

Potential applicability of the concept of a sustainable city in Sri Lanka: A review

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Urban areas produce a series of environmental problems that arise from the consumption of natural resources and the consequent generation of waste and pollution. These problems are continuing to grow, new solutions, without adverse effects, therefore need to be developed in order to maintain the quality of life desired by the community. This paper reviews the applicability of the concept of a sustainable city within the Sri Lankan context and explores the policy changes required for adoption of the concept.

Many cities tend to be large consumers of goods and services, while draining resources out of external regions that they depend on. As a result of the increasing consumption of resources, and growing dependencies on trade, the ecological impact of cities extends beyond their geographic locations. The main objective of the study was to explore the components of the concept of a sustainable city, and to investigate their applicability in selected sectors of the country.

The study involved a survey of available literature on the concept of a sustainable city and investigated the main concepts applicable in three main areas, namely, transport, energy and waste management. The survey was extended to incorporate measurement indicators and their applicability as well. This information was then matched with the existing sustainable strategies of the above mentioned sectors and the potential of the incorporation of the concept was explored.

The results revealed the important components of the concept of a sustainable city including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components. The existing sustainable strategies have been limited only to the areas of waste and energy sectors within the urban sectors of Sri Lanka. System level indicators, targets and policy instruments have been identified, that could be immediately applied within the Sri Lankan city context.