International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development
Vol.6, No.1, Winter 2016

# Institutionalism in Strategic Structural Plans
## (A Grounded Theory Approach)

[1*]Maryam Daneshvar, [2] Ali Ghafari, [3]Hamid Majedi

[1]Ph.D., Department of Urbanism, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad Univesity, Tehran, Iran.
[2]Assistant Professor, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.
[3]Associate Professor, Department of Urbanism, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad Univesity, Tehran, Iran.

Recieved 09.06.2015; Accepted 12.21.2015

**ABSTRACT:** Nowadays, planning is no longer considered merely a scientific and technical career nor a government responsibity. It rather functions as a bridge connecting the planners to institutional changes. In other words, the planning theory does not develop in a social, economic and political vacuum, but is formulated by individuals in social situations with the aim of clarifying the enviroment recommending appropriate procedures and processes. The purpose of this research was to identify the explanatory and normative capability of the Strategic Structural Plans theory in the context of institutionalism so as to enhance the capacity of its application in practice. For this purpose, the grounded theory was adopted as a research strategy within the framework of qualitative methodology. The data collection instruments involved desk study, interviews with experts, managers and specialists, collaborative observations on the environment. The research environment included macro and micro levels. At the macro level, the focus was on comprehensible conditions and components of Iranian spatial planning system, while the micro level served to examine on the local scale the urban planning and management through sample mining in Mashhad, Iran. As a result of this analysis, a total of 159 concepts, 44 categories and 9 major categories and 6 topics were recognized. Among the categories identified, institutionalism in the theory of Strategic Structural Plans was selected because of the frequent appearance in the data and its relation to other categories as axial category, where the paradigm model was outlined emphasizing on the causal and context condition, intervention, strategies and consequences.

**Keywords:** *Strategic Structural Plans, Iranian spatial planning system, Iinstitutionalism, Grounded theory.*



## INTRODUCTION

Planning in each society undertakes a unique role, purpose and motive. The emergence of planning system in Iran can be traced back to official records as old as nearly 70 years. There are different reasons in the relevant literature about the nature of Iranian planning. However, some believe that planning is inevitable since it is rational, and that is why the Iranian government officially shifted its focus in 1946 onto development planning (Harvard Advisory Group Report). The preparation of urban development plans as a strategy for application of planning in Iran took the first steps in the 1970s influenced by the current practices of urban planning and plans as well as the Western dominant approach initially implemented based on the notion of comprehensive plans. After a few decades, various research efforts were made in Iran proved that the selected inefficient strategy leads the urban development and promotion of environmental quality of all the involved factors in spearheading the urban development. Based on the substantial knowledge of the shortcomings and failures in the traditional planning model (comprehensive) in preparation of urban development plans on the one hand, and the new development needs and goals for the development of urbanization on the other hand, the Strategic Structural Plans were proposed as a corrective approach to guide the urban development in Iran. Having adopted this approach in urban development plans and assessed the first practical examples provided, it was revealed what was prepared and approved as Strategic Structural Plans (whether in the process of preparation, adoption and implementation or documents and outputs of the plan), were conflicting in terms of content and

*Corresponding Author Email: *a-ghaffari@sbu.ac.ir*

procedural aspects with the conceptual-theoretical nature of the strategic approach, even though they in some ways strived to remain in concidence with the principles and features of this approach.

The importance of this issue becomes clearer when we recall that the Strategic Structural Plans have been suggested in the Iranian urban planning as a desirable model against the traditional method of plan preparation (which has a poor implementation rate. The research has shown that the final product of the strategic structural plan has partly digressed from the revolutionized structure of the approach because of all the theoretical and practical difficulties and faults as well as the respective legal problems concerning the application of strategic structural plan instead of the comprehensive plan. The point is what has happened in the world as a structural or strategic planning is the result of radical changes in planning environment (in terms of social, intellectual and legal framework, etc.). This in turns signifies the need to engage the Iranian spatial planning system with the theory of Strategic Structural Plans in preparation of national urban development plans.

