

*Tackling Dhaka's Planning Issues: Philosophical Ideologies and Planning Remedies*

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**Abstract**

Bangladesh has achieved an amazing feat in reducing the annual growth rate of population, the size of the population is still large when compared with the size of the country. If the current trend continues, the population of Bangladesh is expected to reach about 194 million in 2050 (WB 2012). Understandably, this population exerts tremendous pressure on a limited resource base. As a result, both landlessness and environmental degradation have become rampant in recent times. Furthermore, because of the rapid growth of urbanization and associated infrastructure, every year Bangladesh loses 0.3 percent of its cultivated land. We have to keep in mind that the economy of Bangladesh is still mostly agrarian with 48 percent of the labor force engaged in agriculture and related activities (BBS 2013). Along with national population growth, the percentage of people living in urban areas has also been rising. 1.8 million people were living in urban areas in 1951 which increased to 13.5 million, 22.5 million, 31 million, and 33.5 million in 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011 respectively; an eighteen-fold increase in the last 60 years. This astonishing growth in urban population is largely attributed to three main factors, namely: (i) rural-urban migration, (ii) natural growth, and (iii) the redefinition of urban areas. It is affirmed by experts that among them, rural-urban migration is the most dominant factor. Moreover, the country faces enormous challenges in coping with the infrastructures and service requirements for its rapidly growing urban population, particularly in the capital city Dhaka.

# 1. Background

The capital city Dhaka has extensive administrative and infrastructure facilities, as well as extensive road and telecommunication networks, which are definitely better than any other city in the country. Hence, it has become the focus of urban expansion and the hub of all economic activities. For obvious reasons, marginalized rural people are attracted to the area and come here in the hope of better employment opportunities and an improved lifestyle. As a result, it has become one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, primarily driven by staggering population growth. Currently, the megacity's population is more than 14 million, If the current rate of population growth continues, Dhaka will exceed Beijing in size by 2025, with a projected population of 22.9 million (UN 2012). Dhaka suffers from traffic congestion, which is deteriorating, despite its low level of motorization. This horrible situation prevails largely due to an absolute lack of roads, deficient road network configuration, and inefficient traffic management. The existing public transport system, bus transit operations, in particular, is characterized as far short of the desirable mobility needs of the people in terms of reliability, comfort, speed, and safety. In Dhaka, buses are generally considered unreliable and time-consuming to reach one's destination. It is one of the very few megacities in the world without a proper public transport system (Khan 2013). The present public transport system in Dhaka city consists of only conventional bus services and para-transits. Lack of an effective public transport system and preference for door-to-door services influence the augmentation of private cars and other forms of transport. The railway was very popular and still is a relatively safer and cheaper transport system in Bangladesh; as a consequence of the absence of proper initiatives and investment in the urban corridors, it could not play the expected role in Dhaka's public transport system. Moreover, rail tracks run through the Central Business Districts (CBDs) and congested areas of the city with numerous level crossings which result in enormous congestion (Habib 2002). Dhaka has been historically infamous for being heavily polluted. It was termed as the most polluted city when the presence of lead (Pb) in the air was reported to be higher than in the atmosphere of any other place in the world back in 1997. Pollution from traffic and brick kilns has been identified as two of the most significant factors by studies. The main culprits for air pollution are large numbers of high-polluting vehicles, impure fuel, inefficient land use, overall poor traffic management, and industries (especially brick kilns) (Begum 2011). Observations show that the concentration of sulfur dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides go up in the dry season significantly (Habib 2002).

## 2. Philosophical Thoughts for Planning

Philosophy can be described as a theoretical base from which knowledge is constructed. Ornstein describes that without philosophy educators would be directionless, without a theoretical base to start from. Philosophers typically proceed to the clarification, and critical examination, of the basic assumptions underlying our ideas and beliefs by examining the logic of our theories and practices in order to elucidate whether or not they are rationally defensible and justifiable. The following philosophical foundations or pillars may help planners to achieve sustainable urbanization planning.

1. The positivistic/scientific viewpoint states that the real world, when observed, thoroughly studied, and classed systematically, should provide an explanation for a specific event and also make some sort of future forecast. To put it another way, promoting scientific aspects would provide a sense of understanding of the reasons for world events. It is difficult to make a direct link between positivism and planning. Evidence can be acquired by examining how positivism has influenced the social sciences and how planning has borrowed from the social sciences. Planners are unable to link knowledge to action due to the positivist ideology's deficiencies in dealing with lived reality. Positivism theory believes in Scientific and mathematical interpretation ignoring the religious and social viewpoint. Without considering the religious and social viewpoint for any type of developing countries city development will not be helpful for their citizens. Bangladesh is a developing country and Dhaka city is a rapidly growing megacity, here in Dhaka city development positivism approach will not be suited. For Dhaka city development have to consider all types of the social and religious aspect, at the same time planner will have to play a flexible role for Dhaka the city planning which will contradict to this positivism theories the main concept.
2. The application of assemblage thinking in geography, sociology, and urban studies has grown in popularity over the past decade. There is no single "correct" way to use the phrase because it is linked to the concepts of apparatus, network, multiplicity, emergence, and indeterminacy. Assemblage is a significant concept and it is made up of heterogeneous pieces or objects that interact with each other. These items aren't all of the same kind. The main concept of Assemblage theory is a collection of things together makes meaning and shows a relationship among all types of development properties. Basically, a city is a process, continuous entity, and evolving entity which are flexible on the time of city planning. We can plan a better city if we think in the assemblage way, there are several types of problems in a Dhaka city like traffic congestion, housing, air

