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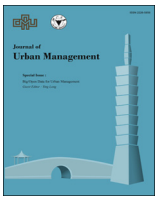

Research Article

Urban sustainability through strategic planning: A case of metropolitan planning in Khulna city, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Planning is a crucial element for any development initiative. Planning entails choice making in pursuit of stated goals e.g. improving living conditions for individuals and societies. Planning initiatives are employed within social systems that are governed by institution, and planning intervenes with and may reconfigure these institutions resulting in social change. This paper discusses how urban sustainability can be achieved through strategic action in urban development by analysing the planning process of Khulna city, Bangladesh. This paper reviews different scholarly articles to draw a conceptual framework for identifying the interface of strategic planning, components of strategic action planning and urban sustainability. Based on this conceptual framework this paper identifies the scope of achieving urban sustainability through analysing the current planning practice of Khulna city, Bangladesh. This paper identifies that though the Khulna city plan adopted the approach of strategic planning but it failed to comply with its theoretical notion to achieve the issues related to urban sustainability. Analysis reveals that in terms of social attribute that recognizes the interest of different group of people the exiting planning packages is not sustainable. Similar phenomenon have been observed in terms of recognition of gender and marginalized people in planning, equitable provision of income and employment generation, peoples' participation in planning and polices for ensuring equitable access to infrastructure services. Therefore the existing planning package of Khulna city failed to achieve the issues of urban sustainability through its adapted strategic planning approach.

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1. Introduction

It is obvious that planning process is changing over time to address the rapid changing nature of problems associated with city structure. The major changes have been observed globally in the post World War II era that called for massive physical and social reconstruction especially in Western Europe (Khan & Swapan, 2013). In response, British town planning legislations became an important model for controlled urban growth and modern town planning (Dear, 1986). During this time, blueprint planning or master plan approach was introduced which essentially based on rational planning (forecasting, analysis and landuse allocation), leading to the development of long term physical blueprint plans (Rakodi, 2001). Following this trend of physical planning traditions, developing countries were also influenced by the

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ideas of modernization. Therefore the urban planning practices in Bangladesh during 1960s were highly influenced by this type of physical planning practices introduced by British planners. The 1960 Master Plan of Dhaka and Khulna city is the reflection of such physical planning tradition. Therefore it can be observed that the master plan approach was exported to South Asia along with planning legislation and development control regulations replicated from the British system (Khan & Swapan, 2013). However, this blueprint approach of physical planning was contested by the rapid urbanization process and resource constraints in developing countries (Rakodi, 2001). In this context, the master plan of 1960 for Dhaka and Khulna city failed to achieve the ultimate goal and urged for a new approach of planning. The global planning traditions were also changing at that particular time. The urge for participatory planning through incremental planning by Lindblom (1959) and advocacy planning by Davidoff (1965) were the major shift in global planning paradigm. This shift led towards the incorporation of strategic planning approaches in planning practices globally. Even in Bangladesh there was a shift of planning approaches followed by the replacement of the master planning approach by strategic planning approach. To combat the rigidness of master planning approach and to introduce more open ended and participatory policy framework, strategic planning was introduced in Bangladesh in 1980. In this context strategic planning process was incorporated in the plan preparation for Khulna City Master Plan 2001. Though namely the plan is strategic in nature but to what extent it has been strategic in practice, is a matter of question and urban sustainability is the major concern in this process. Accordingly, this paper argues that participation, sustainable utilization of resource and equity can be instrumental for promoting strategic planning to ensure urban sustainability. In this paper the case of Khulna city, Bangladesh will be analyzed through the basic notion of strategic planning described above to find whether the approach was strategic or not. In addition the case will be analyzed to justify how the issues of urban sustainability were addressed through different policies to promote strategic planning.

