Planning for sustainable cities and communities

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Sustainable Cities and Communities

A sustainable city stands upon the features of livability, functionality and resilience by maintaining socio-cultural fabric and environmental sustainability. Livability refers to a collection of qualities considered desirable by inhabitants of a locality. Enhancing livability is supposed to enhance the experience of a resident living within a community in a positive way. Parameters that come forth while judging livability of an area may include, but not limited to – accessibility to services & facilities, affordability (housing, transportation etc.), meaningful employment opportunity, safety & security, cleanliness & hygiene, social equity & justice, sense of community, availability of quality education & healthy facilities, attractiveness & adequacy of public places, walkability, healthy natural environment, interesting cultural activities, opportunities for public participation.

Functionality is related to the efficiency with which the components of an urban system operate. It is the organizational or city manager's perspective that is more concerned with large systems and their functioning than an individual's experience of those systems. The essences of functionality are the effectiveness and efficiency of key systems like – transport, drainage, social services (health & education), utility/life support systems, economy, energy. natural environment & ecosystem and governance.

Resilience is the capability of a community to prevent catastrophic events and also the ability to recover in case the event occurs. For building a resilient city we should be aware of the disaster risks that threaten everyday life of its inhabitants and to create the capacity to prevent and recover from any disaster that does occur. Hence the vision is to make cities and communities resilient to – natural & anthropogenic hazards, economic downturn and climate change impacts.

Respecting local socio-cultural fabric, mainly points to being aware of and sensitive to the social and cultural background of the community in question. It also means that the usual norms and ways of life of the people have to be acknowledged and considered when judging the appropriateness of any policy decision taken in the plan. Therefore, any planning policy should be evaluated by direct and indirect impacts to the community.

Respecting environmental sustainability intends to understanding the inherent interdependency of human beings on many natural & ecological processes. Disrupting the natural balance of these systems which apparently seem disconnected to the proper functioning of a city or region will ultimately hamper human systems

too because of this high level of interdependency.

Challenges of Cities and Communities in 21st Century

The 2009 Global Report on Human Settlement ' Planning Sustainable Cities' identifies the factors shaping 21st century cities as:

- The environmental challenge of climate change and cities' dependence on fossil fuels.
- The demographic challenge of rapid urbanization (particularly the growth of small and medium size cities), the shrinking, ageing population in some countries, and the youth bulge, as well as the increasing multicultural composition of cities.
- The economic challenges linked to the uncertainty of future economic growth, the new doubts on market led approaches and the expanding informality of urban activities.
- The challenges linked to social and spatial inequality, urban sprawl and unplanned urbanization.
- The challenges and opportunities of increasing democratization, awareness of social and economic rights and consequent political renegotiation of power.

Although these challenges are global, their impacts are mainly urban, and the local environment context, culture and economic basis in each city and community shape to a large extent their impact on the local living conditions.

Urban Planning in New Millennium

In the face of urban planning challenges in new millennium, urban planning has made a major shift by focusing lesson defining land use and zoning.Urban planning has to address ways to create cities that workfor all citizens, offer opportunities to rich and poor alike, wherecommunities and their concerns are at the heart of decisionmaking on development, and where risk and vulnerability iseffectively addressed for all citizens, particularly for the urban poor.

Given the new imperatives and demands on policy andpractice, the urban planning profession is in the midst of afundamental reinvention, by different actors and authorities.They are working to develop more highly contextualized information, new communication tools, inclusive methods to modeling the outcomes and different ways of generating andselecting solutions that support the poorest city residents, andwork with ecological systems.A new urban planning practice in the context of 21st centuryurbanization can transform the key challenges faced by citiesinto opportunities. Hence principles of urban planning in new millennium have been redefined as:

- *Promote sustainable development*
- *Achieve integrated planning*
- *Integrate plans with budgets*

- *Plan with partners and stakeholders*
- *Meet the subsidiary principles*
- *Promote market responsiveness*
- *Ensure access to land*
- *Develop appropriate planning tools*
- *Be pro-poor and inclusive*
- *Recognize cultural diversity.*

Sustainable Development Goals

The **Sustainable Development Goals** (**SDGs**), officially known as "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", is a set of 17 "Global Goals" with 169 targets among them, adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit September 25–27, 2015 in New York, USA.

