.

### 3.6. Identification of Perceptions

#### *Criteria selection for identify community perceptions on public space revitalization projects*

Perception regarding the project has been identified through predefined set of statements/questions covering objectives of public space revitalization, common issues and expectations of urban revitalization & characteristics of inclusive city which were obtained from the literature review. Based on below criterion develop the questionnaire which was used to identify the different perceptions of different social groups on particular project.

**Table 5: Criteria and indicators for identify project impacts**

Base of the Criteria	Dimension	Criteria	Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles of Public spaces Town planning Urban design and sustainable urban regeneration</li> <li>• Objectives of regeneration projects,</li> <li>• Common impacts, issues and expectations of regeneration projects</li> <li>• Nature of the selected project</li> </ul>	Economic	Local economic growth Affordability, economic incentives	Provision of Employment opportunities, local revenue External benefits to neighboring communities
	Social & cultural	Accessibility (for any social group) Social cohesion social exclusion Safety & comfort Effectiveness	Can everybody in-out-use (in any time) Everyone feel friendly-familiar- safe and comfortable Provision of Varsity of benefits social, economic, health
	Psychological	Belongingness Alienation	Free of fear to access Sense of belongings
	Physical	Accessibility Conviviality Usability/suitability Flexibility Connectivity Efficiency	Maintenance & management Do the elements of the projects satisfy the different community needs Opportunities for varied activities
	Environment	Environmental quality	Community satisfaction on existing natural elements Enhance natural resources

Source: By Author using literature

#### *Identify Overall perceptions of impacts*

Adopting the methods of Fredline (2000), the main dependent variables, (residents' perceptions) were measured using 32 impact statements, and participants were first asked to assess whether they believed if there were changed in particular statement due to the project and to identify the "direction of the change". If residents did perceive a change, they were subsequently asked to assess the "effect on their personal quality of life", and also the "effect on the community as a whole". Those personal and community effects were measured using a seven point scale ranging from -3 (very negative) to +3 (very positive).

Part A of each questionnaire asked whether something has changed because of the project and which direction. For example,

1a <b>Social cohesion</b>	<b>Statement</b>	Decreased $\Rightarrow$
	Because of the project many and varied opportunities for social interaction and social cohesion have	Increased $\Rightarrow$
		No change
		Don't know

Part B of the questionnaire asked participants to rate how he/she is affected personally. This reflected the effect of project on their personal quality of life. For example,

1b	<b>Statement</b>	-3	-2	-1	0	-1	-2	-3
	How has this affected your personal quality of life?	High negative	negative	Weak negative	No effect	Weak positive	positive	High positive

Part C asked to rate how it affected the community as a whole. This will reflect the overall effect on the community. For example,

1c	<b>Statement</b>	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
	How has this affected the community as a whole?							

### 3.7. Analytical Approach

The analysis of data of the QA survey was done by using integrated statistical method due to the nature of the questionnaire (most questions are close ended). According to the nature of answers for the first section of the questionnaire differentiated the socio-economic status of the respondents and second and third sections of the questionnaire provide different perception regarding the project which could be used as a tool for measuring the dimensions of social inclusion of the particular project and it was designed to compare perception with their socio economic conditions based on the identified category of different social groups.

#### *Selection of technique*

Respondent's answers and ratings were analyzed using integrated statistical methods in order to identify their perception on project respective to their social groups. Collected raw data were imported into the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and been analyzed using SPSS techniques of ANOVA, Chi-square test and Post-Hoc analysis.

### 4. Analysis Results

The following section initially presents description about project users and their nature of use of the project site.



#### 4.1 Identify the project users

In the following table 6, Results indicate that, 70% from total respondents have been used the revitalized project site (at least once) for diverse purposes. Out of them 51% are high income people (97% within high income) and 30% and 19% is middle (65% within middle income) and low income respectively