2. Strategic planning; urban sustainability through strategic action planning

Though strategic planning was introduced by military and corporate roots, the approach was evolved in urban planning for its open process and creative participatory methodology. In response to the failure of state to secure socially just urban planning by comprehensive rationality, the pluralistic concept of planning was evolved. Strategic planning frameworks provide direction and justification for the flow of regularity and investment activity, which leads to changes in the location and form of development (Healey, 1996). Thus the process by nature is open-ended and participatory considering the hierarchy and interrelations of different tier of planning for promoting coordination as the underpinning principle. Moreover strategic planning is an open ended process constitutes of (1) an adaptable no-rigid methodology (2) a tool for sustainable urban development (3) a mechanism of participatory governance (4) a form of collaboration and (5) an instrument to manage and address future uncertainties and changes (Steinberg, 2002). However, strategic planning can contribute for urban sustainability when the planning process is institutionalised by meaningful participation of stakeholders for efficiency (Ibid).

Another major argument is how strategic planning can promote sustainability in the era of competitive market-based policy framework. The probable way of thinking is to justify strategic planning with urban sustainability. Strategic planning apparently seems to be a sustainable approach because of its collaborative actions but having unclear notion of power relations for goal articulation. However the recognition of synergy between actors, multiplier effect of the process and expanding room for manoeuvre for socially just action in strategic planning may transformed the strategic planning to a more sustainable approach defined as strategic action planning (Levy, 2007). Strategic action planning can ensure sustainability through the orientation of a series of components (1) the construction of collective intent, (2) a reframing diagnosis (3) precedent setting actions (4) the development of organizational and institutional capacity (5) dialogue and advocacy and (6) public learning (Levy, 2007). This paper will attempt to justify the procedural framework of strategic planning by the normative framework of strategic action planning to analyze how the different dimensions are related to strategic action planning. To analyze the procedural framework of strategic planning the exposure of following steps are necessary (1) Initial Agreement – 'Plan for Planning' (2) Identification of Mandates – "Musts" (3) Missions and Values – "Wants" (4) Internal and External opportunities and threats (5) Identification of practical alternatives to resolve strategy issues (6) Potential Future – "Vision of success" (Bryson & Roering, 1987).

3. Urban sustainability through redistribution of resource and power

It is notable that sustainable development refers equitable distribution of resource within generation and between generations for economic development (Kyrou, 2008). In this regard the question for strategic planning is whether strategic planning ensures urban sustainability by ensuring equity or it considers self-seeking economic growth only. So the common concern of collectivity for development is the major indicator of urban sustainability. Urban sustainability can be achieved through five dimensions, socially, economically, politically, ecologically and physically (Allen & You, 2002). In terms of social

sustainability this paper assumes the equity and freedom to exercise individual right. Whereas equity refers the consideration and adaption of policies specially referred to the issues of gender and marginalized people. Unless this practice of equity is ensured in planning it is noteworthy that the strategic planning approach will not be treated as sustainable (Few, 2002). In economic perspective, it is assumed that redistributive measures can promote urban sustainability. Redistributive measures include creation of enabling environment that recognizes income generating ability of the poor. Another dimension of economic sustainability is to ensure livelihood security by the direct and indirect policy interventions. So to promote more sustainable urban strategy it is necessary to create the provision of enabling environment that can generate income and employment opportunity (Watson, 2002). However social and economic issue is always related to political decisions and a matter of power relations. Unless the political representation of people is not ensured in decision making it is impossible to develop sustainable urban strategy that can ensure equity and redistribution. Understanding these aforementioned issues this paper assumes social equity in the planning stages in the form of public participation to promote political sustainability.

The major way to promote political sustainability is to ensure people's active participation in decision making, planning and implementation. To understand any strategic planning approach through political sustainability it has to be measured with the ways how the planning approach recognizes and ensures peoples participation (Allen & You, 2002). In urban planning, participation is conceptualised as a matter to ensure efficiency of sustainable planning process through a comprehensive understanding of communities' demand and considering community as the stakeholder of planning actions (Swapan, 2014). Participation in planning is increasingly recognised as the more consensual system of decision-making (Davies, 2001). Despite increasing interests in community participation in strategic planning process still the level and nature of community participation remains unanswered (Swapan, 2014). Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that only few citizens, irrespective of diverse socioeconomic background, have interest or are motivated in participating who is likely to have specific skills for effective participation (Mohammadi, 2010). Therefore it leads toward tokenism. As a consequence public dissatisfaction with the process and output of planning is becoming increasingly evident in the form of mass rejection of planning by violating the policies and planning regulations (Swapan, 2014). If the participation is only tokenism then it is merely a malpractice. However, this issue has to be addressed institutionally. As the literature on participatory practice suggests that in the planning process much emphasis has put into creating planning practices more participatory but the suitable institutional form to institutionalise the perceptions of realities of community have remained unexplored (Njoh, 2002). It has been observed in different literature that the institutional platform is often led by the representatives of relevant public departments, local governments, professional groups, civil society organisations, business groups, media, elected political leaders and academics (Mohammadi, 2010; Swapan, 2014). This approach again results the tokenism form of participation. In this context, this paper argues that tokenism cannot guarantee economic development and improvement of the social welfare; rather an empowered form of participation can achieve social equity with political sustainability in the form of public participation in planning process. Therefore, to unpack the potentials of people the representation and formulation of community organization in decision making can ensure sustainability.