In this respect, the relationship between theory and practice of planning has been the limelight nowadays, where planning is counted as an integral part of the society. Thus, it should be acknowledged that any reform effort made in the planning system as an element linking the government and the public sector would require basic conditions, tools and supplies. The absence of practical implementation of planning is not implemented. Moreover, it remains limited to build communication with the existing trends of urban management activities. In this study, the key question under discussion is what development framework there are in the Iranian spatial planning system where the theory of Strategic Structural Plans can be applied. Accordingly, we note that the establishment of an efficient planning system, success in the implementation and application of procedures, require an awareness of the essential conditions for the establishment and sustainability of the system. Therefore, the basic features of the strategic structural approach are identified as a strategy to preparation of urban development plans. Afterwards, the characteristics of the dominant discourse on Iranian urban planning, procedures and mechanisms in the spatial planning system will be evaluated. The current research adopted the grounded theory with an emphasis on the planning theory as an evolving dialogue so as to explore the concepts and categories associated with this theory affected by the processes of institutional change, referring to the documents, resolutions, instructions and relevant literature based on qualitative content analysis of various sources, including strategic planning both in theory and practice. Thus, this study attempts to explain the characteristics of the strategic structural plans on the one hand, and identification of the components of spatial planning system through interviews, participant observation and study of relevant texts on the other hand. Then, the identified conflict will help formulate the transformation in Iranian spatial planning system within a conceptual and paradigmatic model through qualitative analysis methods and encryption methods.

## Literature Review

### Urban Planning Traditions

Planning relies upon a number of models working together in very different fields. The basic question of how power is exercised provides us with an initial understanding of the opportunities available in order to incorporate an explicit power strategy into planning (Albrechts, 2003). Studying the most recent planning theories for their practical experience is a good strat in putting forward a selected model for addressing the research questions.

Although some of the past planning theories failed to address urban issues in certain aspects (some of the relevant ones will be discussed in the following paraghraphs), many of them managed to deal with a specific situation at a particular point in time. Generally, planning policies are conceived through time, based on the constitution of each country, while taking into account social, economic and cultural constraints. This does not mean that different planning theories have to be used for different contexts, but the context has to considered and will affect the way the theory is used. Before explaining and analyzing the selected theory of this research, it is beneficial to briefly review and evaluate some of the relevant theories and models of planning.

In the 1960s and 1970s, different 'modern' planning theories and traditions were developed and implemented; a brief summary review reveals that while they add some strength to the practice of planning, they have certain weaknesses:

- The rational, comprehensive model is based upon a belief in the existence of common interest in planning as a continuous and voluntary process, as a means to create a better future by using a 'systems approach' (Hall, 1979), and a clear methodology with sequential phases related to each other: long-term goal setting, goal- and action-oriented research, forecasting and development of alternatives and finally action, monitoring and feedback combined with decision-making in different phases of the process. Already in the 1960s, this approach was criticised by different authors, faulted for the fact that the model did not fit with the irrationality of reality (Hall, 1979). Also practitioners using the model pointed out the obvious weaknesses of the approach.

- Disjointed incrementalism or the 'science of muddling through' can also be seen as a reaction to 'ideal rational' planning and as a form of 'non-belief' in the long-term dimension of planning. Lindblom states that "the synoptic ideal is not adapted to man's limited intellectual capacities, the inadequacy of information, the costliness of analysis, not adapted to failure nor to the relationship between fact and value in policy making." His alternative, which he terms 'disjointed incrementalism,' is based upon a step-by-step approach using the existing situation as the standard and problem-solving as the proper approach.

