

Reduction of Open Space in Urban Planning: A Case Study of Osmani Udyan

**A Dissertation
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**Submitted
to
Institute of Governance Studies
BRAC University
Dhaka**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of
MA in Governance and Development (MAGD)**



**Institute of Governance Studies
BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh**



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“Take a last look” William Whyte told the readers of Life in 1959. “Some summer's morning ... turn off onto a back road and go for a short trip through the open countryside. Look well at the meadows, the wooded draws ... the creeks and streams, and fix them in your memory. If the ... standard of living goes up another notch, this is about the last chance you will have”.
(Quoted in Adam W. Rome 1998)

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List of Abbreviations

Ansar & VDP	Ansar and Village Defense Party
BAPA	Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BELA	Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CDI	City Development Index
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
DAP	Detail Area Plan
DCC	Dhaka City Corporation
DIT	Dhaka Development Trust
DMDP	Dhaka Master Development Plan
KM	Kilometer
MOE & MR	Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources
MOLGRD & C	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperative
NAM	Non Aligned Movement
PWD	Power Works Department
RAJUK	Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha
SMT	Sabuj Moti Trust
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WASA	Water and Sewerage Authority

Acknowledgement

I have incurred many debts in the course of preparing the thesis. There is no way I can ever repay most of them, but I wish here at least to record them and convey my gratitude.

On the academic side, my primary debts are to Dr. Shahnaz Karim who supervised my work. She devoted enormous amount of time to counseling, questioning and criticizing early drafts of the work.

I also acknowledge the contribution of my course coordinator Dr. Rizwan Khair and my interviewees for their immense support. The information and advice I got from Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, one of my interviewees and my college teacher, formed the guideline to think about the issue from a wider perspective. The interview was something to cherish in life. Special thanks to Professor Dr. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman and Professor Dr. Md. Emdadul Haque for giving me advices, guidance and basic ideas about thesis writing.

My course-mates also gave me all out support and encouragement while doing the thesis. I owe a lot to them.

MOHAMMAD SAIFUL ISLAM BHUIYAN

Summary

Dhaka is a mega city. By 2015 it will be the 5th largest agglomeration in the world, with a population of 19.5 million. The pressure of burgeoning population in Dhaka city has put immense pressure on the urban settlement. The Dhaka City Corporation, WASA and RAJUK have been staggering to provide the minimal services to the citizens. Within the small area of Dhaka city there are only a few parks and playgrounds as open space. But even those few parks and playgrounds could not avert the grip of encroachers. The space to breathe in Dhaka is shrinking day by day.

Many open spaces have been grabbed by the different vested quarters and in many cases by the government itself. Osmani Udyan is such a case that has come under attack by both government and public. Conscious citizens have expressed their concern over such attempts. Osmani Udyan is situated in between the Dhaka City Corporation and Bangladesh Secretariat. As its position has made it essential for the city, likewise it has put it in danger. For being in the prime location and place whenever any land is needed for the government to make an establishment, its name springs to the mind of the government. Osmani Udyan in the last two decades has undergone many ups and downs. The checkered life of Osmani Udyan has earned it a place in the history of Bangladesh's environment movement. This thesis has attempted to explore why Osmani Udyan comes under threat and how it survives.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is the legal authority to look after Osmani Udyan and other parks in the metropolitan city Dhaka. RAJUK (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha) has also failed to make a proper planning to accommodate huge population and ensure civic amenities. The soared up land price also instigated the unscrupulous people to encroach the open space ignoring the needs of city life.

Key words: Urbanization, Open Space, Encroachment, Urban Planning, Civil Society

1.1 Introduction

Dhaka is the capital and largest city of Bangladesh and lies on the northern bank of the river Buriganga. Dhaka is known the world over as the city of mosques and muslin. It is also regarded as a city of rickshaws. Dhaka was at one time known as a city of “52 *bazar* (Markets) 53 *goli* (Lanes)”. The tendency continues to construct too many market places and shopping centers in an unplanned way. Dhaka district with an area of 1463.60 sq km (BBS, Bangladesh Data Sheet-2007) is bounded by Gazipur and Tangail districts on the north, Munshiganj and Rajbari districts on the south, Narayanganj district on the east and Manikganj district on the west. The Dhaka Metropolitan City has an area of 360 sq km (Dhaka City Corporation web side, <http://www.dhakacity.org>. Accessed on 19.06.2011) Dhaka City Corporation area has a population of 6737774 (estimated 2007) The Dhaka City Corporation area consists of 21 police stations and 90 wards. The metropolitan area has a population of 1, 22, 95, 728 (estimated 2007) according to the Statistical Pocket Book, Bangladesh-2007.

Due to many factors the population of Dhaka city is increasing at a very high rate. According to Rafiqul Huda Chowdhury, (1980 p 32) the urban population growth results from the net impact of several processes:

- (1) Natural increase or decrease, reflecting the balance between births and deaths
- (2) Net migration resulting from the balance between the total movements in and out of the urban areas
- (3) Designation of new areas as urban as they meet the formal criteria.

The population of Dhaka has been increasing due to all the three factors. Moreover the unemployment problem in the rural area and absence of basic amenities such as health, education and communication outside the capital play a vital role to force rural people to migrate to the capital. The demand for workers and services in the growing industries of Dhaka has also prompted large scale migration from rural areas for better opportunities. The migrants contribute to the city’s economic development by providing necessary labor to manufacturing and services. This has, however, also put pressure on the city’s infrastructure, public services and habitable land. To provide accommodation for the burgeoning population, different interest groups compete with each other in grabbing the open spaces of Dhaka city leaving no space for leisure. “The rapid growth of urban population had serious implications on the delivery of social services in urban areas resulting in acute shortage of houses and transport and in a higher unemployment rate” (Rafiqul Huda Chowdhury, 1980 p 41) Dhaka city has become a slum of bricks and glass

where traffic congestion is a common phenomenon. The authorities, together with the city dwellers, have failed to make Dhaka habitable.

The population growth in Dhaka city has a serious impact on its land. Dhaka is a low lying city and making a new holding for a house involves huge cost for sand fill and new communication. That is why the demand for existing land which is relatively higher and has good communication system has gone sharply. The increasing demand for new residences has forced government and public to make new buildings in available open space such as backyards, garden, parking place and playgrounds. The government has built new school building in the existing campus or created college in school campus (e.g. Motijheel Government Boys' High School, Government Laboratory High School, Viqarunnisa Noon School & College). In government colonies, new buildings were built on the open spaces.

In Dhaka there are several acres of *khas* (government owned) land. Some of the *khas* land is fit for settlement while some are not. Land not fit for settlement includes roads, playgrounds, canals, wood-lands and other public easement land (lands that are kept for public use). "The total amount of *Khas* land fit for settlement in Dhaka city is now only 671 acres. According to a conservative estimate, an almost equal amount of *khas* land in Dhaka city is either under outright illegal occupation or occupied by individuals through creation of false records" (Siddiqui, K, *et al* 1990 p 23)

The *Khas* land that can be used for public open spaces are also being encroached by the land developers, *mastans* and political leaders in connivance with unscrupulous government officials. The encroachers are so strong that they sometimes influence the policy initiative of the government. Land development business in Dhaka and other busy districts is the most thriving business. They have already turned the central area of Dhaka into a slum of bricks and glasses.

Due to demand for housing and industries the land transfer in the capital city has also increased. According to Siddiqui, K, *et al* (1990 p26) land transfer in Dhaka city shows the following characteristics:

- a. Incidence of land transfer is much higher in Dhaka city and its outskirts than in the rest of Bangladesh, the number of land transfer in Dhaka area being almost 1/10th of the entire country's total land transfer in a year.
- b. In Dhaka city, the main pressure for land transfer is from land price whereas in the countryside poverty and sometimes extra-economic factors are also operative.
- c. Land transfer in and around Dhaka city is also being accompanied by change in character of land from agricultural to non-agricultural use.

The land transfer pattern and rate indicate that open land (cultivable land & barren but open land) in and around Dhaka city are being used for housing or industrial purpose. The housing or industrial areas are growing without any planning. Once this land is occupied, it will be difficult to make a sustainable plan in those areas. The haphazard development of the land does not include any open space, play ground or garden. This might have disastrous consequences in the long run.

1.2 Background

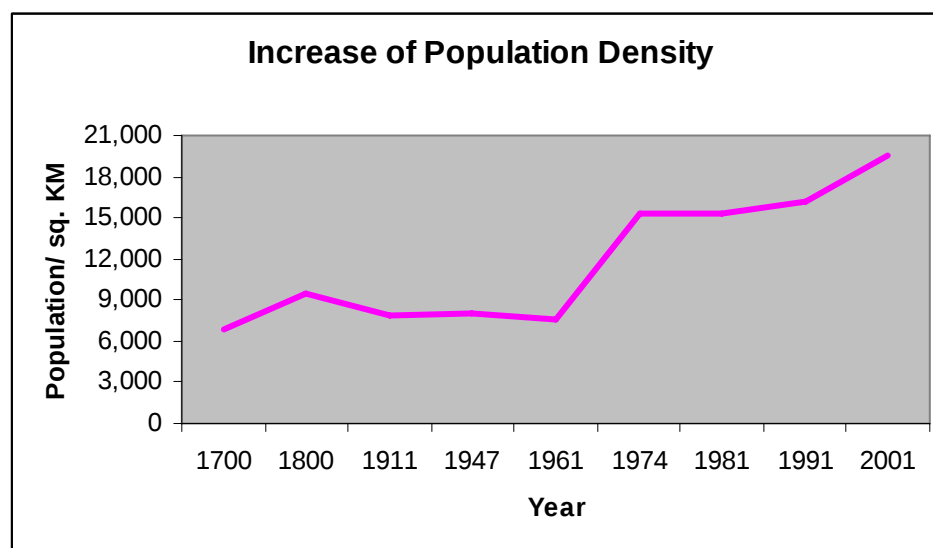
Dhaka has been experiencing huge migration and natural growth of population every year due to push and pull factors. Due to the pressure of the population, the area of Dhaka city is also always changing. The population of the city between 1901 and 1931 was below 200,000. With the creation of the capital of East Pakistan in 1947 the city got a momentum of population growth and reached 336,000 in 1951. Population again increased five times within two decades and reached 1,600,000 in 1974 when it was the capital of Bangladesh. The table below shows the rapid growth in population of Dhaka city.

