CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCE OF THE PHYSICAL OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING AND POLICY

Melasutra Md Dali
Urban Studies and Planning Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur
melasutr@um.edu.my

Abstract

The importance of outdoor physical environment to the development of children can not be questioned, since children spend large amount of their time outdoor as compared to adults. Children are vulnerable to their conditions of the physical environment and its quality affects their overall behavior patterns. Children are well known to play everywhere and play with everything. But for urban children, their movement and their play opportunities are often restricted by traffic and unsafe environment.

Today the provision of children outdoor play areas i.e., children playgrounds or open spaces, has become integrated into the planning process in most of our residential developments. How well it is furnished is an indication of the value that society places on children development. We are fortunate to have such services but are they conducive enough to cater the need for children or do they meet their expectations?

This paper discusses the existing children outdoor facilities developed out of local planning practices. Do these facilities hold the potential for our children’s physical development? How would the children benefit from their playing environment? Are children happy with their play spaces or do parents concern about their children play opportunity? The paper examines the need to create a more conducive play space beyond the quantitative preferences and guidelines. It further highlights the need for community participation in creating a more functionalized playground.

Keywords: Open Spaces, recreational planning, children play areas.