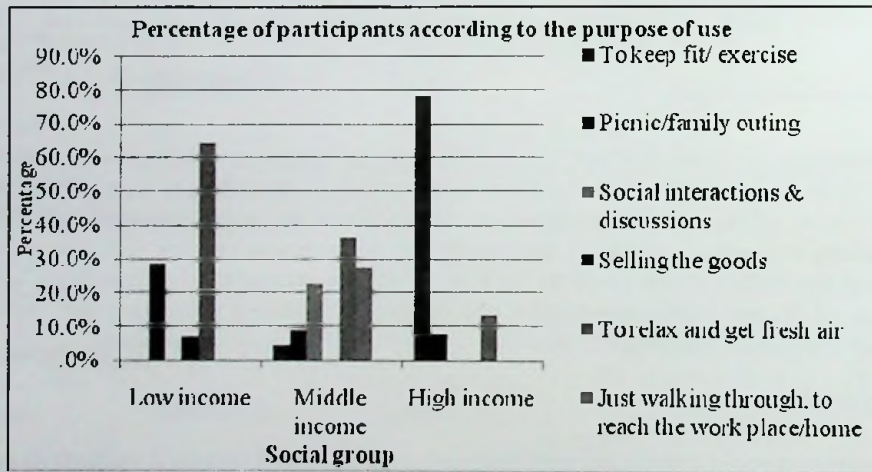
**Table 6:Percentage of project use by different social groups**

Project User	Social group			Total
	Low income	Middle income	High income	
% of Non use within social group	56%	35%	3%	
% of Non use within all non-users	58%	39%	3%	100%
% of Use within social group	44%	65%	97%	
% of Use within all Project Users	19.2%	30.1%	50.7%	100%

Source: Questionnaire survey

#### 4.2. Reasons for use & non use

Through the questionnaires it was found that the project participants, non-participants and reason behind use or nonuse. Those reasons are differ according to their social levels. The descriptive analysis of the motivations of local residents to go to squares is shown in figure 2 below.



**Figure 2: Purposes of use (motivation) the project site by different social groups**

Source: Questionnaire survey

#### 4.3. Social group & their nature (frequency & stay time) of use

According to the statistics, frequency of use and the duration of stay of high income group are significantly higher than the low income group.

According to the following Table 7, out of the sample of high income community, 95% is using the project site more than once a month while 24% of middle income and only 16% of low income people are using the site.

Further, a relatively large proportion of high income people (81%) use project site regularly (more than once a week) while only 14% and 7% of the middle and low income local residents.

**Table 7: Frequency of use the project site by different social groups**

Type of project user (participants)		Frequency of visit				Total
		less than once a month	Monthly	More than once a month	More than once a week	
Low income	% within Type of user	50%	14%	29%	7%	100%
	% within Frequency of visit	39%	29%	29%	3%	
Middle income	% within Type of user	46%	23%	18%	14%	100%
	% within Frequency of visit	56%	71%	29%	9%	
High income	% within Type of user	3%	0%	16%	81%	100%
	% within Frequency of visit	6%	0%	43%	88%	
Total	% within Type of user	25%	10%	19%	47%	100%
	% within Frequency of visit	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Result regarding stay time indicates that most of the high income participants stay on the site for 1-2 hours (46%) followed by more than 2 hours (22%). Yet usual stay time for middle and low income participants is less than 1hour (Appendix C, Table 9, 9.1). Yet it shows slight increase of stay time of those two gropes in weekends. Percentage of people who are staying more than two hours is increased by 29% of low income and 54% of middle income.

High positive correlation between frequency of visiting and duration of stay with monthly personal income (0.613 and 0.606 significant levels respectively) show the use of project site by high income groups more conveniently than other social groups. The relationships between frequency of visiting and length of stay, and monthly personal income, type of participants (social class), age group, travel mode and sex, are explored by the application of Chi-square tests.

The results shown in Table 8 reveals that there is a significant difference between use patterns and demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of local residents, except for frequency of visiting and sex (gender), frequency of visiting and age.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests: Use Pattern

Use pattern	Characteristic	Value	df	Sig.
Frequency of visiting	Age	9.319	12	0.676
	Type of respondent	69.634	8	0.000
	Gender	5.998	3	0.725
	Monthly Income	46.459	8	0.000
	Travel mode	74.260	10	0.000
Duration of stay	Age	47.993	12	0.000
	Type of respondent	91.223	6	0.000
	Gender	43.352	3	0.23
	Monthly Income	170.857	8	0.000
	Travel mode	112.453	10	0.000

Results indicates that the dominant project user is the high income social group while very few of others groups are using the site. That has been clearly demonstrated by the results of analyses regarding to the Composition of the projects participants, frequency of use and duration of stay.