Table 1.1 Population growth of Dhaka

Year and Period	Approximate area (sq. KM)	Population	Population density/ sq. KM (approx)
1600 Pre Mughal	3	-	-
1700 Mughal Capital	130	900,000	6,923
1800 British Town	21	200,000	9,524
1911 British Town	16	125,733	7,858
1947 Capital of East Pakistan	31	250,000	8,065
1961 Capital of East Pakistan	73	550,143	7,536
1974 Capital of Bangladesh	104	1,600,000	15,385
1981 Dhaka Municipality	162	2,475,710	15,282
1991 Dhaka City Corporation	276	4,486,421	16,255
2001 Dhaka City Corporation	276	5,378,023	19,485

Adopted from: Taylor 1840; Islam 1996; Ahsan 1991; GOP 1953 & 1964; GOB 1978; BBS 1984, 1993, 1996 and 2001 Quoted in Hafiza Khatun (2003) p-20

Figure 1.1 Increase in Population Density of Dhaka



This huge population growth has increased the basic demand for settlements and utility services. During the British period the administrators tried to create an environment with which they were familiar at home. “In 1825 the Magistrate Charles Dawes had set about clearing the Ramna jungles and laying out a spacious green, opening out the choked northern outskirts of the city”. (A. Sahrif Uddin 1986. p. 130). During the second half of the nineteenth century the city also expanded both towards the east and west. “Most of the building activity and expansion of the town took place without any planning. The only locality which was developed as a fully planned residential area was Wari.” (A. Sahrif Uddin 1986. p134-135). When the population of Dhaka began to rise substantially again, mostly by immigration, the newcomers settled down wherever accommodation was available. This demand for accommodation turned into rapid establishment of both formal and informal settlements (slums and squatters) around the city. The city started growing in an unplanned way where spaces for recreation were not kept.

A comparison between six cities of Asia Pacific in the following table shows that Dhaka city has the lowest per capita residential area. The recreational area is as low as 0.5 sq. meters per person whereas Penang, a Malaysian city has 12.4 sq. meters per person.

Table 1.2 Per capita land for different purposes in 6 cities (in square meters per capita)

	Bandung	Dhaka	Hué	Kandy	Makati	Penang	Average
Residential	37.2	16.1	22.0	103.8	18.2	92.1	48.2
Commercial	1.1	2.5	5.6	16.2	5.8	2.0	5.5
Industrial	3.8	1.6	4.0	6.5	2.6	3.6	3.7
Institutional	2.5	1.0	6.4	-	28.8	6.6	2.3
Agricultural	33.3	29.8	118.7	11.2	N.A.	85.6	46.4
Recreational	0.4	0.5	0.6	2.6	0.4	12.4	2.8
Vacant land	1.4	2.0	44.5	N.A.	1.1	-	8.2

Sources: Bandung (1990); Dhaka: Ministry of Land (1982) and Dhaka Collectorate (1989); Hué: Municipal Land Management Department (year missing); Kandy (1994); Makati: Assessor’s office (1993); Penang (1974).

Quoted in Municipal Land Management in Asia: A Comparative Study, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific.

http://www.unescap.org/huset/m_land/ack.htm Accessed on 28.07.11

Most of the designated residential areas of new Dhaka including Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Baridhara, Uttara, and Banani are also more or less occupied by a huge number of schools, colleges, universities, coaching centers, industries, factories, shopping malls, clinics, business enterprises and high rise apartments. Although these areas had open spaces in front of their houses, the demand for accommodation and lucrative offer by builders turned the areas into very cramped habitats. The residential areas of old Dhaka such as Wari is also losing its residential status due to high rise buildings and lack of enough urban amenities such as roads, play grounds and schools for the residents living there. It is very difficult to identify whether the old Dhaka

currently contains any residential areas, although once major parts of it were high class residential areas. Most of the lakes and parks of Dhaka city are now more or less occupied by government establishments or illegal encroachments.

The crucial question that confronts Dhaka is whether it can exist as a decent and livable city. The present urbanization trend makes it difficult to answer in the affirmative. Modernization and beautification along with building of high rises without considering the consequences, disappearing open spaces and water bodies.

Parks and playgrounds in the city are few and far between. Open places are essential to get rid of monotony of urban life. Recreation and sports play a vital role in town planning and are considered highly desirable from the point of view of the citizens' physical well being. Open places assumes greater importance because urban people usually live in a congested, sultry house where sun and air cannot enter.

Dhaka City Corporation has 54 parks (Annexure-2a) having a total area of 98.2285 acres and 11 playgrounds having an area of 26.2 acre for the 6.0 million people. Though the parks are few in the city, these are constantly being used to meet up the increasing demand for accommodation from different government bodies, sometimes for mere economic benefit. Osmani Udyan, located in the center of Dhaka, has in recent years come under constant threats of encroachment from both the government and public. Different civil society organizations and environmentalists actively took part in the movement to save the park and other parks as well. A committee named *Osmani Udyaner Jomi O Poribesh Rokhya Andolon* (Movement to Protect the Land and Environment of Osmani Udyan) was formed by different civil society organizations and environmentalist. It has become a symbol of environmental movement in Dhaka and the country as a whole. This is why the Osmani Udyan has been chosen as a case to study different issues related to reduction of open spaces in Dhaka and its consequences.

1.3 Objectives

The objective of the study is to identify:

- (1) the factors and actors that caused the encroachment/ reduction of Osmani Udyan
- (2) the failures of Dhaka City Corporation and other agencies in protecting the park and to trace the reasons behind such failure.

1.4 Methodology

The study was conducted through content analysis and interviews.

Content analysis: Relevant research works, books and literature were reviewed to get a general overview of the importance of open space in urban cities.

Interviews: Environmentalists, civil society representatives, personnel of NGOs working on environment and authorities concerned were interviewed to have a more thoughtful insight on the issue. No structured questionnaire had been administered for the interviews, but a general guideline was prepared.

1.5 Limitations

The study was not free of limitations. The following limitations were faced during the preparation of this dissertation:

- (1) Limited access to information as very few works or research has been done on open space and
- (2) Time constraint.

1.6 The Historical background of Dhaka city:

“Dhaka is an ancient city with a long historical background. Its history dates back to the 7th century. Its demography and topography also underwent changes during this period. “The city has gone through a number of transitions since the 7th century till its emergence as the capital of Bangladesh.” (Hafiza Kahatun, 2003, p. 2). Before being capital of independent Bangladesh it was made capital thrice, during Mughal, British and Pakistan rule. “Dhaka became the capital four times during the last four hundred years. Dhaka was the capital of Bengal *Subah* (Province) from 1610 to 1713 under the Mughal Empire. In 1905 during the British rule, it became the capital of East Bengal and Assam. In 1947 the Indian sub continent was divided, with two independent states emerging on the basis of religion. Dhaka again was made the capital of East Pakistan. In 1971 Dhaka was once again made the capital of independent Bangladesh.” (Muntassir Mamoon 1991, p 9).

The ancient township of Dhaka started its journey on the bank of Buriganga and gradually expanded in the surrounding areas. “Dhaka city originated in the early centuries of Christian era in a naturally suitable place like other great seats of civilization of ancient period. It developed spontaneously on the north bank of the river Buriganga.” (Hafiza Kahatun 2003, p. 4). “It is assumed that the city limit went beyond Babu Bazaar on the western side. The town consisted of a few markets centers like Lakshmi Bazar, Sutrapur, Goal Nagar, Patuatoli and Kumartali.” (*ibid.* p. 4)

According to Jean- Baptiste Tavernier, Dhaka was one of the twelve major trade centers of the Mughal Empire. Foreign traders were lured to Dhaka by the prospect of acquiring wealth. The foreign traders usually came from Iran, Arabia, Greece, England, France, Holland and Portugal. (Muntassir Mamoon 1991 p. 18).

After the end of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 the British Crown took over power from the East India Company and Dhaka marked the beginning of physical renewal with utility services. The city limit did not expand but the town underwent changes. (Hafiza Kahatun 2003, p.7)

In 1832 a committee for improvement of the city was formed by collector Mr Walter. The main task of the committee was to construct and maintain roads. There was only one long road at Dhaka originating from Lohar Pool and ending at Lalbagh. (Muntassir Mamoon 1991, p. 34)

In 1840, with government initiative a committee was formed which was similar to the Mr Walters Committee of Improvement. It was known as Dhaka Committee. (Muntassir Mamoon 1991, p. 37). From 1947- 1971 the city expanded considerably. New residential areas such as Dhanmondi, Banani, Gulshan etc developed. (*Ibid*, p. 55)

1.7 Open Space and Environment of Dhaka City

The area of Dhaka City is 1463.60 sq km (BBS, Bangladesh Data Sheet-2007) and population 1, 22, 95, 728 (estimated 2007) according to the Statistical Pocket Book, Bangladesh-2007. It has a huge population relatively to its area. It has 8668.23 acres of open space (including agricultural land, water bodies, urban forest and grave yard) which is only 21.6 percent of total land

Table 1.3 Distributions of Open Spaces in Dhaka City

Type of Open Space	Area in acres	Area (acre) per 1000 People	Percent of Total Area
Agricultural	4871.00	1.15	12.12
Garden	362.00	0.086	0.901
Graveyard	14.50	0.003	0.036
Lake	60.71	0.014	0.151
Vacant Space	2004.63	0.470	4.991
Park	358.46	0.082	0.892
Play ground	156.46	0.037	0.390
Pond	101.12	0.024	0.252
Swamp	731.00	0.173	1.82
Urban Forest	8.00	0.002	0.02
Total	8668.23	2.040	21.573
Source: Bhadra and Shammin (2001), Peoples Report on Bangladesh Environment 2002-2003, MoEF – US			

Source

http://www.sdnpsbd.org/sdi/international_days/wed/2005/data/human_stlmnt/distribution.htm
accessed on 07.08.08

For purposes of comparison, the following table shows total park land per 1,000 by city in the USA.

Table 1.4 Total parkland, by city in the USA

City	Population	Total Park (Acres)	Acres per 1,000 people
Washington, D.C.	581,530	7,617	13.1
Boston	595,698	5,040	8.5
Baltimore	640,961	4,905	7.7
Philadelphia	1,448,394	10,937	7.6
San Francisco	744,041	5,384	7.2
Jersey City	241,789	1,640	6.8
Los Angeles	3,849,378	23,761	6.2
Long Beach	472,494	2,866	6.1
New York	8,250,567	38,185	4.6
Chicago	2,833,321	11,860	4.2
Miami	404,048	1,359	3.4
Newark, NJ	281,402	843	3.0
Santa Ana	340,024	330	1.0
			Average 6.1

Source: The Trust for Public Land: Conserving land for people,
http://www.tpl.org/content_documents/citypark_facts/ccpe_TotalAcresperResident_08.pdf
 Accessed on 29.07.08

The above tables show that on an average different cities of USA have 6.1 acre of park for 1000 people where as in Dhaka there is 0.082 acre of park for 1000 people. For the calculation official statistical data has been used but in Dhaka huge number of people live in slum areas who are not included in the statistics and many people come to Dhaka from neighboring districts in the morning and leave in the evening. If all these people are also taken into account, the park land for 1000 people will be much less than the calculated rate.

Due to lack of open spaces and trees the environment becomes polluted. Presence of pollutant in Dhaka air is many time higher than the WHO prescribed limit.