- Advocacy, trans-active, radical planning, and other models for social learning and communicative action, all generated in the United States, deal with addressing basic human values (equity, justice, sustainability) and interests, especially of the poor and the weak. These models, with their specific methods and tools, today retain a certain importance as they are often used by non-profit organisations (community work, and action groups) and NGOs (Greenpeace, Amnesty International, etc.). In many UN programmes and practices, the tools of these traditions of 'social learning' form the cornerstone of the techniques employed for 'identifying problems and priorities, setting goals, exercising legal rights, determining service standards, mobilising resources and implementing policies, programmes and projects.' However, the basic aim of these traditions does not influence daily policy but changes social and environmental conditions in the long term, mainly by social learning through 'action' and by creating 'movements' dealing with a clear objective.

## Strategic Planning

In the 1960s and 1970s, the strategic spatial planning in a number of Western countries evolved towards a system of comprehensive planning at different administrative levels.

In the 1980s, one could witness a retreat from planning fuelled not only by the neo-conservative and liberal disdain for planning, but also by post-modernist scepticism, and both of them tended to view progress as something which, if it happens, cannot be planned (Healey, 1997b). Instead, the focus was on the realisation of projects but not any more on 'plan making,' often only used as legal frames for development. A distinction can be made between two movements. A first movement starts from the changing role of the public sector. The lack of public finances implies that more and more, the private sector, developers and investors bring with them market-led methods and techniques to influence urban development. What is interesting and very positive is the fact that this approach deals with opportunities and assets instead of merely with problems. It is a development-led approach instead of classic regulatory land-use planning. However, within this approach, the question remains if public interests and values are taken into account; in reality, most of the time they are not. If we look at the prevalent practices, urban and social improvement is often not an objective and neither is the need for a coherent urban policy. The main driving force remains profit-making. For politicians, this approach is seductive politically and financially, because it delivers fast results. According to several authors with architectural and urban planning backgrounds, the total mastering of urban development is simply not possible or even desirable. They advocate another kind of project-oriented approach based upon a detailed reading of the city, the potentialities of strategic and structuring places, and their characteristics and qualities. They maintain that the scale of regions and cities is too general and too abstract for 'action planning.' Such an approach aims at the development of a package of urban interrelated interventions — urban projects — and measures on different scales and levels. Although the implementation, quality and spatial orientation of this approach should be a characteristic of every planning effort, it is somewhat 'elitist' in nature and cannot solve the more fundamental issues faced by cities. It is an attractive model for politicians, architects and investors because it is in fact a project- and market-led approach founded upon feasibility, opportunity and quick realisation of projects. Promoters of this approach hope that such interventions will have a renewing and structural impact on city development and in many cases they do. Barcelona is possibly the best case illustrating this approach, using the 'pulsar' effect of the Olympics and of the political changes in Spain in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

There is a large amount of literature in the USA about the use of strategy and strategic planning in business and nonprofit organizations and growing literature in Europe about strategic planning (Faludi, 2000؛ Albrechts, 2001; 2003; 2006؛ Albrechts et al, 2001؛ Albrechts et al, 2003; Balducci, 2003؛ Balducci et al, 2011؛ Healey et al, 1997؛ Healey,1997a, ; 1997b; 2004; 2006, 2007; 2008؛ Kunzmann, 1996; 2001؛ Salet & Faludi, 2000؛ Janin Rivolin, 2008; 2010; Balducci et al., 2011). Also, an increasing number of practices (Examples include the Flemish Diamond (Albrechts, 2001), Hanover City Region (Albrechts et al., 2003), the Milan City Region (Balducci, 2003; Healey, 2007), the ESDP (CSD, 1999; Faludi & Waterhoud, 2002), the Randstad (Lambregts & Zonneveld, 2004), the Rhine-Ruhr Metropolitan Region (Knapp et al., 2004), and more recently the devolved nations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the English regions (Davoudi & Strange, 2009; Harris & Hooper, 2004; Haughton et al., 2010), all over the world seem to suggest that strategic spatial planning may be looked upon as a possible approach able to cope with the challenges and able to embed with structural change.