**Use pattern**

The observation was conducted from 6:00am to 10:00pm continuously. The use density, characteristics of users (their social status, age, and whether they are tourists or local residents), and their major activities were recorded every hour.

From the data concerning the use pattern of project site, it can be found that 7:00-8:00 and 17:00-21:00 are the most preferred periods for people to be on the Independence Square during both weekdays and weekends.

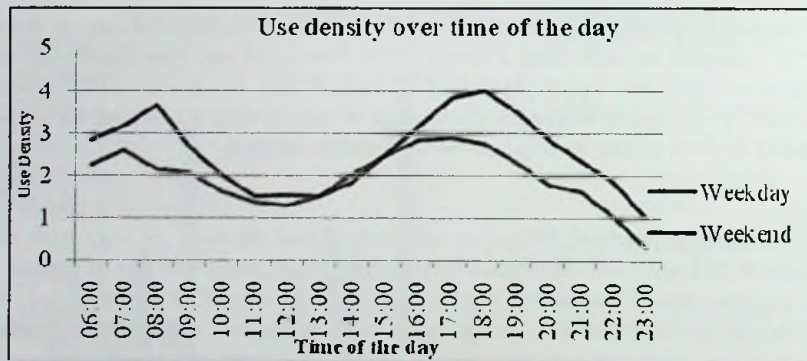


Figure 3: Use pattern of project site weekday & weekend

The changes in use density at different times for weekdays and weekends also differ according to the income level (below figure 4).

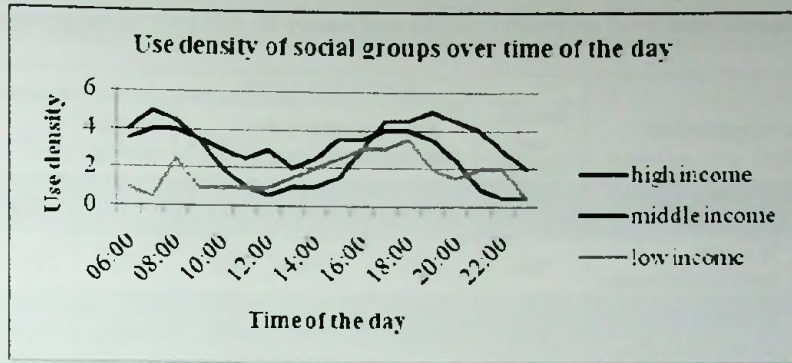


Figure 4: Use pattern of project site respect to the social groups

Source: Field observation

The site has two crests on the use density graph. Although for this revitalized Square the crests occur between 6:00-8:00 and 11:00-21:00 in weekdays, low and middle income people are mostly visiting during weekends.

#### 4.2. Perception on Independence Square Revitalization Project

##### Perception on fulfilment of lacking requirements

Below table shows the perception regarding to the fulfillment of specific needs by the regenerated project site.

Table 9: Perception on fulfilment of lacking requirements

Type of respondent		Lacking requirements			Total
		health related activities (exercise)	Increasing mobility	Aesthetic & environment needs	
Low	% within Type of respondent	0%	67%	33%	100%
Middle	% within Type of respondent	36%	44%	20%	100%
High	% within Type of respondent	76%	0%	24%	100%
Total	% within Type of respondent	53%	24%	24%	100%

##### Overall satisfaction on results & nature

The descriptive analysis on the satisfaction level of different social groups on revitalization project is shown in below table 10.

**Table 10: Satisfaction level on project results and nature by different social groups**

Type of respondent		Satisfaction results					Total
		Strongly not satisfied	Not satisfied	No opinion	satisfied	Strongly satisfied	
Low income	% within Type of respondent	69%	25%	6%	0%	0%	100%
	% within Satisfaction results	76%	62%	15%	0%	0%	31%
Middle income	% within Type of respondent	15%	15%	32%	27%	12%	100%
	% within Satisfaction results	17%	39%	85%	53%	13%	33%
High income	% within Type of respondent	5%	0%	0%	21%	74%	100%
	% within Satisfaction results	7%	0%	0%	47%	88%	37%
Total	% within Type of respondent	28%	13%	13%	16%	31%	100%
	% within Satisfaction results	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Although 31% of the total respondents have strongly satisfied with the project results, that differs according to the income levels. 74% of the high income respondents are strongly satisfied with the project while 76% of the low income respondents are strongly unsatisfied with the project.