In the case of ecological sustainability this paper advocates the balance between natural environment and built environment. The provision of adaptation mechanisms to deal with natural disaster and future access to natural resource (eg ground water) is the determinant of ecologically sustainable strategic planning. The policy principles for adaptation and the ways for trade-off between ecology and economy is the critical issue and major challenge for strategic planning in the competitive global market-based economy, where urban areas are becoming much more powerful economic hub to ensure economic sustainability (Scoones, 2007). For physical sustainability it is also assumed as a matter to promote equity in terms of services and facilities. To decrease social fragmentation, ensuring equitable access to utility services and formal secured housing, the strategic planning should be interlinked with economic and physical policies. The interdependency of physical infrastructure and group of people can be instrumental for promoting physically sustainable urban strategic intervention.

4. Interface of strategic planning and urban sustainability

Unpacking the concept of strategic planning and urban sustainability reveals that one of the major indicators of the strategic planning's success is to ensure urban sustainability. Urban sustainability is linked with the component of strategic action planning; thus the reflection of these components in the procedural framework of strategic planning can ensure urban sustainability. In the following table the procedural steps of strategic planning is linked with the attribute of urban sustainability to describe the interrelationships as a mean towards the end.

Table 1
Interface of Strategic Planning, Components of Strategic Action Planning and Urban Sustainability.Source: Author's Composition from Levy (2007), Bryson & Roering (1987) and Allen & You (2002)

Steps of strategic planning	Components of strategic action planning	Indicators of urban sustainability	Dimension of sustainability
(1) Initial Agreement – 'Plan for Planning'	Construction of collective Intent	The process of participation of all stakeholders	Political
(2) Identification of Mandates – "Musts"	Reframing diagnosis	Collective problem diagnosis	Social and political
(3) Missions and Values – "Wants"	Precedent settings	Identification of common goals and interest leads to equity	Social, political and physical
(4) Internal and External opportunities and threats	Developing Organizational and Institutional capacity	Enabling environment for employment and Income considering environmental Issues	Social, political, economical and environmental
(5) Identification of practical alternatives to resolve strategy issues	Dialogue and advocacy	Alternative choice for equitable service delivery	Social, political and physical
(6) Potential Future – "Vision of success"	Public learning for future action	Long term vision for environmental management	Environmental

With this understanding, the case of strategic planning in Khulna city, Bangladesh will be analyzed through urban sustainability, where the following five broad criteria will justify the strategic planning approach; (1) Social: Recognition of gender and marginalized people in planning (2) Economical: Equitable provision of Income and employment generation (3) Political: Peoples' participation in planning (4) Ecological: Policies for environmental management (5) Physical: Polices for ensuring equitable access to infrastructure services.

5. Metropolitan planning in Khulna city

Evolved by the British, master plan approach to urban planning was introduced in the sub-continent during 1950s; however within a decade it faced challenges about its ability to tackle the dynamic nature of the problems of urban living environment. In Bangladesh, first master plan was initiated in late fifties, but with no commendable success. A new phase of planning initiative began in early 80s in line with British Development Planning concept. But the old system of master plan still continued within the new plan package as the age long practices of urban planning and development control could not be replaced with a compatible system. But, after liberation in 1971 there had been substantial changes not only in the politics but also in policy and administration, in addition to amid deteriorating quality and skill in the bureaucracy, some new ideas were imported into the urban planning by international experts (Chowdhury, 2005) and strategic planning was introduced to combat the limitation of master plan that ignores future uncertainty and potentials. In other words, strategic planning was introduced for an open-ended policy framework. But without any prior attention to contextualization, the approach is also under threat to ensure coordination, participation and social justice for sustainable urban development.