Table 1.5 Air pollutants in Dhaka City (March 2001) compared to WHO recommended standard

Compound	Hourly extreme $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Times the WHO Recommended Standard
NO ₂	601-714	>10
SO ₂	300-500	>10
Particles	5-400	>15
Ozone	600-900	>5
VOC _s	783000	>50-100
Benzene	783000	>7-10
Toluene	200000	>10

Source

http://www.sdnepbd.org/sdi/international_days/wed/2005/data/atmosphere/air_pollutants_dhaka_compared_who.pdf accessed on 07.08.08

1.8 Performance of Dhaka as a City

City Development Index ranks cities in development spectrum and combines city product with infrastructure, waste management, health and education. (Matthew S. West fall and Victoria A. de Villa, eds, 2001).

CDI could be taken as a measure of average well-being and access to urban facilities by individuals. CDI is actually a measure of depreciated total expenditure over time on human and physical urban services and infrastructure, and it is a proxy for the human and physical capital assets of the city.

Table 1.6 Urban Facilities

Region	CDI	City Product	Infrastructure	Waste	Health	Education
Stockholm	97.4	93.5	99.5	100.0	94.0	99.8
Melbourne	95.5	90.0	99.8	100.0	93.7	94.1
Singapore	94.5	91.6	99.5	100.0	92.7	88.6
Hong Kong	92.0	89.4	99.3	99.0	90.9	81.3
Moscow	89.9	81.0	98.7	86.8	83.8	99.3
Seoul	86.0	65.3	98.4	100.0	88.7	77.7
Rio de Janeiro	79.4	82.3	86.2	62.6	81.9	84.3
Sofia	79.1	70.9	93.7	58.5	86.2	86.3
Hanoi	74.2	59.6	72.0	90.0	80.6	69.0
Havana	71.0	65.0	74.8	50.0	80.7	84.7
Jakarta	69.2	66.2	57.3	46.7	80.2	95.7
Ulaanbaatar	68.4	53.7	59.0	90.0	72.5	66.7
Lahore	61.1	71.1	78.5	50.0	64.9	40.8
Colombo	58.4	46.9	68.6	45.0	86.2	45.3
Bangalore	58.0	51.1	82.7	31.3	76.5	48.5
Dhaka	48.4	55.6	45.3	27.5	64.6	48.7
Vientiane	47.1	44.0	58.0	0.0	62.3	71.3
Accra	46.6	49.4	50.0	0.0	71.4	62.0
Phnom Penh	43.5	40.2	33.0	27.0	47.2	69.9
Port Moresby	39.3	69.0	18.1	10.0	59.1	40.2
Lagos	29.3	42.1	29.5	2.0	44.0	29.1
Niamey	21.7	40.0	22.0	0.0	78.3	14.9

(1998 data)

Source: <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/Istanbul+5/116.pdf>. accessed on 28.07.11 & Matthew S. West fall and Victoria A. de Villa, eds, 2001

A comparison of 23 different cities of the world (Table 1.6) shows that Dhaka has failed to provide the required urban facilities to its inhabitants. Dhaka's position is 16th with a CDI of

48.4. The score is the lowest of the 4 South Asian cities ranked (Lahore, Colombia, Bangalore and Dhaka) The health score is as low as 64.6.

1.9 Conclusion:

Dhaka city was established back in 1610. It was supposed to be a beautiful city with beautiful gardens. As the population of the city increased to accommodate the extra citizens many gardens, playgrounds were encroached. Dhaka is one of the highest densely populated cities with least amenities to live.

Literature Review

2.1 Urbanization: Definitions and Concepts

For the paper, relevant literature has been extensively reviewed. However, as the research found, literature on importance of open space or how sprawling urbanization engulfs open spaces is rare.

For this thesis three types of literature have been reviewed. These are:

1. Urbanization as a reality
2. Urbanization and human behavior
3. Urbanization, land use and environmental degradation

Controversy surrounds the definition of urban area or city. There is heterodoxy among scholars regarding exact meaning open space. City may be defined as relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals. (Wirth, Louis. 1938, quoted in Harvey M. Choldin, 1985 p. 45) The first cities arose in Mesopotamia, mostly in Summer, in its southern region, at about 3,500 B.C. Some of the names such as Babylon and Baghdad are commonly known, whereas others like Ur, Eridu, Lagach and Kish are not. (Harvey M. Choldin, 1985 p. 73) Concentration of people is a fundamental characteristic of city. Relatively dense population is the life blood of city. Due to the more population in cities technological innovation is needed to fight the continuously generated problems of urban life and to fulfill the ever increasing demand. In cities diversity of peoples and activities encourages innovation and creativity, which in turn create opportunities that attract more people. On the other hand, problems of overcrowding, crime, poverty, and pollution may be severe. Cities, therefore, have come to reflect the hopes and fears of the modern world.

“Two conditions appear to be necessary for urbanization. One is people and the other technology. Population increase and surplus feed the process; technology gives it form and focus. All three of them, population increase, technology and urbanization, work along together. A population does not necessarily reach a certain density before it begins to urbanize. Technology does not have to wait on population. The whole thing is a spiral arrangement

whereby technology produces population surplus and encourages population increase, population surplus and increase encourage further technology, and upshot is urbanization.” (Hope Tisdale, 1942 p 315)

It should be noted that the definition of an urban area, as distinguished from a rural area, differs from country to country.

Social relation in urban areas is also different from rural areas. When urbanity develops, metamorphosis in social behavior, culture and behavior is inevitable.

Harvey M, Choldin have argued that certain of the city’s features affect social relationships, behaviors, and personality. “The fast pace of the city and the large numbers of persons and contacts produce an intensification of nervous stimulation for the individual, who is bombarded by swift and uninterrupted stimuli. Essentially, the human creature is not naturally built to receive so much stimulation, so it responds adaptively. Urban individuals develop a special personality type: they react with the head rather than the heart: Thus they calculate the costs and payoffs of particular actions, including interpersonal relations. They develop an intellectually and a heightened awareness of situations. Urban individuals become impersonal, with blasé attitude which protects them from over stimulation of the nervous system; in social relations they are reserved. Perhaps the only good thing ... in the metropolis is that it offers the individual greater personal freedom than smaller communities offer” (Harvey M. Choldin, 1985 p44, 45)

Choldin also highlighted that considerable differences existed among the city’s residential areas in their levels of truancy, juvenile delinquency and criminality...low-income communities near commercial areas and heavy industrial districts had the higher rates and the out lying residential areas of higher economic status had low rates.

The literature review provided insight on a core aspect of city life-land use planning, that is deciding what portion of land will be used for what purpose. It basically deals with land development required for various purposes that is industry, business, education, religion, leisure, recreation etc. There is no uniform classification of land use.

Land use in cities can generally be classified into the following categories:1

- a. Shops, business, and professional premises with or without residence
- b. Premises with public or community functions
- c. Public transport premises
- d. Industrial premises including builders yard and warehouses
- e. Residential Premises
- f. Open spaces

In India the urban geographers classify urban land use into the following catagories (R.B.Mandal 2000, p200, 201):

- a. Residential
- b. Agricultural
- c. Open Space
- d. Military land

- e. Parks and playground
- f. Commercial
- g. Administrative
- h. Educational
- i. Industrial
- j. Burial ground

It should be noted here that every urban area not only means residential, business and industrial area but it includes provisions for better living such as open spaces, playgrounds and parks.

Sometimes shortage of housing is considered to be the foremost problem of urbanization and accordingly haphazard building of houses is allowed by the government. This attitude intensifies other problems of urbanization and most often backfires.

“... it is not a question which simply involves ‘housing’. At the same time, it is essential to make it possible for individuals to improve their overall life capacity. Thus, improvements in employments, transport, infrastructure and social facilities must accompany developments in housing. (*Ibid*, p138)

While urbanization starts, degradation of ecological imbalance is accelerated. People to meet up their present need destroy the environment without considering future consequences. The exploitive attitude that has prompted much of the environmental crisis in Western Europe and North America: stems from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which conceives of man as superior to all other creatures, possessing everything else for his own enjoyment and endowed with a God-given right to use, exploit, modify, and “perfect” the environment in any way he sees fit, using whatever scientific and technological power is at his disposal. (Brian J.L.Berry: Frank E. Horton, 1974, p 9)



In Bangladesh urbanization also has a most serious impact on environment. In all urban areas of Bangladesh especially in Dhaka the degradation of land, water bodies, air and vegetation is a common phenomenon. “The rapid pace of urbanization and the rather haphazard or uncontrolled pattern of urban growth and expansion in Bangladesh are manifest in the various sectors of the urban environment, such as housing, transportation, water and sanitation, garbage disposal, drainage and flooding, health and nutrition, education, community services, air and visual aesthetic environment.” (A Atiq rahman *et al* ed, 1994 p 342)

2.2 Let us now consider the core concept of this thesis: Open space

Open space means many things to people. It might be a field or forest, a public park with playing fields, a wetland, or a body of water. Open space is most easily defined as land that, for the most part, is free of buildings and other impervious areas. Whether in public or private ownership, it provides for clean water, clear air, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, moderation of temperatures, flood storage, scenic vistas, streetscapes, recreation, and education.

Section 2(b) of the Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002, defines open space as- Open space means, in master plan what has been marked as open space or what has been declared as open space by Government gazette notification.

It is really difficult to distinguish between open space and parks in Bangladesh as some parks are mentioned in the master plan of RAJUK as open spaces.

“The city master plan demarcates Ramna Park, Shishu Park, Suhrawardy Udyan, Osmani Udyan, National Park (which is outside the Rajuk area) Old Airport, Zia Udyan, Botanical Garden and Zoo, Zia International Airport, National Mausoleum at Savar and Dhanmondi Lake as open spaces.” (New Age, 05.06.05)

It is clear the concept of open space is amorphous, though in broader sense, open spaces include open spaces used for other than park and play ground (Old Airport, Zia International Airport), parks and playground.

A park is a bounded area of land, usually in its natural or semi-natural state and set aside for some purpose, usually for recreation. (Example- Osmani Udyan, Ramna Park)

Section 2(a) of the Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002, defines park as “in plan or land survey map what has been marked park or what has been declared as park by Government gazette notification.

A national park is a reserve of land, usually, but not always declared and owned by the government and protected from most human development and pollution. (Example- Bhawal National Park)

Parks commonly resemble open woodlands, the types of landscape that human beings find most relaxing. Grass is typically kept short to discourage insect pests and to allow for the enjoyment of picnics and sporting activities. Trees are chosen for their beauty and to provide shade.

Private parks owned by individuals or businesses are used at the discretion of the owner.

An urban park, also known as a municipal park or an open space, is a park that is built in cities and other incorporated places to offer recreation and green space to residents of and visitors to the municipality. The design, operation and maintenance is usually done by the government, typically at the city level, but may occasionally be contracted out to a private sector company.

Common features of municipal parks include playgrounds, public restrooms, boat ramps and or picnic facilities.

Modern urban space consists of building sites, transportation sites and open spaces. The original definition of Open Space by Hiroshi Ikeda in 1921 indicates that besides the vacant land, apart from building sites which aren't covered by buildings, such as parks, squares and stadiums. Open Space also consists of the legal vacant land within or around the building site. In modern times, people share in common the idea of Open Space as spacious, public and scenic.