**Overall perceptions on impacts**

Different patterns in perceptions can be observed. In the case of low income community groups, the majority (64%) indicated 'no effect' at the personal level, and the proportions indicating a negative impact outweighed those indicating a positive impact, resulting in a negative mean score. It is interesting to note that although the 6% of low income indicate very negative impacts at community level, no one of high income indicating a very negative impact at community level. Behalf of that 60% of high income and 74% of them indicated "very positive impacts" at personal and community levels respectively.

**Table 11: Overall perceptions of personal and community impacts by each social group**

Statement	Social group	very negative (-3)	-2	-1	no effect	1	2	Very positive (3)	MEAN
Overall, how does the project affect your personal quality of life	Low income	12%	11%	5%	64%	6%	2%	0.2%	-0.5224
	Middle income	2%	2%	2%	56%	7%	8%	23%	0.7876
	High income	0%	0%	0.2%	27%	5%	8%	60%	2.0124
Overall, how does the project affect community as a whole	Low income	6%	8%	4%	28%	15%	23%	16%	0.7373
	Middle income	5%	6%	3%	20%	13%	14%	40%	1.3262
	High income	0%	0%	0.2%	16%	4%	6%	74%	2.3733

When tested using ANOVA (impact level × different groups), the significant variance was observed for different social groups and also between personal and community effects.

**Perceptions on specific impacts**

Frequency analysis was performed comparing the relationship between the perception of different social groups and the perceived direction of change of the impacts. In an effort to simplify these results, Table 14 shows only the direction of change perceived by the largest proportion of the respective sample.

High income respondents have been always indicated the direction of impacts towards positive track (by giving answers as agree, increased or better) while low income respondents have indicated their perception regarding change towards negative direction. For the statements regarding social impacts majority of low income and two third of middle income respondents have been indicated negative responds, statements such as “Comfortably at the site” (91%, 62% - disagreed), “Promotion of better community balance and integration” (Decreased- 91%, 79%), “Promotion of equal opportunity to access” (Disagree - 91%, 65%).

**Table 12: Perceptions on direction of change for specific project impacts**

No.	Project Impacts	Low income		Middle income		High income	
		Direction	%	Direction	%	Direction	%
1	Appearance of the area around the site	Better	81.3%	Better	85.3%	Better	97.4%
2	Quiet and peaceful atmosphere of the site	Decreased	59.4%	Increased	70.6%	Increased	97.4%
3	Pride of residents have, on their city	Increased	65.6%	Increased	85.3%	Increased	92.1%
4	Comfortably at the site	Disagree	90.6%	Agree	61.8%	Agree	100.0%
5	Maintenance of public facilities	Better	53.1%	Better	82.4%	Better	86.8%
6	Cleanness of the vicinity	Better	100.0%	Better	100.0%	Better	100.0%
7	Safety & management of environment	Better	96.9%	Better	94.1%	Better	94.7%
8	Employment opportunities	No change	75.0%	No change	50.0%	No change	52.6%
9	Property values of the vicinity of the site	Don't know	53.1%	Don't know	55.9%	Don't know	60.5%
10	Decrease expenditure to some services (ex: payment to gym)	Agree	50.0%	Agree	47.1%	Agree	36.8%
11	Opportunities for local business	No change	56.3%	No change	35.3%	No change	55.3%
12	Promotion of better community balance and integration	Decreased	90.6%	Decreased	79.4%	Increased	94.7%
13	Promotion of equal opportunity to access	Disagree	90.6%	Disagree	35.3%	Agree	97.4%
14	Encouragement of different people for different Activities	Disagree	75.0%	Agree	64.7%	Agree	92.1%
15	Equal chance to access and enjoy with family and friends	Decreased	93.8%	Increased	55.9%	Increased	97.4%
16	Opportunities to meet new people	No change	81.3%	Increased	67.6%	Increased	92.1%
17	Friendly behavior of society	No change	56.3%	Increased	67.6%	Increased	88.2%