Being an industrial city in 1960, Khulna city had the potentials to act as an economic hub in the regional economy. To foster economic growth, in 1960 an attempt was made for metropolitan planning in Khulna City by introducing a master plan. The content of that plan was merely land use planning and with no economic and social appraisal, therefore the plan failed to ensure coordination and contextualization, which lead to failure of the plan (Chowdhury, 2005). However after the expiration of that plan in 1980, strategic planning was introduced for Khulna unlike other metropolitan cities of Bangladesh. The plan is called Khulna Master Plan 2001. It is a three tier hierarchical plan contains structure plan, master plan and detailed area plan. The planning period of the plan is twenty years. The plan was considered as strategic as the structure plan was formulated as a strategic plan which lays down future development policies and shows directions of spatial growth and major development proposals in indicative form. It does not attempt to specify detailed lot by lot land use or local road configurations. It identifies where growth and change need detailed local and action plans. Unfortunately, the new strategic planning hardly had any implications on metropolitan development except being used as instrument of planning permission and development control.

6. Critical overview of Khulna city plan as strategic planning

The Khulna city plan is merely a land use plan thus the attempt was to solve complex problem by practicing development control mechanism. The approach was arbitrary rather than evidence based. The 'common sense' and international standard techniques were adopted for policy making without considering the local context. Although it is a demanding task to represent the complex dynamics of urban land use changes that are consistent with observable data, significant progress has been made in recent years in forecasting and evaluating land use change on the basis of dynamic and causal relationships between factors such as transport and land use, and built environment and socio-economic processes (Bari, 2009). The planning region of Khulna City plan was divided into 14 zones but prior to dividing the area, no attempt was made to coordinate spatial linkage among different zones. There are nine strategic options in the plan, none of these option

was elaborated through local context neither there was subsequent policy measures to implement those policies. So the plan is merely a research report without effective recommendations in terms of public action that considers local context as an underpinning principle. The plan is strategic in nature by military norms as the policy outlines prescribed in structure plan have to be followed in subsequent planning appraisals. In this regard, this paper argues that whether this plan was really strategic by nature or it is just namely strategic plan considering the issue of urban sustainability promoted by strategic planning.

7. Recognition of gender and marginalized people in planning

The land use planning approach adopted in Khulna City plan basically concentrates on infrastructure development. The issue of recognizing gender and marginalized people's concern in the plan is totally absent. Even in the first part of the structure plan where the existing situation have been analyzed there is no reflection of disaggregating the data that can provide the scope to recognize gender in future policy appraisals. In this regard the plan is so blind and hypothetical. However, to define the current problems in different zone of the planning area, the structure plan suggested that 'In zone-2, a sweeper colony in the area is perceived as a problem by upper income people living in this zone that has to be addressed' (KDA, 2001). This way of problem recognition explains the existing negligence towards marginalized people which opposes urban sustainability. The biasness of commercial development and land use based policies are often threatening to urban poor communities. In the plan it is prescribed under commercial development sector that there will be a commercial complex in the vacant land of railway, but the land is occupied by slum dwellers right now. So in practice, eviction is a common scenario without any policy measures to secure the housing of existing slum dwellers. Till today not a single pro-poor housing project has been implemented in Khulna city by any government organisation. Consequently in terms of social attribute that recognizes the interest of different group of people the exiting planning package is not sustainable.