Green Space focuses on environment in contrast with Open Space. With global and urban environment problems getting more and more serious, the importance of urban environment is generally acknowledged. Therefore, from the point of modern urban programming, Green Space is widely being used. And from the point of access to public facilities, so is Open Space.

Open space is defined as publicly or privately owned land that is publicly accessible and has been designated for leisure, play, or sport, or land set aside for the protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment. In this study, along with the traditional definition of park and open space, play ground has been also considered as open space.

Section 2(d) of the Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002 defines play ground as- "in master plan what has been marked as play ground for sports or athletics.

2.3 Importance of Open Space

Open space is important for city dwellers for a number of reasons. It is not for mere aesthetics that a city must have enough open space, but for recreation, quality life and to promote tourism such space is also important. There are also ethical and moral considerations related to protecting wildlife and its habitat and preserving non-renewable resources for future generations. William Whyte, an open space activist, argued that open space had great aesthetic, social, and ecological value.

The environmentalist and open space activist argues for the importance of open space. Without enough open space in city planning, citizens are to face different problems. "The open-space activists made three kinds of arguments. one was a conservation argument. Another argument, essentially aesthetic, focused on amenity. The third dealt with outdoor recreation." (Adam W. Rome.1998 p 161)

"But usually the aesthetic argument was more basic. People wanted and needed the chance to enjoy the beauty of nature. As one scientist wrote, "the average person wants more and more to conserve nature simply because it is there; because it is good to look at and be in" ... (Adam W. Rome.1998 p162)

Good health

An open space is the breathing place for a populous city like Dhaka. It is the lung of the city. Open space provide oxygen for the citizens and it is the best place for morning exercise. Open space also controls the temperature of the city. The average temperature of Osmani Uddyan is

2-3 degrees Celsius lower than the Motijheel commercial area which is only half a kilometer away. Open space reduces smoke and air pollution.

Recreation

In developing countries cities like Dhaka lack recreational scopes. The green spaces provide people with the opportunity for sheer recreation to forget the troubles of their routine life. Open space recreation keep youngsters away from being derailed. “The 1950s were marked by a major campaign against juvenile delinquency, and advocates of recreational open space often claimed that access to nature would help to ensure the healthy social development of children.” (Adam W. Rome.1998 p162)

The boom in population, a reduction in the industrial workweek, and intensified demands on existing parks and recreational facilities argued that the nation had to make a concerted effort to provide new recreational space. So recreational space became a resource, like trees or energy or water, which could be overexploited. (Adam W. Rome.1998 p162)

Economic Value

Besides recreational importance open space such as parks, woods, lakes also have great economic value. House rent in planned housing societies with ample open space is higher than haphazardly developed areas. Additionally, economic activities such as fishing, selling peanuts, ice cream are also common in parks. Open space is a good source of timber. Lakes and canals work as water reservoir which controls flood and water logging.

Ethical and Moral Considerations

Open spaces are habitat of different wild life species namely birds, animals and insects But due to population growth which resulted in grabbing of open spaces the natural habitat of the different species, many common species are going extinct.

Aesthetic Enhancement

Open space adds to a town’s beauty and enhances the appearance of other properties. Parks, meadows, rivers, ponds and lakes provide a respite from the hurried world. Their beauty and tranquility provide for peace of mind. In addition, they help to maintain and increase property values.

2.3 Legal Provisions

Dhaka City Corporation is the authority to look after the open spaces, gardens, parks forests within the municipal area. The Dhaka City Corporation ordinance, 1983 (As modified up to 31st March, 1994) gives this corporation the authority.

Chapter IX of the ordinance reads that-

127. Gardens. (1) The Corporation may, and if so required by the Government shall, lay out and maintain within the City such public gardens as may be necessary for the recreation and convenience of the public, and such public gardens shall be maintained and administered in such manner as the by-laws may provide. (2) For every public garden, there shall be framed and enforced, in the prescribed manner, a Garden Development Plan which shall provide for the development and improvement of the garden.

128. Open spaces. The Corporation may provide and maintain within the City such open spaces as may be necessary for the convenience of the public and such spaces shall be grassed, hedged, planted and equipped with such amenities and in such manner as the by-laws may provide.

129. Forests. The Corporation may, in the prescribed manner, frame and enforce Forest Plans providing for the improvement, development and exploitation of forests and plant, maintain and work forests in accordance with such plans.

Dhaka city is also responsible for planting trees on road side and in gardens and for maintaining and protecting the trees.

126. Arboriculture (1) The Corporation shall plant trees on public streets and other public places within the City and take all such steps as may be necessary for the plantation and protection of trees on such streets and places. (2) The Corporation may, in the prescribed manner and with the previous sanction of the Government, frame and enforce an arboriculture plan.

130. Nuisances pertaining to trees and plantations. 1) The Corporation may by by-laws determine the pests of trees and plants and provide for their destruction. (2) If any land or premises within the City is grown with rank or noxious vegetation or undergrowth, the Corporation may by notice require the owner or occupier of such land or premises to clear such vegetation or undergrowth within a specified time, and if he fails to do so within such time, the Corporation may have such vegetation or undergrowth cleared and the cost incurred thereon by the Corporation shall be deemed to be a tax levied on the owner or occupier under this Ordinance. (3) The Corporation may, in the manner provided in the by-laws, require the felling of any tree which is dangerous or the trimming of the branches of any tree which overhang and are likely to interfere with traffic or are otherwise inconvenient. (4) The Corporation may, in the manner provided in the by-laws, prohibit the cultivation of any crop, which is considered dangerous to public health within such part of the City as may be specified.

As per section 108 of the Ordinance City Corporation may, and if so required by the Government shall draw up a master plan for the cityand as per section 109(2) (b) among other matters, the site development scheme may provide for- the streets, drains and open spaces.

As per the Dhaka City Corporation ordinance, 1983 City Corporation may maintain its property and can transfer the property

Section 65 (2) of the ordinance reads -The Corporation may (a) manage, maintain, inspect, develop or improve any property which is owned by or vests in it or which is placed under its charge; (b) apply such property for the purposes of this Ordinance or the rules; and

(c) acquire or transfer by grant, gift, sale, mortgage, lease, exchange or otherwise any property with the previous sanction of the Government.

However, in the Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance, 2008 has divested the City Corporation power to transfer property. It needs prior approval of the Government to sell, mortgage, lease or exchange property.

Section 80(2) of the Ordinance reads

The Corporation (a) maintain, inspect, develop or improve any property which is owned by or vests in it or which is placed under its charge; (b) apply such property for the purposes of this Ordinance or the rules; and (c) upon prior approval of the Government acquire or transfer by grant, gift, sale, mortgage, lease, exchange or otherwise any property with the previous sanction of the Government.

2.3.1 Building Construction Rules-2008

On 03.06.2008 Government promulgated a new rule for building construction that will create some open space in the city. The new rules amended Building Construction Rules-2007.

Under the new rule owners of up to 2 *kathas* of land will be allowed to use highest 67.5 percent of their plot of land to construct a building. They would have to construct building leaving 0.8 meter space at the edges instead of the previous one meter.

According to the new rules, owners, who have 2-3 *kathas* of land, will be able to use 65 percent of the land for construction. Owners of three-five *kathas* will be able to use 62.5 percent of the land, owners of 5-9 *kathas* 60 percent, owners of 9-12 *kathas* 57.5 percent, owners of 12-14 *kathas* 55 percent, owner of 14-18 *kathas* 52.5 percent, and owners of 18 *kathas* and above will be able to use 50 percent of the land for constructing their structures.

The new rules allow owners, who constructed their buildings according to the old rules, to internally modify their buildings leaving alone the length, width, height and total floor space of buildings. The new rules also say that an owner constructing a building under the Key Point Installation or Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh height-restricted area would be able to use all the land after leaving the minimum space around the building. The ground coverage rule of constructing buildings will not be applicable for them.

2.3.2 Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002

The Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002 imposes restrictions on changing the class of open space, park and play ground. Felling off trees also means changing class.

Section 5 of Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002 reads - **Restriction on Changing Class of Playground and Open Space, Park and Natural Wet land:** Without the provisions of the law, class of park, wetland, open space and play ground can be changed or the land can not be used otherwise or the land can be leased out or transferred. (Explanation: to

fulfill the objective of the section, destruction of basic characteristics or felling off its tree will be considered as change of class.) The law has provision of punishment for violating the law.

Section 8(1) of Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002 reads-

Punishment etc.: If any body infringes any section of the law he will be punished for not more than 5 (five) years imprisonment or fined not more than Taka 50 (fifty) thousand or both.

2.3.3 The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995

The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995 defines ecosystem as the inter-dependent and balanced complex association of all components of the environment which can support and influence the conservation and growth of all living organisms;

It should be noted that the Director General of Department of Environment can take remedial steps against any sort of injury to the ecosystem. The law depicts - remedial measures for injury to ecosystem- (1) If it appears to the Director General that any act or omission of a person is causing or has caused, directly or indirectly, injury to the ecosystem or to a person or group of persons, the Director General may determine the compensation and direct the firstly mentioned person to pay it and in an appropriate case also direct him to take corrective measures, or may direct the person to take both the measures; and that person shall be bound to comply with the direction.

2.4 Conclusion: This chapter has attempted to clarify the relevant definitions and concepts related to open space and its usage. The chapter also has tried to define the legal provision regarding the use of open space.

Case study

3.1 Encroachment of Osmani Udyan

Osmani Udyan is century old park of Dhaka city. It was a railway property since the British Period. Later it was given to Power Works Department (PWD). In 1998 PWD handed over the Osmani Udyan at that time having an area of 23.14 acres to Dhaka City Corporation upon the Decision No. 12(4) 89 of Cabinet Division meeting dated 09.04.89.

