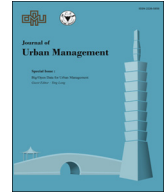


Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Urban Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jum

Research Article

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



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 March 2016

Received in revised form

19 May 2016

Accepted 6 June 2016

Available online 4 July 2016

Keywords:

Sustainability

Strategic planning

Social justice

Participation

Khulna

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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Peer review under responsibility of Zhejiang University and Chinese Association of Urban Management.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jum.2016.06.001>

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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 rigidity 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

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