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21st Century Land Use Planning for Mega-cities

The case of Peri-urban Dhaka

Physical boundaries of urban built-up areas often do not coincide with their administrative boundaries. Usually these urban built up areas are extended into the rural landscape, beyond the administrative boundaries of the urban areas changing the appearance of the rural landscape to look like that of the urban. Such areas form a zone of diffusion between the city and the rural areas. In Dhaka peri-urban areas rapidly developed into haphazard unplanned urban-like settlements, at the edges of municipal boundaries, as a result of individual initiatives to subdivide land and construct structures ahead of any formal planning regulations.

The lack of development control mechanism in the peri-urban areas gave the impetus to generate a model of controlling the development of settlements in peri-urban areas. So the aim of this study was to provide information (spatial and non-spatial) about the magnitude of the problem of peri-urban growth. The study also analyzed the growth pattern of peri-urban areas over a twenty five years period. Survey research was used to identify the socio-economic characteristics of the population found in these areas.

The results show that there has been a rapid growth of spontaneous peri-urban settlements in greater Dhaka between 1980 and 2000 due to high demand from in-migrants. Rural to urban migration and urban to peri-urban migration are responsible for the increasing land and housing demand in peri-urban areas. Infrastructure like roads and services influence the location of these settlements. High housing densities, lack of proper environmental infrastructure, and poor land management leads to an unsuitable living environment, and an inefficient use of the scarce resource land.

With the proposed concept of development control the study presents various development alternatives for Dhaka's peri-urban areas. Several techniques are presented in the conceptual models: the first alternative is to limit development to continue as it is and the second alternative is to intervene in the present state by introducing all groups' participation, and land demand analysis. Development control is a systematic approach that will control and guide the growth of settlements towards sustainable development through proper utilization of land.

Key words: mega cities, peri-urban areas, land use planning, housing, Dhaka, Bangladesh