8. Equitable provision of income and employment generation

The first objective of Khulna city plan was 'The Structure Plan will interpret the urban strategy and development policies to create the context for Khulna City development' (KDA, 2001). But in practice there is no indication, how the plan will be incorporated with national plan (Five Year Economic Development Plan). Unless the plan has no clear understanding of incorporation with national plan it is merely impossible to ensure economic development as the planning procedure of Bangladesh is 'top- down'. During preparation of the existing plan Khulna was experiencing an industrial boom due to its jute goods export, excellent transport and port facilities. But now the city is experiencing real threat of industrial lay-off due to the changing nature of national economy, which is now dependent on garments and shrimp, whereas the economy of Khulna is based on jute industries. However in macro scale there is no clear indication in the plan that how the economy of Khulna city can be revitalized as 54% of total GDP of the city depends on the formal industrial sector (KDA, 2001). Apart from the formal employment informal sector is playing a vital role. For patronizing this informal sector by ensuring credit access and land-use provision for securing business enterprise the policy proposals are really inadequate, thus the plan ignores urban sustainability.

9. Peoples' participation in planning

True community planning requires much more than passing a plan around at a few meetings to gain (or gauge) support, or to employ an elite committee to justify pro-rich policy directives, as in the cases of urban planning in Bangladesh (Bari, 2009). In the preparation of Khulna city plan the involvement of the people was basically passive participation. In the decision making process it was just informing people about different decisions without any consultation. Even the planning process failed to find out the scope of participation as well. Participation in planning process can be defined as 'if participation is to be considered in the plan, then the plan itself should be a product reflecting collective process and the context in which it was operating, in addition it is important at which moment in time participation is introduced in the plan for participation & decision-making linkages' (Kyrou, 2009). Unfortunately the planning process of Khulna city plan was not collective indeed rather it was expert-led. The participation process can be defined as a process of tokenism, as it has been observed that representatives from public departments, local governments, professional groups, civil society organisations, business groups, media, elected political leaders and academics were asked to attend different meetings in the plan preparation stage to develop a wish list. This approach hinders the potential to explore the grounded reality as it fails to identify the perception of community. Therefore the meaning of community is restricted to few citizens who are known to the planning authorities and from the privileged part of the society (Mohammadi, 2010). Due to the lack of community participation in the grassroot level, the local problem and interests are often overlooked and bring conflict of interests. In Khulna city plan the strategic options are infrastructure-based but it is not clear whether provision of these infrastructures are able to create an enabling environment for further economic investment in the city economy that can generate employment and income, which is the prior need of the people. As an example, it can be mentioned that 4173.24 acres of land

was earmarked as industrial zone that included 1568 acres of new industrial zone. But the real scenario shows that industrial layoff is happening in Khulna city and this proposed industrial zone remains as barren land. In absence of this formalized industrial provision of employment opportunity informality becomes the major sector for livelihood of the urban poor. But due to the lack of community participation in the planning process there is no single policy regarding the informal economy of Khulna city. In this regard the plan really failed to uphold the strategic vision to promote peoples' participation in decision making, thus the plan failed to ensure urban sustainability.

10. Policies for environmental management

For sustainable urban strategic intervention environmental concern is a prior issue. In the existing Khulna city plan there are some development control mechanism to protect environmental degradation such as pollution control of motorized vehicle and industrial effluent, however this approaches are not in scale and even do not recognizes the major environmental threats. Given the importance of increasing salinity as an environmental problem there is no policy appraisal in current Khulna city planning. Besides, in the extended planning area of Khulna city shrimp cultivation by artificial saline water is causing environmental degradation. Arguably, the planning challenge is the trade off between environment and economy, as because a large number of marginalized people are directly or indirectly involved with shrimp cultivation. With regard to this environmentally complex issue the plan has adopted the land use zoning mechanism, which is not fully exercised as the planning authority is more concerned about the built structure without considering the environment in a holistic attribute. Though the city is experiencing the adverse effect of climate change due to tidal irregularity and salinity intrusion there are no adaptation policies in the planning package. Apart from the NGO initiatives there is no clear approach of solid waste management excepting the suitable dumping site selection. Unfortunately the site was selected on the basis of arbitrary approach while the area has faced rapid peripheral residential development. The existing plan proposed for about 2008.00 acres open space in the form of park, play field, road and riverside green space and botanical garden. However, not a single park was established as a follow-up of this plan. One major reason for such failure can be explained through the lack of coordination among different organisations. The sites have been selected in the plan but it does not articulate that which organisation will construct and manage those parks. Therefore this is another failure of organisational coordination in terms of participation and explains that in context of environmental management Khulna city plan is not sustainable.