18	Facilities available to local residents have.....	No change	65.6%	Increased	47.1%	Increased	92.1%
19	Number of people around the site	Increased	96.9%	Increased	100.0%	Increased	100.0%
20	Identification of needs by Project priority elements	Disagree	93.8%	Agree	67.6%	Agree	94.7%
21	Placement of elements orderly for requirements	Agree	84.4%	Agree	73.5%	Agree	81.6%
22	Ability of use project at any time during day	Agree	65.6%	Agree	76.5%	Agree	76.3%
23	Improvement of physical health & mental health	No change	68.8%	Increased	61.8%	Increased	100.0%
24	Pleasant feelings in daily life	No change	59.4%	Increased	73.5%	Increased	97.4%
25	Collective enjoyment of life and sense of belongings	Decreased	87.5%	Increased	67.6%	Increased	100.0%
26	Opportunities for entertainment and other various activities	Increased	78.1%	Increased	88.2%	Increased	84.2%
27	Social, moral values and self confidence	No change	68.8%	Increased	52.9%	Increased	97.4%
28	Parking availability in the vicinity	Increased	78.1%	Increased	94.1%	Increased	81.6%
29	Interactions between locals and tourists	Increased	84.4%	Increased	73.5%	Increased	78.9%
30	Priority for local community rather than tourists	Disagree	78.1%	Agree	64.7%	Agree	94.7%
31	Stimulation of local the economy by Income of the site	Disagree	68.8%	Not change	47.1%	Not change	50.0%
32	Getting the maximum return for invested public money	Disagree	93.8%	Disagree	52.9%	Agree	92.1%

Table 13 presents the mean scores of residents' perceptions of each impact on personal quality of life and overall community well-being (that is, Parts B and C of the dependent measure).

Table 13: Perceptions of specific project impacts on personal and community quality of life

No.	Project Impacts	Mean personal value rating			Mean community value rating		
		Low	Middle	High	Low	Middle	High
1	Appearance of the area around the site	.3125	1.2059	2.6842	1.5000	1.9118	2.8421
2	Quiet and peaceful atmosphere of the site	-.1563	1.2353	2.6579	.5000	1.4412	3.0000
3	Pride of residents have, on their city	.0313	.6765	2.0789	1.5313	2.2647	2.7632
4	Comfortably at the site	-1.6875	.2941	2.8947	-2.188	.5294	3.0000
5	Maintenance of public facilities	-.0625	1.1471	2.1622	1.7188	2.5294	2.6053
6	Cleanness of the vicinity	.5625	2.0000	2.7632	2.0938	2.4412	3.0000
7	Safety & management of environment	.3438	2.2059	2.8421	2.0625	2.5588	2.8421
8	Employment opportunities	-.0625	-.0588	.0000	.0000	.0000	.2632
9	Property values of the vicinity of the site	.0000	.0000	.0000	.3125	.2353	.3947
10	Decrease expenditure to some services (ex: payment to gym)	-.0313	.5588	.0526	.9375	.9412	.7105
11	Opportunities for local business	-.2188	-.0294	.0000	.1563	.6176	.7105
12	Promotion of better community balance and integration	-2.2188	-.4412	2.8421	-2.7500	-1.5588	2.8421
13	Promotion of equal opportunity to access	-2.5313	.3529	2.5526	-1.8750	-.3529	2.8947
14	Encouragement of different people for different Activities	-1.7188	.5294	2.7632	.6875	1.9118	2.7632
15	Equal chance to access and enjoy with family and friends	-1.8750	-.5294	2.0789	1.0000	1.0000	2.8158
16	Opportunities to meet new people	.1250	1.6471	1.9211	1.0313	2.3824	2.7211
17	Friendly behavior of society	.1250	.7353	2.3421	.8438	1.7059	2.6053