pollution, and haphazard urban sprawling, these problems will be mitigated if we think this problem in an assemblage way. To mitigate rapidly growing urban problems, we have to think in a complex way and generate ideas for solving those problems. Developing countries megacity like Dhaka's urban problem will be decreased if we think about the two-fold concept (Formal & Informal way and Planned & Unplanned way), Multi-scale and complex develop thinking (Have to increase Bottom-up development think). We know that there is nothing that exists in the world which is maintained in perfect order, that's why the city plan will not also be ordered way. The most priority problem will be solved first and for the time being the priority will also be changed and I think this way Dhaka city will be developed and the way is actually assemblage thinking.

### 3. Development Thought for Planning

It is the wish of every community and every nation to move from one stage of development to another. Development is a holistic approach that involves structural institutional changes and social-economic transformation, in addition to increased outputs and incomes. Development also encompasses changes in peoples' customs and beliefs that are a hindrance to development programs. Economic growth involves urbanization, industrialization, and increased and appropriate use of technology in all sectors of the economy.

1. Dhaka city is a rapidly growing city where already all types of industrial and commercial departments existed. If the city is developed considering the classical economic theory there will be deprived lower-class residence and govt cannot control the development system. The classical economic theory helped cities to migrate from monarchic rule to capitalistic democracies with self-regulation. All types of development will be based on upper-class residences or industrialists. The industrialist will be benefited and they will get priority for all types of utility services and they will control the whole development system. In this case, middle class and lower-class residence will be deprived, they will not be considered under the development process. Bangladesh is a democratic country that's another reason we cannot consider the classical economic theory for Dhaka city development.
2. I think for the development of Dhaka city Keynesian Economics theory is the best option among all the development theories. Bangladesh is a democratic country where govt wants to play a great role in the betterment of the people. All types of development and utility services are controlled through govt. Govt tries to ensure people's social, cultural, and livelihood don't affect through development. All types of development

output are monitored through govt officials, that's why there is no way to cheat with the development. Dhaka city is a rapidly growing megacity, so govt should more focus on the lower-class people and this theory also supports this argument for development. Based on Dhaka city's condition and Bangladeshi policy this theory is the best suited for development.

3. Neoliberal Economics theory is opposite to the Keynesian Economicstheory. This one is the world-famous theory for urban planning but in the context of developing countries like Bangladesh, this theory is not suitable for development. Neoliberalism is a policy model that encompasses both politics and economics and seeks to transfer the control of economic factors from the public sector to the private sector. Many neoliberalism policies enhance the workings of free-market capitalism and attempt to place limits on government spending, government regulation, and public ownership. The policies of neoliberalism typically support fiscal austerity, deregulation, free trade, privatization, and a reduction in government spending. The free-market approach to public services will misguide and policies associated with neoliberalism will tend to encourage the presence of monopolies in an absence of regulation in Dhaka city.

#### **4. Planning for Dhaka City**

In a changing and globalizing world, planning theory is core to understanding how planning and its practices both function and evolve. City-planning, sometimes called “urban planning,” focuses on the quality of life in cities, suburbs, towns, and villages. Just like a doctor needs to know about the systems of the body in order to treat a patient, city planners need to know about the systems of the cities where they work. When planning a city, planners must consider many factors, including the economy, the environment, and cultural and transportation needs. City planners also must understand the current uses of existing buildings, roads, and facilities in their city, as well as how these uses may affect the city in the future. Here in this section three different types of planning theory (Spatial Planning, Strategic Planning, and Growth Management Theory) will be discussed and for Dhaka City, the best planning theory will be identified.

1. Spatial planning is mostly recognized as a public sector function with the purpose of influencing future spatial distribution of activities. Spatial planning tries to coordinate and improve the impacts of other sectoral policies on land use, in order to achieve a more even distribution of economic development within a given territory than would otherwise be created by market forces. In spatial planning for the development of a

city, planners think of planning as a positivist view of the world. But using the positivist world view planner provide only one solution for all kinds of urban problems. They think about a certain bounded area's problem and try to follow the global north standard to mitigate the problem. In the context of Dhaka city, spatial planning is not appropriate, because here only one planning solution for different dynamic problems and global north city planning standard will not be helpful to mitigate the global south city problems.

