

Culture and Sustainable Urban Development

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Abstract— For a long period of time, urban development was only associated with economic growth hence resulting in development of cities as economic centre. Majority of the development and functions in these cities revolve around economy and its complimentary activities.

With time the Sustainable development concept emerged which gives equal importance to Economy, Social and Environmental aspect to achieve Sustainable urban development. This approach was perceived as creation of Green cities with enormous Economic opportunity.

Over the recent decades, the prospective to view the Sustainable Development has changed. At present it is realised that the most important aspect for Sustainable Development is creation of ‘Human Climate’ i.e to creates the most desirable places for human to live and prosper and where human can establish connection with the distinctive character of his historic and natural environment. This paper provides an insight to the significance of culture and its symbiotic relationship with Sustainable Development. It also discusses various operational challenges associated with it.

Keywords— Sustainable Development, Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Culture:

The culture is defined as “The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.” (Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity,2001)

“Cultural matters are integral parts of the lives we lead. If development can be seen as enhancement of our living standards, then efforts geared to development can hardly ignore the world of culture.” (Sen, 2000)

1.2 1.2.Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most accepted definition is from Brundtland Report. 1987, which defines Sustainable Development as :

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report,WCED, 1987).

The cities or towns were always the centre for innovation in the economics, cultural and social realms. Previously the prosperity of the city was viewed by economic development, hence major emphasis was on attracting capital. The present perception of situation has changed, policy makers believes that, for cities to

prosper it has to be attractive to people. In the last few decades, urban development strategies have been strongly influenced by the beliefs of what makes cities desirable in an increasingly global economy, where knowledge, creativity and innovation are the driving forces for economic growth and prosperity. Necessity to create an attractive “human climate” has been realised, this will lead towards creating Vibrant cities, which offers an array of cultural qualities that creates most desirable places to live, consume and produce.⁹

The objective of creating “Human Climate” can be achieved through culture-sensitive urban strategies supported by principles and inclusive processes of access, representation, and participation. In the context of defining a new people-centred and planet-sensitive sustainable development agenda, cities can be considered as transformative platforms. However, in current scenario the transformative potential of cities have not yet been fully



Figure 1, Basic frame of Sustainability (Brundtland)

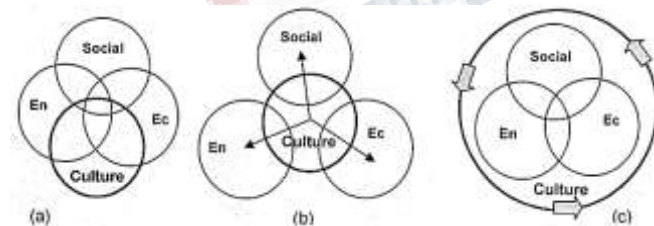
harnessed by international agencies, national governments, or local authorities. Social, environmental and economic dimensions for sustainable development have been globally acknowledged but, the cultural dimension is still undervalued, or just seen as an optional aspect. To create culturally sensitive urban development model, the importance of cultural practices and values in sustainable development must be explicitly recognized, supported and integrated into planning and policy in a systematic and comprehensive way.

1.3 Culture and Sustainable Urban Development

To a large extent, the quality of our lives depends, on our being able to take part in, and the benefit we derive from our culture. The underlying wellbeing of human life is associated with establishing the connection with the distinctive character of our historic and natural environment, with the language, the music, the arts and the literature, which accompanied us throughout our life.

Even though the importance of culture and its contribution to urban development is recognized globally, but it is minimally discussed in international platform for last 40 years. After several efforts to include Culture as part of debate in the international development agenda, ultimately resulted in, inclusion of culture under the “Sustainable Cities” strategic objective in Sustainable Development Goals, UNESCO,2015.

The classical model of Sustainable Development (Brundtland Report, 1987) has been critically analysed with time. This is further comprehended at Universal Forum of Cultures 2007, redefining the base of Sustainable Development, with emphasis on culture aspect. Hence resulting in inclusion of Culture as fourth pillar for Sustainable Development and Culture Sensitive Developmental Model was introduced.10



(Abbreviation: So – Social, En – Environment, Ec – Economics)

Figure 2: Culture Sensitive Developmental Model: Three Models Source: Dessein et al., 2015

Culture Sensitive Developmental Models: These models for culture and sustainable development has been structured engulfing sustainability (Fig. 2). Three roles of Culture in Sustainable Development has been shown in this

model. This model includes Culture as the fourth pillar (Fig 2,a), Culture mediating between the three pillars (Fig 2,b), and Culture as the foundation for sustainable development (Fig 3,c). The arrows in the model indicate the ever-changing dynamics of culture and sustainable development (Dessein, et al. 2015, p. 29).