Reflecting on the challenges spatial planning is facing and relying on the experience accumulated from business, planning practice, and a study of the planning literature leads us to the following viewpoint on the 'what' of strategic spatial planning: strategic spatial planning is a public-sector-led (Salet & Faludi, 2000) sociospatial (Healey, 1997b) process through which a vision, actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a place is and may become (Albrechts, 2004).

A combination of characteristics related to the 'how' of strategic planning gives a specific coloring to the concept. Some of this characteristics include below:

It focuses on a limited number of strategic key issues;

It takes a critical view of the environment in terms of determining strengths and weaknesses in the context of opportunities and threats;

It analyses problems, external trends, forces opportunities and resources;

It identifies and gathers major actors (public and private);

It allows for a broad (multilevel governance) and diverse

(public, private, economic, civil society… ) involvement during the planning process;
It creates solid, workable, longterm visions/perspectives and strategies at different levels taking into account the power structures political, economic, gender, cultural, ethnic, uncertainties and competing values;
It designs planmaking structures and develops content, images and decision frameworks for influencing and managing spatial change;
It is about building new ideas and processes that can carry them forward, generating ways of understanding, providing some building agreements, and organizing and mobilizing for the purpose of exerting influence in different arenas;
It focuses, both in the short and the long term, on framing decisions, actions, projects, results and implementation and incorporates a clear link to the budget, monitoring, evaluation, feedback, adjustment and revision (Healey,1997a;1997b; 2007; Faludi & Van der Valk,1994; Kunzmann, 2000; Mintzberg,1994; Poister & Streib, 1999; Albrechts, 2003; 2004).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Grounded Theory

The number of research strategies summarized under the qualitative umbrella has increased significantly in the past two decades, and is still increasing. Each additional field that works more intensely with these methods gives them a new twist, adds ideas, and develops its own techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Some of the different types of qualitative research strategies include hermeneutic and phenomenological research, naturalistic inquiry, ethnomethodology, ethnography, qualitative case study, participatory action research, and grounded theory.
Grounded theory, first published in 1967 by Glaser & Strauss, is the master metaphor of qualitative research. It presents a way to understand a phenomenon through analyzing the data that composes the phenomenon itself. Strauss & Corbin (1990) maintain that "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon… One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge". This means understanding behavior like the participant does, learning their perspective, analyzing it, and giving a name to reoccurring behaviors and ideas (Jourdan, 2008). Essentially, grounded theory starts with a story and tries to figure out what is happening in that story (Charmaz, 2003).
One of the unique aspects of grounded theory is the way in which the data are handled. Data are simultaneously collected and analyzed. Through the process of collecting and analyzing data, major themes emerge and are continuously categorized, refined, and integrated into the theory development (Charmaz, 2003). This process, the gathering, conceptualizing, and interpretation, is integral to the building of theory (Jourdan, 2004).

### The Grounded Theory Research process

The process of building grounded theory consists of different phases, which include deciding on a research problem, framing the research question, data collection, data coding and analysis, and theory development (Fig.1). A grounded theory project typically does not begin with a theory from which hypotheses are deducted, but with a field of study or a research question, and what is relevant to this question is allowed to emerge during the research process.
Like other research projects, the process starts with identifying the research problem and the framing of a research question that demarcates the phenomenon to be studied. The literature review is, however, not a key part of a grounded theory approach. Personal and professional experiences of the researcher or research team, the study sites and materials accessible, and the level of sophistication brought to the analytical process are considered more important than being familiar with previous research—the rationale being that preconceptions can get in the way of critical thinking and discovery.
A key concept for this approach is "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1978), which reflects the ability to think about data in theoretical terms and integrate complex knowledge in the research situation. Sampling procedures differ from those of quantitative studies and are based on the concept of "theoretical sampling" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 176). Sampling decisions are to be grounded in the emerging concepts that become relevant to the developing theory. This means sampling decisions evolve during the research process, and sampling cannot be planned before embarking on the study. Similar to other qualitative research strategies, the grounded theory approach applies one or more techniques to collect empirical data. These techniques range from different interview types and observational techniques.
The analytic procedures in data coding and analysis are based on the method of constant comparison. After noting an event, it is compared to other events with respect to commonalities and differences. Constant comparison serves to uncover and explain patterns and variations. During the research process, hypotheses about the relationships between categories are developed and tested. Hypotheses are revised and qualified until they pertain to all data material, in preparation of the development and grounding of the emerging theory. One of the quality control procedures is the search for negative cases and qualifying material (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
Collection and analysis of data are closely related and carried out in constant alternation. Theory generation is not based on the raw data; it is based on concepts and categories being developed out of the raw data. The data coding and analysis phase of grounded theory studies builds on three analytic techniques: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