Ever since that time the Osmani Udyan has been under threat from different Government Departments and encroachers. In 1998 an area of 0.3765 acre on the western part of Osmani Udyan was allocated to Titas Gas to build City Central Station which is still in their possession. In 1999, 1.0800 acre of land was given to the Police Department to establish a Police Control Room. At the end of 1999 a shed for the typist was built on 0.07 acres of land. The Mukti Jodhya Sangsad has 0.2248 acres of land in their possession. The Golap Shah Public Library and mosque has occupied 0.3758 acres of land. Baitullah Jame Mosque has been occupying 0.2178 acres of land since before the Udyan was handed over to City Corporation. (Source DCC & *Daily Bhorer Kagoj* , 29.06.2003))

3.1.1 Attempt to grab land by one Monowara Begum

2.812 acres of land of Osmani Udyan is under police custody due to injunction by the court. In 1993 one Monowara Begum grabbed 2.812 acres of land claiming to be the owner. She filed a case No. 139/93 at 1st Sub Judge Court claiming to be owner of 2.8172 acre of land. In that case 1st respondent is Syada Jamil Hassan and 2nd respondent is Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka. On 06.07.93 court issued *Solehnama* decree against Syada Jamil Hassan and *exparti* decree against Deputy Commissioner, Dhaka. On 30.11.99 Dhaka City Corporation filed a criminal case against the decree at 1st Sub Judge Court and applied for temporary injunction. In reply Court issued interim injunction favoring Dhaka City Corporation. Monowara Begum filed Civil Rule No. (F.M)/ 2000, 83 (F.M.)/2000, 62(F.M.)/2000 at Honorable High Court against the case. (F.M)

62/2000, (F.M.) 90/2000, (F.M.) 83/2000 were disposed off through discharge in favor of City Corporation. Monowara Begum filed a Writ Petition at Honorable High Court on 08.07.2001. On 26.06.01 in the Writ Petition it was ordered that both parties should refrain from making any kind of change of the disputed land. Ignoring the court order Monowara Begum felled trees of the disputed land regarding which a complaint was filed with Ramna Police Station. On 16.07.01 Honorable High Court issued *suo moto* contempt rule No. 69/2001. Honorable court also ordered Inspector General of Police to take control of the land. For violating status quo Honorable High Court charged Monowara Begum with contempt of court. The writ was disposed off on unconditional mercy petition by Monowara Begum. Against the Monowara Begum and others, Dhaka City Corporation filed Money Suit Case No. 59/2001 for inflicting loss by cutting trees and also filed a Violation Mis. Case 55/2001 for violating court order. (Source DCC & BAPA)

Dhaka City Corporation won in the Civil Case No. 335/99 at 1st Sub Judge Court, filed by Monowara Begum. Dhaka city Corporation also won in the Civil Case No. 83/2004

3.2 Political Assault on Osmani Udyan

3.2.1 NAM Conference Center and CNG refueling station

In 1999 the Awami League Government wanted to build a NAM conference centre in Osmani Udyan which was foiled by the strong protest of the conscious citizenry. (*Daily Bhorer Kagoj*, 06.08.05). At that time the opposition party in the parliament BNP also protested the government decision. In 2003 the BNP led government tried to make CNG refueling station and conversion centre in Osmani Udyan. Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MO E & M R) took the decision and the then prime minister approved it. Due to strong protest by the citizen the attempt never succeeded. (*Daily Sangbad*, 29.06.2003)

3.2.2 Bus Stand in Osmani Udyan

From 2005 a Bus stand has been operating unauthorized in Osmani Udyan. At first 15 buses of Dhaka Dohar route started using Osmani Udyan as bus stand. It is alleged that an influential person from the constituency of communication minister himself looked after the buses. Due to his influential position the authority could not take action against him. Following him 50 buses of Azmiri Poribohan, owned by another influential person of the ruling party, started using Osmani Udyan. 25 big buses of Great Wall Citi Bus owned by an MP were kept in Osmani Udyan.

“Bus operators such as Azmeri Paribahan, Mayer Doa, Baishakhi, some human haulers and rent-a-car companies park their vehicles inside the park. There have also been two temporary restaurants and several makeshift shops inside.” (New Age, 23.05.05)

3.3 Present State of Osmani Udyan

A project, undertaken by the Dhaka City Corporation to modernize the Osmani Udyan by planting more environment friendly trees, is being implemented at a slow pace. The main

objective of the project is to give the park, having an area of 23.14 acres of land, a decent look so that people can pass their leisure there. The total cost of the project has not been estimated yet, but DCC sources said already 3.74 crore taka was spent in the first phase. DCC has already completed the first phase of groundwork that includes construction of a boundary wall, lower bed, artificial lake, walkways along the boundary wall, plantation of trees and garden in the park. Located in the heart of the city, the park is in between Bangladesh Secretariat, (the country's civil administrative headquarters), and Dhaka City Corporation, the office of Dhaka's Mayor.

The following table shows how gradually the Osmani Udyan has been squeezed to the present size.

Table 3.1 Reduction in size of Osmani Udyan

Land of Osmani Udyan 23.14 acres		
Event	Year	Amount of land encroached/ Occupied
PWD handed over Osmany Udyan to DCC	1998	
Public Toilet made by City Corporation	-	0.0376 acre
To make Central City station land was given to Titas GAS	1998	0.3765 acre
To make Police Control Room land was given to Police department	1999	1.0800 acre
Shed for typists made (Now evicted)	1999	0.07 acre
Mukti Jodhya Sangsad	-	0.2248 acre
Hazrat Golap Shah Mosque	-	0.3758 acre
Baitullah Zame Mosque	-	0.2178 acre
Land under litigation with one Monowara Begum	2005	2.8172 acre (DCC Won)
Total Land Encroached/ Used		2.3418 acre
Area of Osmani Udyan		23.140 acre
Land Remaining		20.7992 acre
Source: Dhaka City Corporation, <i>Daily Bhorer kagoj</i> , 06.08.2005 <i>Daily Bhorer Kagoj</i> , 06.08.2005		

3.4 Osmani Udyan: The criminals' den

Osmani Udyan is located in a busy area in which thousands of floating people live. In the neighborhood of Osmani Udyan, there are offices, shopping center, hawker market, cinema hall,

inter district bus stoppage. The neighborhood of Osmani Udyan is a mosaic of rich, middle class and poor people. Touts, muggers and drug peddlers also thrive there. Sex workers also find the place very prospective. Many criminals use it as a hide out. Some sex workers and drug peddlers operate from inside the park using it as their den.

Muggers of the adjoining areas also use the park as a shelter. Drug addicts are noticed even during the daytime. With darkness closing in, floating sex workers begin to frequent the park, looking for customers. At least 100 panders and sex workers are active inside the park, some even during the day. "Hardly a night passes without a scuffle between sex workers and their clients over payment" (The New Age 23.05.05)

3.5 Osmani Udyan and Civil Society

Environmental activists Professor Serajul Islam Choudhury, Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) and Bangladesh Environmentalist Lawyers Association (BELA) have been playing a vital role to protect the Osmani Udyan and create public awareness about the central breathing place of Dhaka. A citizens' committee named 'Movement to protect the land and environment of Osmani Udyan' was formed at their initiative. On 03.01.08 the DCC and environmentalists decided to take legal steps and launch a social movement to protect 2.81 acres of land in the Osmany Udyan, ownership of which is claimed by a 'vested interest group. BELA and BAPA expressed their commitment to give all sorts of legal help.(The New Age, 04.01.2008). Leaders of Shujon, The Hunger Project- Bangladesh, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and Youth Ending Hunger-Bangladesh also urged the Government to take necessary steps to protect Osmani Udyan. They also demanded punishment of the group trying to grab the public property. (The Daily Star, 12.01.2008). When the Government decided to erect conference center for Non Aligned Movement and cut trees a citizens committee named "Movement to Protect 11,000 Tress of Osmani Udyan" launched a campaign demanding the Government revoke plans to build the conference hall in the park. (Asian Economic News, 24.05.1999)

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDP/is_1999_May_24/ai_54888635 accessed on 30.05.2011)

The Sylhet Division Development Student Action Council organized an art competition for children in Osmani Udyan in the Dhaka city to protect it from encroachment. Artist Hashem Khan inaugurated the programme which was presided over by Fazlur Rahman Khan, President of the organization. (The New Age, 11.06.2005)

Osmani Udyan has taken the center stage the center for any kind of environmental movement. In the Udyan demonstration are arranged not only to protect Osmani Udyan itself but to protect other parks, water bodies, playgrounds that is environment of the country as a whole.

At a rally on 22.07.2005 BAPA leaders demanded immediate steps for the protection of ponds. They demanded that the exact number of ponds in the country should be determined. They demanded a citizen's committee to protect the ponds and creation of a cell to use the government ponds only under a scientific management. (The New age 23.07.2005)

3.6 Encroachment of other parks in Dhaka

Within the Dhaka City Corporation area, it is not only Osmani Udyan alone which has been grabbed by different quarters, other parks also have come under threat of encroachment. Two other such cases are cited below.

3.6.1 Encroachment of children's park at Khilgaon:

It is alleged that Bangladesh Ansar and VDP occupied 0.6584 acre of land designated for playground and children's park ignoring a High Court injunction on January 31, 2007. In the city master plan of 1961 the place was shown as children's park. President Hossain Mohammad Ershad in 1987 allotted the land in favor of Ansar and VDP to establish its women hostel. Following continuous protest from the locals, the PWD in 1996 cancelled the allotment and handed it over to Dhaka City Corporation. The Awami League government on July 12, 2000 again allotted the land to Sabuj Moti Trust (SMT) for building a general hospital. The BNP-Jamat Government coming to power cancelled the allotment and issued work order for development of the park. Upon a writ petition filed by SMT on January 2, 2005 the High Court Division Bench issued an injunction and ordered Ansar and VDP not to make any construction until the disposal of the writ. However Ansar and VDP put up boundary fences around the land and deployed armed security men. (The Daily Star 13.07.07)

3.6.2 Encroachment of Park in Mirpur Section 2

On April 16, 2007 the National Housing Authority felled several hundreds trees of the only park of Mirpur section 2 to make a market. They vandalized the children's rides and other instrument of the park by bulldozer. In the main master plan of Dhaka city the place was marked as greenery. (*The Daily Prothom Alo* 17.04.2007) The weekly Ononya and Save the Environment jointly organized discussion meeting to bemoan the move. (*The Daily Ittefaq* 05.06.07)

3.7 Conclusion

Osmani Udyan is a century old park located in the centre of Dhaka city. Now and again different vested interest groups try to occupy it with the help of political goons. The government itself several times built establishment in Osmany Udyan ground ignoring the need of a park for a city life and for ecosystem.

Findings

After studying the case of Osmani Udyan, interviewing different civil society representatives and consulting relevant literature some conclusions can be drawn. A good numbers of factors and actor have been identified behind the reduction of Osmani Udyan, which was the objective of the study. Findings of the exploration can be summarized as follows:

Actors behind the Reduction/Encroachment of Osmani Udyan

4.1 Vandalism by authority (political or administrative)

When the city Dhaka was established by the Mughals, there were many gardens. The Mughals and the subsequent British ruler made many gardens for aesthetical reasons. “The most famous and beautiful garden was Bagh-i-Padshahi. The garden was located in Ramna.” (Muntassir Mamoon: 1991, p 17)

The municipal authorities, who are supposed to protect the gardens, can be held responsible for destroying the gardens. To meet the demand of burgeoning population, instead of creating new designated urban area they cut off the trees to make new buildings.

Like the parks of Dhaka, trees have been chopped down on silly grounds, some times to widen the roads, some times to straighten the roads or sometimes to build new buildings. And always behind this the authority is in collusion with political elites.

“Dhaka was once full of trees. As there were plenty of Shegun (teak) trees in Shegun Bagicha (garden) the area was called as Shegun Bagicha. The responsibility of maintaining Shegun Bagan went to the Municipal committee when the army regiment was shifted from Purana Palton to Lal Bagh Fort. Like present days the Municipal committee chopped the precious trees of Shegun Bagan. (Muntassir Mamoon: 1991, p 35).