18	Improvement of facilities available to local residents	<b>-.0313</b>	.6176	2.6579	<b>2.0938</b>	2.1176	2.7368
19	Number of people around the site	<b>-.6563</b>	.5588	1.0000	<b>.8438</b>	1.6765	2.4474
20	Identification of needs by Project priority elements	<b>-2.0313</b>	.7941	2.7632	<b>-.1250</b>	.8824	2.7632
21	Placement of elements orderly for requirements	.2188	1.3529	2.1842	1.8125	2.1176	2.4474
22	Ability of use project at any time during day	.1250	1.2941	2.6053	1.6563	2.2353	2.9211
23	Improvement of physical health & mental health	.2188	1.2353	2.3684	<b>2.4375</b>	2.8824	2.8421
24	Pleasant feelings in daily life	.3438	1.8235	2.8421	<b>.7188</b>	1.1471	2.8421
25	Collective enjoyment of life and sense of belongings	<b>-1.8125</b>	.6765	2.8421	1.4688	1.7647	3.0000
26	Opportunities for entertainment and other various activities	.0000	1.2941	2.7632	<b>1.2813</b>	1.7353	3.0000
27	Social, moral values and self confidence	<b>-.5625</b>	.5882	2.3684	<b>.9688</b>	.8235	2.2632
28	Parking availability in the vicinity	.1563	1.2647	2.2105	<b>1.4688</b>	2.0294	2.3158
29	Interactions between locals and tourists	.0000	.4530	.0000	<b>.3750</b>	1.3235	2.2632
30	Priority for local community rather than tourists	<b>-1.0938</b>	1.4118	2.8421	<b>-.7813</b>	.9706	2.6842
31	Stimulation of local the economy by Income of the site	.0000	.0000	.0000	<b>.0938</b>	.2059	.4737
32	Getting the maximum ,return for invested public money	<b>-2.5313</b>	.7647	2.3158	<b>-.2500</b>	<b>-.0294</b>	2.4737

An ANOVA (one way) with the Post hoc test was used to examine the variance of the mean scores between different social groups. The significance of the mean difference has been varied according to the statement. According to the findings, perceptions regarding specific impacts were differed according to the income levels. According to the perception of high income respondents, they indicated that they are having positive impact regarding all impacts at personal as well as community levels. Although low income respondents indicated positive impacts at community levels, regarding some impacts they indicated they are having negative impacts at personal level.

For statement such as “number of people around the site” and “social, moral values and self-confidence”, low income perception resulted negative value (-.5625, -.6563 respectively) while high income respondents resulted positive values (2.4474, 2.2632 respectively). According to the total mean values as shown below, there is negative mean value regarding impact at personal for low income respondents, while mean values regarding impacts at community level for three groups have been gradually increased (low to high income).

**Table 14: Means of specific project impacts on personal and community quality of life**

Personal(Total)				Community(Total)			
Low	Middle	High	Total mean	Low	Middle	High	Total mean
-0.5224	0.7876	2.0124	0.8317	0.7373	1.3262	2.3733	1.5276

Since middle and high income respondents have resulted positive mean score though low income indicated negative value, resulting in a positive mean score as personal total mean. For all three social groups, the perceived benefit at the community level is significantly higher than at the personal level. According to the high income respondent's perception, most perceived impacts by the project at personal level and community level are "improvement of physical health and mental health" and "improving quiet and peaceful atmosphere" respectively while "safety and management of environment" and "improvement of physical health and mental health" were resulted by middle income as most perceived impacts by the project at personal level and community level. According to the low income perception "improvement of the cleanness of the vicinity" was resulted as most perceived impact at personal level and "improvement of physical health and mental health" as at community level.

Below Table 15 shows the resulted impacts as "most perceived benefits" by the project, according to the overall perception of all respondents.

**Table 15: The most strongly perceived benefits of the project according to the perception of respondents**

Personal benefits	Mean	Community benefits	Mean
Safety & management of environment	1.8654	Improvement of physical health & mental health	2.7308
Cleanness of the vicinity	1.8365	Cleanness of the vicinity	2.5385
Pleasant feelings in daily life	1.7404	Safety & management of environment	2.5096
Appearance of the area around the site	1.4712	Improvement of Facilities available to local	2.3365
Opportunities for entertainment and other various activities	1.4327	Maintenance of public facilities	2.3077
Ability of use project at any time during day	1.4135	Ability of use project at any time during day	2.3077
Improvement of physical health & mental health	1.3365	Pride of residents have, on their city	2.2212
Quiet and peaceful atmosphere of the site	1.3269	Placement of elements orderly for requirements	2.1442
Opportunities to meet new people	1.3077	Appearance of the area around the site	2.1250
Placement of elements orderly for requirements	1.2788	Collective enjoyment of life and sense of belongings	2.1250

According to the perception of all respondents, the environmental and physical benefits are the mostly perceived benefits by the project while social and economic benefits are ranked as least

perceived benefits. Table 16 shows the resulted impacts as “least perceived benefits” by the project according to the overall perception of all respondents.