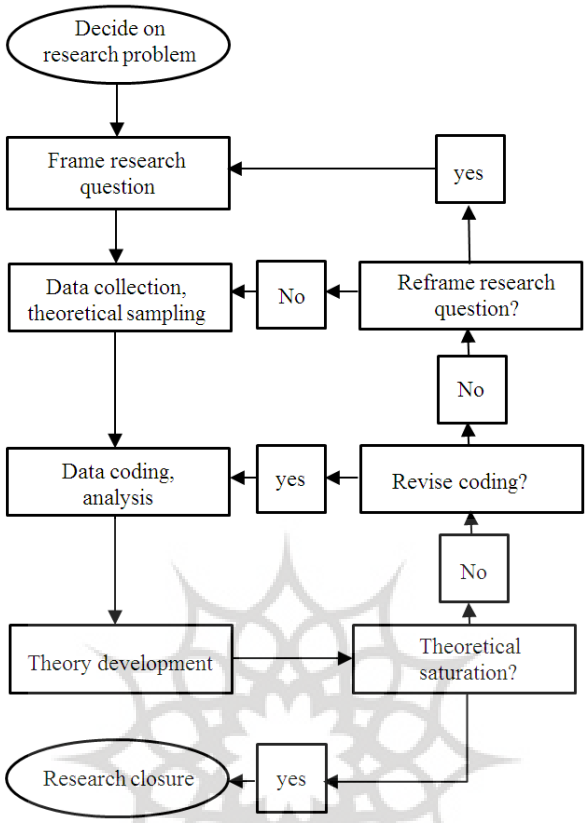


Fig.1: Grounded Theory flow chart

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Urban Spatial Planning in Iran

Urbanization and urban planning trends in Iran are similar to those of other developing nations: as the number of cities and their populations increase, the physical structures of the urban areas develop. The current system of urban development and planning in Iran is highly centralized and relatively rigid (Ghanbari & Madanipour, 1988). The constraints created by centralized and rigid urban development plans in Iran have inadvertently resulted in the rapid spread of slum areas and informal settlements in and around large and medium-sized cities (Aladdin, et al., 2011; Cities Alliance, 2005). The dominant urban planning approach in Iran consists of comprehensive and detailed plans. Several studies have already demonstrated the ineffectiveness of this approach and the need for a more strategic approach to urban planning (Panahandeh Khah et al., 2009; Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 2003; Zista Consulting Engineers, 1993; Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 1999; Farnahad Consulting Engineers, 2008). The existing system in Iran also makes it difficult for stakeholders to access local information, ensure transparency, and participate in the preparation and implementation of the urban plan (Panahandeh Khah et al., 2009). Furthermore, urban plans must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes during rapid urban and global development. The fragmentation of responsibilities and management in urban development presents additional urban planning problems (Cities Alliance, 2005). These problems affect the effectiveness of the current planning approach in Iran, highlighting the need for a shift toward a more dynamic, flexible, and participatory-based planning approach (Panahandeh Khah et al., 2009). City conditions and urban planning approaches have become more diversified as a result of rapid urban population growth, globalization, and economic effects (especially the urban economy). Cities require new tools to cope with these shifts. However, the centralized and rigid urban planning approaches used in the Iranian context have thus far failed to adequately respond to these conditions, thus resulting in problems during their implementation.