Osmani Udyan once was the property of Bangladesh Railway. Later it came to the Power Works Department. In 1998 the Power Works Department handed over the Osmani Udyan to Dhaka City Corporation. After taking charge of Osmani Udyan 2.0864 acre of land (1.0800 acre of land to Police Department, 0.2248 acre of land to Mukti Jodhya Sangsad, 0.3758 acre of land to Golap Shah Public Library and mosque, 0.3765 acre of land to Titas Gas Department, 0.0293 acre to make water pump) has been transferred to different departments. It is an irony that, the

Dhaka City Corporation whose responsibility is to save parks and build new parks has transferred land of the parks.

It was known from the interview of an official of DCC, who talked on condition of anonymity stated that the land was given to different departments on government decision (land was given to Titas Gas on decision by the MOLGRD & C). In a recent move, under the Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, the mayor has been scrapped of the power to transfer land. For any kind of gift, transfer of land government approval is needed. However, the change in the law will not improve the scenario since prior to the latest law land under DCC control was also transferred on government decision.

The political leaders also play an active role to encroach the Osmani Udyan and other parks of Dhaka city. In 1999 the Awami League Government wanted to build NAM conference hall, and in 2003 BNP Government wanted to make CNG refueling station in Osmani Udyan. Bus owners under the political guidance use Osmani Udyan as bus stand or car parking place. In 2000 Awami League Government allotted the Khilgaon children park to Shabuj Moti Trust, run by a political leader.

4.2 Land price of Dhaka

The reduction of open space in Dhaka city can also be partially attributed to the increasing land price in Dhaka city. Another factor of high land price in Dhaka is the competition among the land developers. As the Government is allowing high rise buildings the price of the land soared up almost overnight. The land developers are using all sorts of technique to utilize the entire parcel of land. Due to excessive price land has become as precious as gold. Land price in Dhaka is higher than the land price of many developed countries.

The World Bank in a 2007 report stated that residential land values in prime locations of Dhaka range between US \$ 30 and \$ 60 per square foot, similar to prices reported in other cities such as Hyderabad, Kuala Lumpur or New Delhi.

As the land price has become very high nobody wants to spare a single inch while building a house. The benefits which come from open space is considered lower than the cost incurred to buy the land. Illegal encroachment of land has become very profitable. Sometimes the musclemen try to encroach land through the loop holes of laws. Osmani Udyan is an instance of such unethical attempt of encroachment. Monowara Begum in connivance with her husband, Abdul Khaleque, also a Supreme Court lawyer, filed a case with the sub-judge's court on July 7, 1993, claiming her ownership on the land worth over Tk 200 crore. (The New age 04.01.08).

The population of Dhaka is increasing at a higher rate. "Dhaka is the fastest growing mega-city in the world, with an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 new migrants, mostly poor, arriving to the city annually. ...population is projected to grow to 20 million in 2020, making it the world's third largest city." The World Bank, (2007 p Xiii)

The fear of population boom has activated the vested interest group. Every body is trying to thrive in an unscrupulous way by availing the opportunity they got.

4.3 Role of Civil Society

Civil Society has been playing a vital role to protect Osmani Udyan from encroachment. A citizens' committee named 'Movement to protect the land and environment of Osmani Udyan' was formed. Whenever there is any attempt to deface the Osmani Udyan they play the leading role in debunking the ill motive of the vested interest groups. They urge DCC and others concerned to take legal action against the land grabbers in order to save the park. Sometimes they express concern over the reluctant attitude of DCC towards protecting the Osmani Udyan, a century-old historic park, from land grabbers.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA) and BELA (Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association) also stay in the front line to protect the park. They arrange press briefing to create and raise public awareness.

4.4 Unplanned Urbanization

One of the major causes of reduction of open space in urban planning is unplanned urbanization. "During the Mughal and pre Mughal era there was no master plan for Dhaka City. In 1955 Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) was established. In 1959 the first master plan for 20 years for Dhaka city was made. After independence for a long time there was no master plan for Dhaka city. In 1992 an initiative was taken to make another master plan for Dhaka. After three years in 1995 Dhaka Master Development Plan (DMDP) was made and in 1997 was approved by the authority". (Professor Nazrul Islam commented on *The Daily Sangbad* 14.11.2003).

DMDP proposed to make a Detail Area Plan (DAP) for the city. But till date it has not been implementd. The Detail Area Plan is supposed to give direction about the land use that is to mark residential, industrial and administrative area. Due to absence of detailed planning, the Dhaka city is expanding in an unplanned way. A comparison of urban land use of 1984 and 2004 indicates that unplanned housing has increased to a great extent in a span of twenty years.

Despite the boom in unplanned urbanization it appears that the importance of planning is understood by city planners and politicians as well.

Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation said "that population of the Dhaka city will go beyond two crore in 2015. The government must take initiative to develop the city to make it compatible for living. A comprehensive plan must be formulated considering the future of Dhaka City after 50 years" (*The Daily Independent and The Daily News Today*, 16.06.2008)

4.5 Corruption and inefficiency of RAJUK & DCC

Corruption and inefficiency of RAJUK & DCC are also major reasons behind the encroachment of reduction of open space in Dhaka city. The DCC lack the efficiency to serve the citizens and is unwilling to turn a blind eye to offenders in return for some gain.

Professor Nazrul Islam said "This organization lacks vision commensurate to the size and character of Dhaka. The people in this organization do not appreciate the complexities of a city

system. DCC is weak administratively, managerially, and financially.” (Asian Cities in the 21st Century: Contemporary Approaches to Municipal Management Vol. 3 Reforming Dhaka City Management, 1998,)

He added “We need to make institutions functional. If RAJUK cannot function properly, Dhaka can never work properly” (*The New Age Xtra* , 25-30, May 2007)

The loss incurred due lack of planning is not calculated and always overlooked. For instance citizens waste time while caught in the traffic jam, and they lose working hour. Less working hour means less output.

“... inappropriate planning permission process and corruption in the whole system are hindering the planned development of Dhaka city. Impact of this corruption is severe but sometimes intangible in nature, one can’t calculate in terms of money. For instance deprivation of community facilities, sufferings in congestion, living in pollution etc all are the resultants of bad planning practice and corruption in the planning process which cannot be easily converted in the monetary form.” (Md. Akter Mahmud, 2007 p -2)

Corruption in RAJUK is widespread. It is reported that bribe is inevitable for any kind of permission.

“In every year 7,000 to 8,000 people get the planning permission for construction of residential and commercial building in Dhaka City. Not a single planning permission application moves without any persuasion. This process gets the momentum either by bribe or influential person.” (*Ibid*)

As a result buildings are often constructed in clear violation of the building rules, and sometimes without any permission.

Housing problem

Housing problem in Dhaka city is acute. The ultra poor often do not have a shelter and sometimes must stay in an open space to pass their nights.

“The majority of urban population have access to only a small fraction of the urban land, for example in the case of Dhaka, 70 % of the population of the city who belong to the low-income groups have access to only 20 percent of the total residential land of the city, while the middle and upper income groups who constitute only 30% of the city population enjoy control over 80% of land.” (A Atiq Rahman *et al*, ed, 1994, p343)

The poor live a subhuman life in the slums. They do not have access to basic urban amenities such as water, electricity, fuel for cooking. The slums are very congested; they do not have any communal space.

“In the slums and for squatters, the per capita residential or living space available is sometimes as low as 10 square feet (1 sq M), whereas the recommended minimum even for a low income

high density society cannot be conceived less than 50 sq feet (5 sq M)” (A Atiq Rahman *et al*, ed, 1994, p343). Due to lack of enough space in the house, open spaces such as Osmani Udyan are vital for existence of the slum people. It is not only inhuman and unethical to restrict the entrance and stay of the floating people in Osmani Udyan but also quite impossible. So until and unless the housing system of Dhaka city is improved that is the landless people are provided with housing, intrusion of vagabond and ultra poor into parks and other open spaces cannot be stopped. So to protect the parks from squatters the housing problem of the landless people has to be solved.

Park are occupied otherwise

A big portion of Osmani Udyan is being used for different purposes, some times for bus parking, sometimes for shops. It is a common phenomenon for other parks as well.

A field survey of the Bangladesh Environment Lawyers’ Association said Osmani Udyan, children’s parks at Karwan Bazar, Sayedabad, Jatrabari, and Mirpur, Gulshan Park, Bahadur Shah Park, Botanical Garden, Baldha Garden, Suhrawardy Udyan, Shaheed Anwara Park, Mohammadpur Shaheed Park, children’s park at Hatkhola, children’s park in Old Town, and Ramna Park, which are all under the jurisdiction of the city corporation and the public works department remain occupied and they are used for purposes other than what parks and playgrounds are set up for. (*The New Age* 05.06.05)

4.6 Conclusion

Open spaces are being vanished from Dhaka city as the authorities to ensure open spaces are indifferent about it. Huge influx of people in Dhaka city and the soaring price of land are also the reasons behind the reduction of open spaces. Unplanned urbanization and corruption of the overseeing authorities made scenario acute.

Recommendations and conclusion

It is obvious that very little effective effort has gone into the planned growth of the Dhaka metropolis. If we look at different cities of developed world, we will see that the secret behind the successful management of cities is planning. “There is little doubt that if a panel of experts or indeed laymen was convened to consider the problem of third world urbanization and recommend remedial action, they would agree unanimously that first and foremost, sensible and responsive urban planning is required” (R.B.Mandal 2000. p 113). If properly planned, even now, Dhaka can be transformed into a very decent, livable city. We can use the rivers, the canals, the lowlands, and open spaces to make it a beautiful city.

Proper planning should involve consultations with different stakeholders. A participatory planning will reflect the true demand of the citizens. If the interest of a particular group is considered only there is always chance to make mistakes. “... planning is also a mechanism to provide an environment for living which all may desire but which would not be obtained through the fragmented decision of individuals. It is a means to organize the public goods of society.” (Taylor & Williams 1982. p. 23 quoted in *ibid* p 114)

We have to free the land grabbed by encroachers in and around the city to make Dhaka liveable. We have to think about sustainable development for the city.

Mohammad Iqbal Kabir, a Supreme Court lawyer who also works with the environment lawyers’ association, says, “... we need to reclaim public spaces such as parks, playgrounds. We have identified no less than 65 to 68 such public areas. We are campaigning to free these spaces and make sure that the remaining ones are not grabbed... without livable spaces it will not be a city!” (*The New Age Xtra*, May 25-31. 07)

Real Estate Agencies are also responsible for making the city haphazard and cramped. They are grabbing the land in the fringe areas. They are availing the opportunity as a Detail Area Plan is absent. “With simply a real-estate agency license, they are claiming that they have RAJUK approval to develop a certain land. Starting from the alarming land grabbing in the fringes of Dhaka by major developers to those being done within the inner areas of the city, this is not only deceiving for customers but dangerous for city planning. Without a detailed area plan anything can be tweaked into these developments.” (*The New Age Xtra*, May 25-31.2007)

Coordination among different departments is very essential for proper planning. Some parks are owned by one department and looked after by another department. If all the parks and open spaces are owned and looked after by one department it will be easier to maintain them and that department will be held responsible for any kind of loss or damage.