The SDGs are a follow-up effort to the widely-publicized Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, in effect from 2000 to 2015. Supporters claim the MDGs galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest people whereas critics say there's been very uneven implementation of the goals by topic, country or world region. SDG has envisioned a specific goal for inclusive cities and communities which has been declared in the Goal 11 – "**Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", which is also termed as 'Urban Goal'.**

Specific targets of the "Urban Goal" of SDG

- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums
- By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- By 2030 enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacities for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
- By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of affected people and decrease by y% the economic losses relative to GDP caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with the focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management

- By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- By 2020, increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, develop and implement in line with the forthcoming Hyogo Framework holistic disaster risk management at all levels
- Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, for sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.

Inclusive Cities in New Urban Agenda from Habitat-III

The New Urban Agenda is the outcome document agreed upon at the Habitat III cities conference in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. Habitat III have made 'Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All' adopted as New Urban Agenda. It is expected that by readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed, and managed, the New Urban Agenda will help to end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions, reduce inequalities, promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in order to fully harness their vital contribution to sustainable development, improve human health and well-being, as well as foster resilience and protect the environment.

New Urban Agenda share a vision of cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements, to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.

New Urban Agenda aims to achieve cities and human settlements where all persons are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities, as well as their fundamental freedoms, guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. In this regard, the New Urban Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome. It is informed by other instruments such as the Declaration on the Right to Development.

In order to achieve the goal of sustainable cities, New Urban Agenda envisage sustainable cities and communities should achieve following targets:

- Cities should fulfill their social function, including the social and ecological function of land, with a view to progressively achieve the full realization of the right to adequate housing, as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, as well as equal access for all to public goods and quality services in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, mobility and transportation, energy, air quality, and livelihoods;

- Cities are participatory, promote civic engagement, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces, friendly for families, enhance social and intergenerational interactions, cultural expressions, and political participation, as appropriate, and foster social cohesion, inclusion, and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, recognizing the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations;

- Cities should meet the challenges and opportunities of present and future sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, leveraging urbanization for structural transformation, high productivity, value-added activities, and resource efficiency, harnessing local economies, taking note of the contribution of the informal economy while supporting a sustainable transition to the formal economy;

- Cities should adopt and implement disaster risk reduction and management, reduce vulnerability, build resilience and responsiveness to natural and man-made hazards, and foster mitigation and adaptation to climate change;

- Cities should protect, conserve, restore, and promote their ecosystems, water, natural habitats, and biodiversity, minimize their environmental impact, and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Towards Sustainable Cities and Communities in Bangladesh: Way Forward

Physical plan preparation processes for citiesand paurashavas in Bangladesh are still very much complex and critical in nature. Due to lack of financial planning for the structure plan, master plans and detail area plans, rate of plan implementations are very low. Therefore physical plans of cities have failed to achieve its goals and objectives so far. In addition, development authorities and various urban local bodies do not work in integration which ultimately leads to unplanned development as well as wastages of public money in duplicity of development projects.

Planning should be done throughpeoples participation and hence a major shift from top-down Approach of decision making is required to engage common people in the planning process. Participatory Rapid Appraisal techniques are now being applied in the physical planning processes for city planning in Bangladesh however diversification of techniques is necessary to realistically engage cross sections of population in planning decision making processes.

For the development and planning projects in Bangladesh, engineering solutions generally get preferencesover planning solutions that ultimately leads to initiation of

development projects that are very much costly for a developing country like Bangladesh. This practice should be revisited and planning as well as managerial solutions should be explored and prioritized for managing cities and communities.

Based on the development realities for city and community planning in Bangladesh, urban planners as well as decision makers should learn to work with informality, instead of contrastingit. In addition, addressing safety and security, and disasters throughprevention and adequate inclusive planning models should be invented for our local context and scenarios. Furthermore, addressing climate change and bridging the green agenda through environmental management and planning should be given special priorities to achieve the goal of sustainable cities and communities. By and large, integrated and holistic approach is required by urban local bodies for building sustainable cities and communities for various levels of urban areas in Bangladesh

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