11. Polices for ensuring equitable access to infrastructure services

Unlike DMDP (Dhaka Metroploitan Development Plan) Khulna city plan gives lip service to the poor through proposals for slum/low cost housing development, nowhere are such plans spelled out in detail, nor is sufficient land provided for them (Bari, 2009). In Khulna city plan, the proposed infrastructure based policies are causing social fragmentation and environmental degradation. There are few policies for planned residential development without having any attempt to secure land for the urban poor. In the case of transportation policies there is no effective mechanism for developing the capacity of public transport, which is the main mode of transportation for the poor people. The plan mentions about the creation of five bus routes in the city. However the city has now only a single public bus route and people are now depending on different type of motorized and non-motorized three wheelers. While being a regional hub the city is experiencing bunch of commuters every day, however there is no prior attention to these commuters in transportation sector polices of the plan. Apart from physical infrastructure NGOs are playing significant role in provision of health facilities but the Khulna city plan does not recognizes their role. The plan is very insignificant in terms of its policy regarding health services. It only identifies the location of three hospitals in its planning area without having any specific policy for pro-poor health services and linking different organizations working in the health sector.

12. Status of Khulna city plan for achieving the indicators of urban sustainability

This section summarises the aforementioned critical overview of Khulna city plan under the analytical framework established in Table 1. In terms of the process of participation of all stakeholders, the Khulna city plan fails to achieve urban sustainability. The planning process was merely expert-led and failed to ensure the participation of community. The participation was restricted to a process of generating wish list from the representatives of privileged communities. Therefore it fails to address the issue of the urban poor. The process was very much based on the principle of tokenism and later also failed to promote organisational coordination to implement the planning proposals. In terms of collective problem diagnosis the planning process fails to develop an institutional platform to engage the community and other stakeholder. There was no citizen development committee or any other form of coordinating mechanism that can enhance the notion of collectiveness in the planning process. The plan also suffers to identify common goals and interest that leads to equity. The plan has no provision to address informality in terms of employment opportunity of the urban poor. In terms of infrastructure, housing and service provision the plan fails to articulate a single policy for the urban poor where the proportion of poor households in Khulna can be calculated at 58.9 percent living in 5080 poor settlements (UPPRP, 2011). This plan also fails to create an

enabling environment for employment and income considering environmental issues. It has been observed that industrial layoff is now a common phenomenon for Khulna city and the growing shrimp industries alongside the river is accusing huge environmental threat. Moreover the plan also fails to recognise the employment opportunities for the rural-urban migrant who are pushed towards Khulna city by different climatic event. In terms of alternative choice for equitable service delivery the plan fails to recognise the role of NGOs for providing health services in the poor settlements. Therefore the health policies are restricted to selecting suitable sites for hospitals only. Similar situation can be observed for water supply, sanitation and other services. In terms of long term vision for environmental management, the plan also fails to identify the impact of different climatic event which is now evident through the decreasing level of ground water, frequency of natural disaster and increasing temperature. Finally, it can be concluded that the plan is irrational in terms of urban sustainability rather it is a mare replication of blue-print approach which assumes the planning process as a process of modernization; and the planning decisions are the outcome of rationality without having the reflection of people's needs and aspirations.

13. Conclusion

Strategic planning, by its principle is collaborative and flexible to address diversity of problem. But evaluating the case of Khulna city plan it is apparent that there is no reflection of strategic planning though namely the plan is a strategic plan. By analyzing this plan it is revealed that the age old master plan approach is still in practice. There is no effective attempt to introduce more socially just planning approach. Observation of Khulna city plan reveals that the planning process is still maintaining a low profile and creating the option of malpractices. It has failed to draw sufficient attention of the actors involved and the citizenry in general to uphold its position as a necessary tool for urban development. Moreover the plan is far away from urban sustainability. It should be revised and attempt should be made to incorporate the issues of coordination, equity, economical viability, environmental efficiency and participation. Ultimately, it is not only necessary that planning should respect the prevailing social, environmental, economical and political situation, but the same conditions must need to be congenial and compatible enough to nurture and promote planning as a discipline aimed at lasting social welfare.

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