**Table 16: The least perceived impacts of the project according to the perception of respondents**

Personal benefits	Mean	Community benefits	Mean
Opportunities for local business	-.0769	Promotion of better community balance and integration	-.3173
Employment opportunities	-.0385	Employment opportunities	.0962
Property values of the vicinity of the site	.0000	Stimulation of local the economy by Income of the site	.2692
Interactions between locals and tourists	.0000	Property values of the vicinity of the site	.3173
Stimulation of local the economy by Income of the site	.0000	Promotion of equal opportunity to access	.3654
Equal chance to access and enjoy with family and friends	.0096	Opportunities for local business	.5096

According to the perception regarding benefits some benefits were resulted as least perceived. Yet it also differs according to the income levels. Particularly, low income respondents have been ranked “Promotion of equal opportunity to access”, “Getting the maximum, return for invested public money”, “Promotion of better community balance and integration” as least perceived benefits at personal level while “Increase Employment opportunities”, “Property values of the vicinity of the site” and “Opportunities for local business” have ranked as least perceives according to the high income’s perceptions.

Overall mean values revealed that high income respondents have fully agreed with the project due to delivered benefits to their personal quality of life as well as for the community while other two groups have respectively less agreement about project and its benefits.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

Public space revitalization projects are concerned on the benefits of the city and its users. Therefore, they should be appreciated and used by the people. The importance of urban squares in urban public life has been addressed by many scholars and other professionals. However, this particular study reveals the significant variance of the perceptions between different social groups regarding their quality of life, further it reveals that high income group’s perception extensively favored for current revitalization projects whereas low and middle income groups raise criticisms against it, since not considering their requirements in such projects. Subsequently, several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study on the significance of variance of the perceptions regarding current public space revitalization projects.

According to the research hypothesis most of PSRPs are often achieving preferences of elite groups only. Partially align with that hypothesis, results revealed that perceptions and satisfaction levels were differed according to the social classes and most benefited and satisfied group is the high income community (positive perception regarding project benefits gradually diminishing with social levels, high to low income). Perceptions regarding most of community level impacts on quality of life are approximately common to all groups while recording significant variance in personal level impacts. There was huge difference regarding perception of social benefits of the project rather than Physical and environmental achievements (more similar in different social groups perspective) of the project.

It is quite clear that urban public open spaces are vital element in urban daily life and study found that revitalized public open spaces are rarely used by the entire public. The examination of the PSRP discovered that, with its diminishing variety of users and strict control measures, it is presently serving a more 'homogeneous' public for homogeneous activities than it used to do. And it is increasingly characterized more towards enhancing social exclusion and stratification. Yet, as a public space, it is still accessible to whole society. Otherwise revitalization attempts will reason to further shrink the limited city spaces which have been used by the marginal social groups.

The construction / revitalization of public spaces in the city area is not a waste of money or land resources, it can generate more social benefits and has become a productive strategy for city environment and social quality improvement, yet since these projects use public money, opportunities should equally transfer to the each income level. Therefore, elements which cater the needs of each social group should be included into the project. Otherwise public spaces will be only for high income groups while excluding majority.

The research challenges several current government policy assumptions concerning public space. The 'urban revitalization' agenda appears too concerned with matters of urban design and city beautification and become playing field of elite avoiding the marginal groups using the public space who are key actors in contemporary cities. Therefore, it is important for policy makers and practitioners to recognize that so-called marginal or problem groups such as poor communities are also a part of the community.

#### *List of Abbreviation*

PSRP	Public Space Revitalization Projects/Programs
UR	Urban Revitalization
URP	Urban Revitalization Project
CMC	Colombo Municipal Council
MI	Monthly Income
UDA	Urban Development Authority
UD	Urban Development
GN	Grama Niladhari
MCUDP	Metro Colombo Urban Development Plan
SL	Sri Lanka

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