On 03.06.2008 the government promulgated “Building Construction Rules- 2008”. This is a good move on Government’s part. Under this rule owners are allowed to make building on highest 67.5 percent of their land. If this law is enforced properly open spaces will be created around the buildings which will make passage for ventilation.

The government promulgated another law named Park, Wetland and Open Space Conservation Act 2002, but due to wide spread violation of the law we have seen that open space and wet lands have reduced and encroached not only by political goons or vested interest group but also by the government. In 2006 when Professor Dr. Iazuddin Ahmed became the Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government, 1 Bigha (0.33 acre) land of Ramchandrapur *Khal* at Mohammadpur was given to Dr. Anwara Begum, President, British Columbia School, who was also the then first lady of our country (*The Prothom Alo* 23.07.2008). The transfer was done within 48 hours of Dr. Iajuddin’s assuming power as Chief Adviser of Caretaker Government. When the top man of a state is associated with such a blunt violation of rule, it becomes quite difficult to protect open space of a country. So only rules and regulations are not enough to protect open space, rather cooperation among different civil society organizations and media is urgent here. Mass awareness about the importance of open space has to be created by advertisement, cinema, drama, songs and other means of public advocacy.

Conclusion

Every year we observe world environment day. But the spirit of the day is still limited to arranging seminars and rallies, no initiative taken to make the city green, rather than the campaign are conducted mostly out of narrow political interest.

“The director of the environmental development project of the DCC said, ‘I know that the corporation has not so far made any plan to make the city green or observe World Environment Day in a meaningful way.’” (*The New Age* 05.06.05)

The parks are vanishing out from the city’s map. The few parks that survive braving the political and business assaults remain dilapidated, barren and unusable. Dhaka, once a beautiful city with lots of garden and parks, now has become a city of congested high rises, air pollution and garbage. Osmani Udyan is the lung of Dhaka city. Assault on it by different quarters indicates that how careless we are about the importance of a park. Our future generation will live in high rises but will not able to play. They will live in the brick cages and will not see the winter dew on grasses. If we do not understand the need of open space yet, a very hectic urban life is waiting ahead for us.

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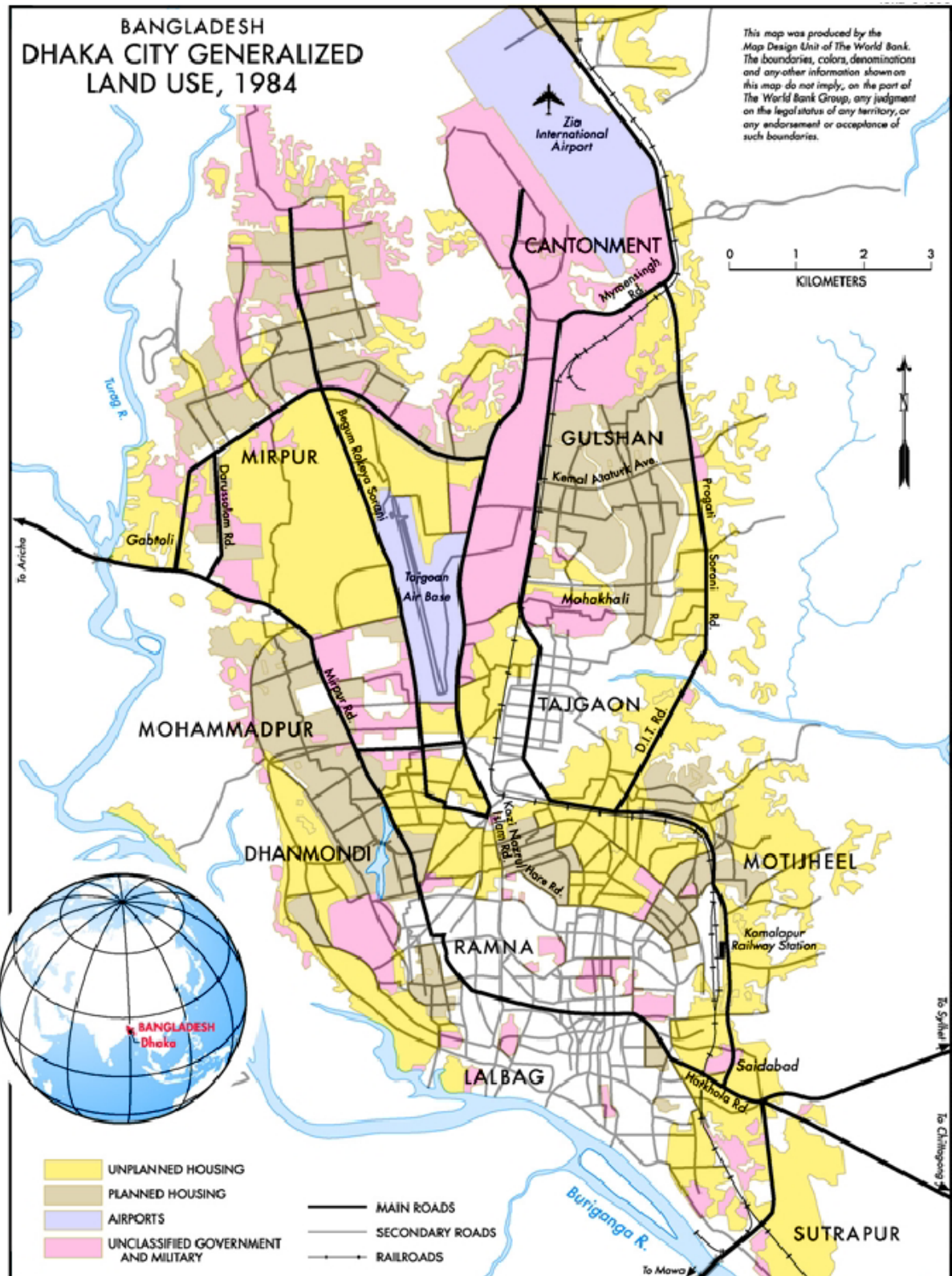
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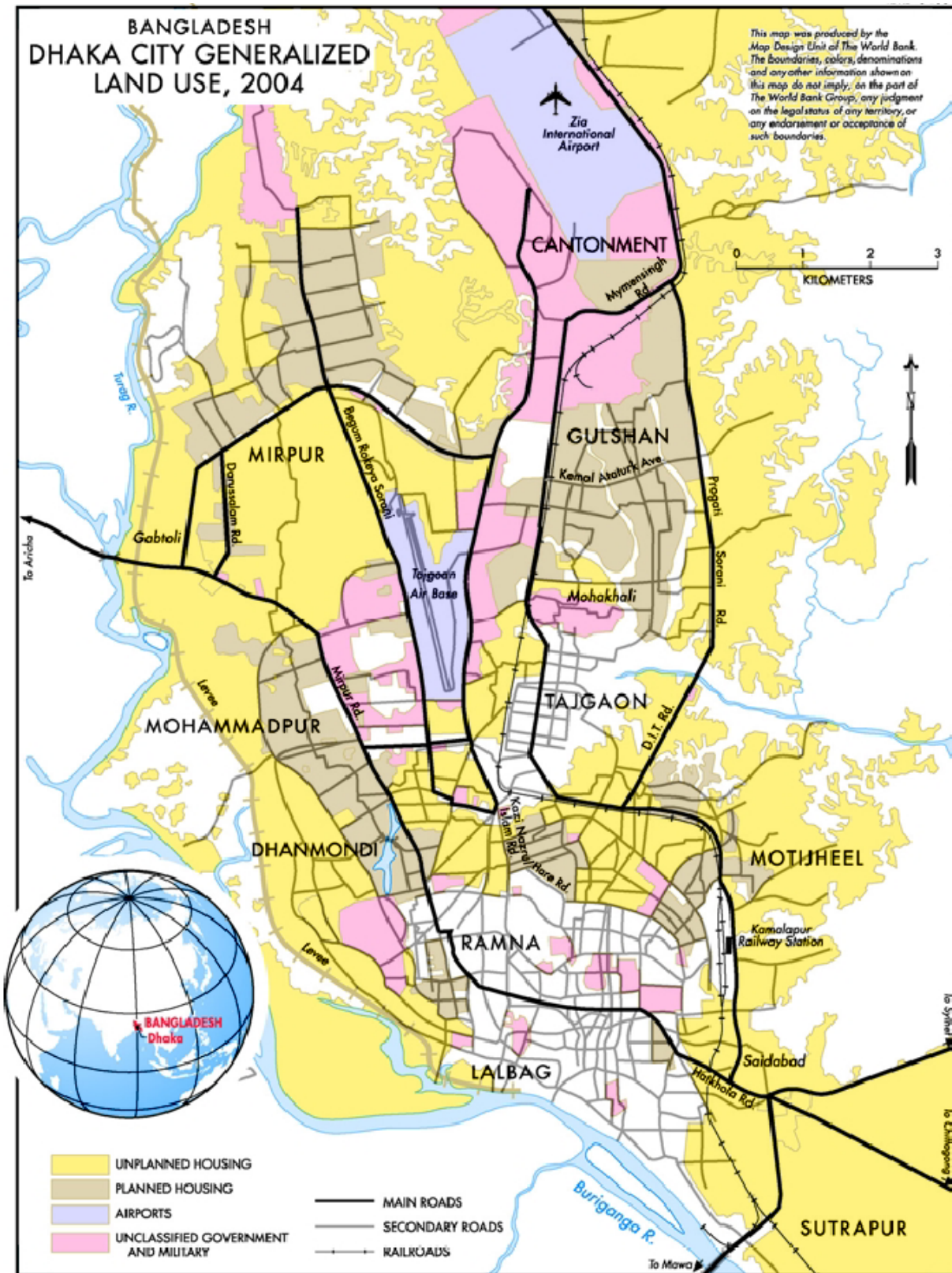
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Annexure