2. Urban strategic planning is a specific instrument of management that encourages citizen participation in local policy decisions. The partnerships which emerge from urban strategic planning are specially created for designing and managing sustainable projects for the city. But these processes of citizen involvement are not spontaneous: it is the local government that is primarily responsible for fostering opportunities for civil society organization participation. During the stages of a strategic plan (Diagnosis, Planning, Strategic Management, Monitoring, and Evaluation) social and political actors work together using a specific methodology. The world population is rapidly becoming urbanized as the rural population gravitates towards cities. "The world is witnessing an unprecedented urban explosion. In the case of Dhaka city planning, I think strategic planning is the best suit for development. For the nature of the strategic planning, we can accept this one: To achieve a specific goal based on the priority goal for city development. This plan is flexible and we can easily change our priority goal with the change of time. This plan is basically set for achieving a long-term vision. Dhaka city is a rapidly growing city and here the main objective is to achieve selective goals and mitigate the urban problem. Urban strategic planning basically the best for Dhaka city, here we have only ensured less political influence.
3. Smart city is a new type of urban development that has progressively emerged as a result of the rapid growth of a new generation of information technology, broad use of information in urban management practices, and the encouragement of changes in urban management methods. Smart growth refers to a set of general objectives aimed at reducing sprawl. The growth of current high technology has resulted in the creation of smart cities. Its progress is largely dependent on the advancement of science and technology. We now live in an information society, in which all types of living situations are rapidly improving. The term "smart city" now refers to a combination of higher-level notions. It is a new urban development trend that is in accordance with contemporary social trends and beneficial to our society's high-level development. There are also several types of factors that do not support smart growth, such as political will, economic and

market factors, environmental factors. These factors are highly affected by the smart growth of a city. Because of the smart growth densely urban area generated where air pollution, high land price, less open space, and housing unaffordability will increase. Smart growth is better for the global north city but from the perspective of Dhaka city, smart growth is not considered because in a developing country like Bangladesh this type of growth will be hampered our social and cultural values. The smart city concept is now most famous for global north city development but not for the global south city development.

## 5. Conclusion

Planning theories have commonly embodied a mixture of sociological assumptions about human and social behavior and philosophical assumptions about the nature, purposes, and premises of planning. Both the sociological and philosophical assumptions of planning warrant thorough examination. This Assignment argues the case for the systematic examination of the philosophy of planning by examining two areas where philosophical analysis might help to elucidate, and critically examine, philosophical assumptions made in planning thought and practice. These are the areas of ethics and epistemology. Prior to this examination, philosophy is itself defined, and the relationship between ethical and epistemological judgments is discussed with respect to the logical distinction that can be made between facts and values. Dhaka is probably one of the very few megacities in the world without any properly planned design or guideline for the expansion of the mass transit system. There are few others like us such as Lagos, Karachi, and Kinshasa, but none of them has a population density of about 50,000 people per square kilometer. According to some projections, approximately 24 million and 35 million people will reside in Dhaka by 2030 and 2050 respectively. So, if Dhaka is to survive the juggernaut called “development” and “urbanization”, it must have a proper plan not only to provide guidelines on paper but also for implementation in reality and there is little scope for mistakes. Here we can see the best possible way (Among all the philosophical, development, and planning theories) to develop Dhaka city without hampering any type of social, religious, economic, political, and environmental issues.

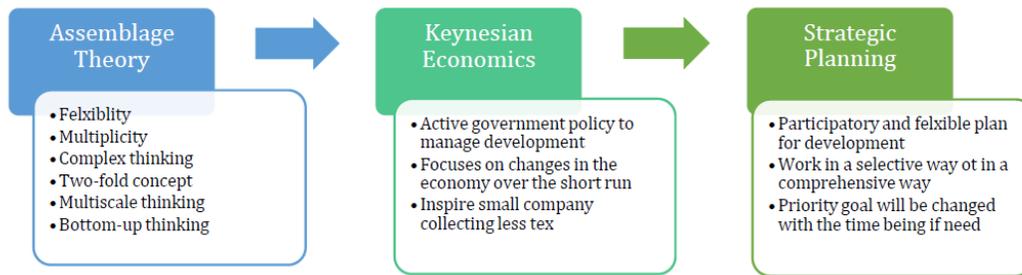


Figure 1: Selected Theory for Dhaka City Development

In developing countries like Bangladesh, the selected theories (Figure: 1) are the best for city development. If we want to develop Dhaka city, we have to think in an assemblage way, at the same time have to follow the Keynesian Economics for development and to achieve a particular goal for the city development have to apply strategic planning.

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