### Urban plans of Mashhad City, as a Case of Study

Mashhad is the second largest city after Tehran, is the main migration pole the in northeast of Iran. Mashhad is the main

religious city in Iran and second holy city one after Mecca. It receives yearly an enormous number of visitors and immigrants. Based on the development plan of Mashhad, approved in 2014, the population of this city will reach 3.65 million people in 10 years (2015) (Farnahad Consulting Engineers, 2015).

The first comprehensive plan to oversee and develop Mashhad City was approved in 1975. The main challenge that the plan had to address was rapid urban population growth. The second comprehensive plan for Mashhad was implemented after the Islamic Revolution of Iran. The investigation (Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 2003) revealed a lack of attention to the determining factors during implementation and the disparity between plan formulation and implementation. The investigation also revealed major problems associated with poor implementation of the Mashhad comprehensive plan, including the municipality's lack of power, authority, and implementation capabilities as well as the lack of financial support, stakeholder participation, institutionalization, and necessary skills to perform the implementation (Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 2003). In response to the poor evaluation results of the comprehensive planning approach in Mashhad, the local authorities applied Strategic Structural plan to cope with new urban challenges and to overcome the shortcomings of the previously employed urban planning approach.

## Step One: Open coding

This study began with the basic assumption that the application of Strategic Structural Plans theory in practice indicates the poor implementation of this idea in the Iranian spatial planning system. Accordingly, this research intended to evaluate the components of Iranian spatial planning system (in both general and specific levels) as well as the theory of Strategic Structural Plans.

The Iranian spatial planning system was examined at general level through research on a national scale (Center of Tehran planning, financial management and infrastructural management, 2013; Karimi, 2012; Zista Consulting Engineers, 1993; Farnahad Consulting Engineers, 2008; Center of Tehran planning, financial management and infrastructural management, 2013; Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 1999; 2000; Kazemian & Rezvani., 2004; Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2009) with an emphasis on strategic structural plan carried out in Tehran. The reason behind this level is called "general" lies in the comprehensiveness of process properties and mainstreams at all levels of the planning system in general. In this respect, according to this fact that the actions taken in the capital city have always been acting as a model to be followed rapidly nationwide and the availability of feedback to the Tehran development plan based on the theory of Strategic Structural Plans, desk study was carried out to review the library documents. Comments and views expressed in connection with the preparation of a Tehran master plan with Strategic Structural approach can be assessed a series of critique workshops for Tehran plan held at ISNA (Mansouri, 2006; Mansouri, et al., 2006; Mansouri, et al., 2006a; Mansouri, et al., 2006b; Mansouri, et al., 2006c; Mansouri, et al., 2006d; Mansouri, et al., 2007a; Mansouri, et al., 2007b; Mansouri & Mousavi, 2007; Mansouri, et al., 2008; Motavaf, 2006; Barati, 2006; Zekavat, 2010; Ghalibaf, 2006; Tehran City Council, 2006). Furthermore, several studies have been conducted as ordered by the Iranian urban development institutions, where in urban planning framework has proved effective (Andalib, et al., 2009; Andalib, et al., 2010; Apour, 2005). As a result of this reviews, in general scale, given the three major categories of specific episodes, the processes and cultur of governance identified a total of 146 concepts and 42 categories.