Annexure-1a: Map of Dhaka District, Source: Banglapedia







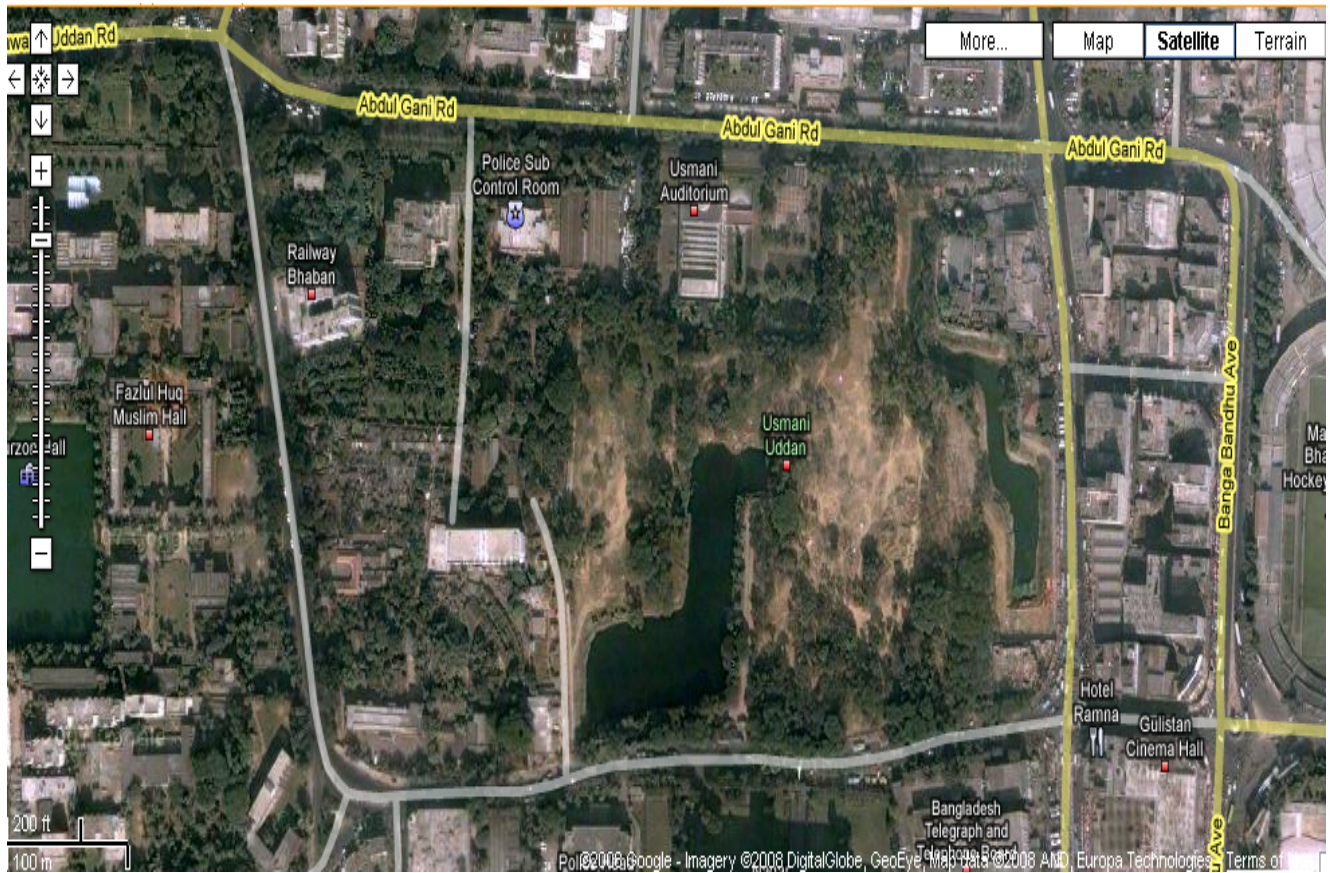
Annexure 1d: Map of Dhaka in 1924. Source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Dhaka
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Annexure 1e: The aerial view of Osmani Uddan



Annexure 1f: These vast unplanned growths, often with inadequate infrastructure, are a symptom of urban planners' failure to address successfully the city's increasing demographic and economic pressures



Annexure 1g: Photo- Bus Stand in Osmani Udyan . Source: New Age dated 23.05.05



Annexure 2a: List of the Parks under DCC

Sl	Park Name	Location	Area
1	Banani Sishu Park	Blk-D, Banani R/A, Ward-19, Zone-9.	1.14 Acr
2	Banani Park	Blk-C, Banani R/A, Ward-19, Zone-9.	0.9060 Acr
3	Banani Sishu Park	Blk-G, Banani R/A, Ward-19, Zone-9.	0.5670 Acr
4	Banani Sishu Park	Blk-F, Banani R/A, Ward-19, Zone-9.	1.23 Acr
5	Banani Lake Park	Adjacent to Banani Lake, Ward-19, Zone-9.	2.75 Acr
6	Kamal Ataturk Avenue Park	Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Ward-19, Zone-9.	0.6 Acr
7	Baridhara Park	Vatara, Baridhara, Ward-18, Zone-9.	2.2679 Acr
8	Baridhara Nursery Park	Vatara, Ward-18, Zone-9.	2.7089 Acr
9	Gulshan Park	Gulshan, Ward-19, Zone-9.	8.97 Acr
10	Gulshan Central Park	Gulshan, Ward-19, Zone-9.	7.6160 Acr
11	Gulshan Taltola Park	Opposite of Gulshan Shooting Club, Ward-19, Zone-9.	6.13 Acr
12	Jatrabari chourasta Park	East Jatrabari, Gulshan, Ward-84, Zone-1.	1.2 Acr
13	Bahadur Sah Park	Lakshi Bazar, Ward-78, Zone-2.	0.06 Acr
14	Saidabad Park	Saidabad, Ward-84, Zone-1.	0.0450 Acr
15	Samibagh Park	Samibagh, Ward-75, Zone-1.	1.35 Acr
16	Gulisthan Park (Sahid Motiur)	DIT Avenue, Ward-32, Zone-4.	3.5 Acr
17	Siraj ud Doula Park	Zindabahr, Nayabazar, Ward-68, Zone-2.	0.85 Acr
18	Jogonnath Sah Road Park	Jogonnath Saha Road, Ward-60, Zone-3.	0.63 Acr
19	Hazaribagh Park	Nilombor Saha Road, Ward-58, Zone-3.	2 Acr
20	Nababgonj Park	Nababgonj 2 nd Lane, Ward-19, Zone-9.	0.5 Acr
21	Shyamoli Park	Mohammedpur Ring Road,	3.57 Acr

		Ward-45, Zone-6.	
22	Sahid Makil Park	Mohammedpur , Ward-44, Zone-6.	1.98 Acr
23	Shia Mosque Park	Mohammedpur (adjacent to Shia Mosque) Ward-44, Zone-6.	1.25 Acr
24	Iqbal Road Field Park	Iqbal Road, Ward-45, Zone-6.	1.6070 Acr
25	Shyamoli Sishu Park	Shyamoli, Ward-41, Zone-6.	1.5 Acr
26	Kawran Bazar Park	Kawran Bazar, Ward-39, Zone-6.	0.52 Acr
27	Firm gate Trikon Park	Firmgate, Ward-39, Zone-6.	0.05 Acr
28	Pantho Kunja Park	Kawran Bazar, Ward-39, Zone-6.	3.0 Acr
29	kolabagan Lake Circus Park	Mirpur Road, Ward-51, Zone-5.	3.7175 Acr
30	Najirabazar Park	Majed sardar Road, Ward-69, Zone-2.	0.22 Acr
31	Malitola Park	Malitola, Ward-71, Zone-2.	0.33 Acr
32	Bongshal Triangle Park	Bongshal Old Chourasta, Ward-71, Zone-2.	0.03 Acr
33	Pallabi Sishu Park	Senpara PorbotaWard-4, Zone-7.	0.70 Acr
34	Tree Uddayan	Senpara PorbotaWard-4, Zone-7.	.33 Acr
35	Narinda Sishu Park	Narinda, Ward-77, Zone-1.	0.33 Acr
36	Narinda Sishu Park	Narinda, Ward-77, Zone-1.	0.1798 Acr
37	Bashir Uddin Sardar Park	Water wax Road Ward-65, Zone-3.	0.20 Acr
38	Khilgaon Sishu Park	Khilgaon Rehabilitation Area Ward-23, Zone-4.	0.65 Acr
39	Outfall Staff quarter Sishu Park	Outfall, Ward-86, Zone-1.	0.33 Acr
40	Mirpur 1 no Round about Park	Mirpur 1 no round about Ward-8, Zone-7.	0.05 Acr
41	Motijheel Park	Motijheel, Ward-32, Zone-4.	0.33 Acr
42	Wonderland Park	Gulshan, Ward-19, Zone-9.	2.5 Acr
43	Ser sahsuri Lane Park	Ser Shahsuri Road, Ward-44, Zone-6.	1.875 Acr
44	Udoyjol Field	Iqbal Road, Ward-45, Zone-6.	1.229 Acr
45	Mohammedpur Tajmohol Road Park	Tajmohol Road, Ward-42, Zone-6.	0.785 Acr
46	Dhanmondi Park	Mirpur Road, Ward-49, Zone-5.	4.4982 Acr
47	Lalmatia D Block Park	Lalmatia, Ward-45, Zone-6.	1.184 Acr
48	Dhanmondi 3 no gate park	Dhanmondi. Road-3, Ward-49, Zone-5.	0.8484 Acr
49	Hazaribagh Kasaitola Park	Gojmahal, Ward-48, Zone-3.	0.4269 Acr

50	Phulbaria Park	Fulbaria, Ward-70, Zone-2.	0.0698 Acr
51	Bokshibazar Park	Girza Urdu Road, Bakshibazar, Ward-63, Zone-3.	0.278 Acr
52	Nimtola Park	Nimtoly, Ward-56, Zone-5.	0.0391 Acr
53	Osmani Uddayan	Phonix Road, Ward-56, Zone-5.	22.10 Acr
Total = 98.2285 Acr			
54	Central Sishu Park	Sahbagh, Ward-56, Zone-5.	

Annexure2b: List of the Playgrounds under DCC

Sl	Field Name	Location	Area
1	Bangladesh Field	Agasadek lane, Ward-69, Zone-2.	1.98 Acr
2	GolapBagh	Golapbagh, Ward-85, Zone-1.	2.80 Acr
3	Basabo Field	Basabo, Ward-27, Zone-4.	2.50 Acr
4	Lalbagh Soshanghat Play Ground	Razanarayan Ghar Road, Ward-60, Zone-3.	0.33 Acr
5	Killar Mor Play Ground	Razanarayan Ghar Road, Ward-60, Zone-3.	0.40 Acr
6	Dhanmondi Play Ground	Dhanmondi R/A, Ward-49, Zone-5.	2.00 Acr
7	Kolabagan Play Ground	Bir Uttom Khaled Mosarraf Road Ward-51, Zone-5.	2.50 Acr
8	Banani Play Ground	Banani R/A, Ward-19, Zone-9.	2.50 Acr
9	Gulshan Central Park	Gulshan, Ward-18, Zone-9.	3.30 Acr
10	Freedom fighter Sadek Hossain Khoka Play Ground	Begam Gonj, Ward-81, Zone-1.	0.96 Acr
11	Dhupkhola Play Ground	Dhupkhola, Ward-81, Zone-1.	6.93 Acr
Total-26.2 Acr			

Annexure 3: List of persons interviewed

- 1: Professor Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, Date: 26.07.08 Time: 7.30 PM
2. Officials of City Corporation, Date 20.07.08 and 27.07.08
3. Sharif Jamil, Joint Secretary, BAPA & Member Secretary Khelar Math, Park O Oitijo Rakha Committee, BAPA Date 13.08.08
4. Mihir Biswas, Joint Secretary BAPA, Date 15.08.08