Placing culture at the heart of sustainable development strategies is both the condition for enabling sustainable development, and a powerful driving factor for its achievement (UNESCO 2016). But enabling roles for culture within the context of sustainable urban development policy and planning remains challenging due to several reasons which is discussed in the next section. (Duxbury, et al. 2016)

1.4 Challenges for Inclusion of Culture in Sustainable Development

There are various operational challenges, for inclusion of culture in sustainable development. These can be broadly categorised in four points:

1.4.1. Limitations due to Legislative Frameworks, Targeted Policies, Bureaucratic Silos and Administrative Reluctance:

In general practice the legislative frameworks, cultural policies and programs have been tailored to the needs of particular sectors (e.g. performing arts, visual arts, music, heritage, literature, etc.). Blending the sector specific approaches with broad-based, inter sectorial, people-centered cultural policies is a difficult challenge.

The Policy frame work and programs for ‘urban sustainability’ basically moves around environmental issues. Due to lack in policy framework, it is ambiguous for policy makers to integrate urbanization, physical planning and culture into urban sustainable programed.

These ambiguities lead to institutional reluctance to incorporate cultural dimensions, in the ‘three- pillar system’, of sustainable development.

1.4.2. Complexity of the Cultural Sector and the Cultural Features of Communities:

The cultural sector has complexity, with its great diversity of approaches and practices from the individual to the collective. This can produce a silo effect which is malicious to people-cantered cultural policies.

The cultural sector is very broad; it has different meaning which is contextual. Culture by character is complex, diverse and ‘invisible’ in many cases. These characteristics can be a source of misunderstanding and social tension when taken up by actors not fully committed to inclusive democracy.

143. Inadequacy of Indicators, Measurement and Evaluation of Progress and Impacts:

Culture has various non-quantifiable and invisible dimensions, which cannot be measured and monitored like other aspects of sustainability. Even though UNESCO has done some important work in the area of indicators for culture in development (UNESCO, 2014) still It is difficult to quantify the contribution of culture in strengthening and enriching local sustainability, resilience and achieving holistic development. The cultural benefits can mostly be evaluated by qualitative approach rather than quantitative.

144. Underlying Issues of Citizen Participation, Gender Equality and Enhancing Inclusion:

With limited knowledge about the significance of culture, it is difficult to encourage participation of citizens in the formulation, exercise, and evaluation of public policies on culture. Another challenge is creating balance between citizen participation with professional "expertise" to get best assess cultural proposals. It is also difficult to blend culture with social issues like cultural policies and programmes to be sensitive towards promoting gender equality, to use cultural policies for empowerment of women etc. (Duxbury, et al. 2016)

To address the above mentioned challenge and improve performance and outcomes of culture- sensitive urban planning and development, it is required to develop more effective tools and techniques.

II. PRACTICE SCENARIO

Benefits of cultural inclusion have been documented in various studies and have several examples. According to a report, by the European Union, published on 2017, culture has a direct impact on economic and social aspect. It had also established a correlation between culture and creativity, and economic and social vibrancy. Many European cities give high priority to culture and cultural diversity. This resulted in enormous social and economic benefits. In compared to other cities of similar size, these cities have more job opportunities (19% more jobs per capita). In comparison these cities have a significantly higher young age population and more highly educated people . It is also claims that European cities have comparatively higher Gross Domestic Product per capita (Valentina, et al. 2017)(Commission, 2017, pp. 25 - 28).

Many cities globally have successfully infused culture as a growth engine. For instance the city of Tokyo, Japan, has a major issue of increasing ageing population and declining birth rate. The city government decided to turn to arts and culture as a strategy to revitalise the city and transform it into a hub for young creative talents. It introduced Tokyo

Vision for Arts and Culture, 2015 (Bureau of Citizens and Cultural Affairs, Tokyo, 2015/06/04) to revive Japan's iconic culture and heritage. This resulting in dynamic creative and cultural industries, and new culture, from cutting edge fashion, media and design to animation, pop art and performing arts. The city invests in large-scale festivals, cultural exchange networks with other cities worldwide, and initiatives to make culture more inclusive. These efforts helped establish Tokyo as one of the world's most dynamic cultural hubs, with creative industries contributing to 12.9% of its employment and cultural influence that extends beyond the city (Bureau of Citizens and Cultural Affairs, Tokyo, 2017).

III. CONCLUSION

In the present era the significance of culture sensitive approach towards sustainable development is recognised globally. It is also widely accepted that Inclusion of culture can lead towards creation human centric development or will be considered as a key to ensure that the paradigm of sustainability is meaningful to people.

However due to huge diversity and vastness of cultural aspect, achieving human centric development becomes elusive and complex. There are also several operational challenges (as discussed in the paper) which make inclusion of culture in sustainable development more difficult.

In the present scenario, to create effective frame work for the inclusion of culture in sustainable development is continuously discussed in various national and international forum. To achieve the

effective outcome, it requires further intense research and analysis to formulate suitable policies and guidelines based on the relevant expertise.

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