In order to become familiar with the specific level (based on theoretical sampling) literature review and reports were used in addition to participatory observation techniques and regular interviews. Given the nature of the sampling in grounded theory, the snowball sampling method was used at the local level until theoretical saturation was achieved. For this purpose, 24 interviews were conducted. In specific level, the Iranian urbanization system relied on the theorists' emphasis on the need for adapting to developments plan with the environmental characteristics, the three areas of knowledge, resources, communication resource and mobilization capacity was identified (Healey, 2007; Waterhoud, 2008; Khakee, 2002; Janin Rivolin, 2012).

## Step Two: Axial coding

The purpose of this step was to establish the relationship between the generated categories identified during the open coding. This was accomplished through a comprehensive basis and model of the traditional paradigm (Creswell, 2005, 401). In order to analyze the Iranian spatial planning system, according to the theory of Strategic Structural Plans, the categories were axial coded and one of the categories obtained by open coding was from identified as the axial category constituting the basis of the theory. The selection criteria of categories were based on the ideas of Strauss (1987) as emerged repeatedly in case studies, its logical and solid relation with other categories, abstract nature in order to maintain the applicability in other substantive areas. In this respect, institutionalism was introduced in the theory of Strategic Structural Plans due to the multiplicity of emphases in interviews and reviewed relevant documents as an axial category. The essence of planning in this theory is the institutional design, about which numerous researchers have emphasized today on institutional capacity-building. The institutionalist objective in planning is to find creative solutions to adapt to changes through the institutional channels and structural forces. The institutional capacity-building can determine how progress is made from government to governance.

## Institutionalism in Iranian Urban Planning

In the Regional Development literature, "institution" can refer to an organization, community, or the like, or the building

assigned to such a task or organized action and implementation (Webster, 1970). In accordance with the ordinary speech, some authors consider the term "institution" synonymous with the concept of organization. As a metaphor, organization can be seen a player while an institution as the game rule. Organizations are influenced by the institutions (rules), while at the same time, they are influenced through their activities the formal and informal rules (Dale, 2002,5).

Historically, planning has been closely connected with government action and state intervention but now operates within far more complex and blurred governance boundaries. While institutional frameworks around policymaking have long been a core part of the urban planning landscape, the planning related literature has recently been largely disengaged from the debates around institutionalism. This changed with the rise of the “new institutionalism” approach in 1990s (Verma, 2007). This oversight is shifting as variations of the new institutionalism approach gain greater recognition as an alternative approach to planning theory with insights for practice.

One of the main theoretical foundations of neo-institutionalism currently being used in urban planning involves the communicative and collaborative approach in the form of a space strategy generation (Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2003; Healey, 1997a). In this respect, Healey in his recent work (2005; 2006; 2007) suggested spatial strategy as an institutional approach. This approach discusses the planning in link with changes related to the political, social, cultural features. According to Innes (1995), the essence of planning is institutional design. In this regard, numerous researchers have emphasized the institutional capacity-building in recent years. This study intended mainly to find innovative ways to adapt to changes, break down the institutional channels and structural forces (Healey, 1997a). Institutional capacity-building is an organizational structure that governs the progress from government to governance. This approach seeks to distribute the power in the central government to the local level. This takes place at the local governments horizontally through collaboration among the interest organizations and groups based on the criteria of knowledge resource, communication resource and mobilization capacity (Healey, 1999).

Since the middle of the twentieth century, all three sectors have been concerned by politicians, planners and academics. The urban government have shifted direction away from the market organized the institutions (business logic), hierarchy (the logic behind the welfare state established over the twentieth century) or networks (the logic of social relationships and the Web) as well as a matter of space-time to a plan-based action rearranging the relationships between society, economy, politics, and spatial elements (Healey, 1997a, 300).

Institutionalism was selected in strategic structural planning as an axial category, given that the approach seeks to distribute the power of the central government to lower levels. This is accomplished at the level of local government horizontally through cooperation between organizations and interest groups based on the criteria of knowledge resource, communication resource and mobilization capacity. Accordingly, strategies for implementing this axial category was presented in three levels. In the process of theoretical consistency with the framework of Iranian urban development, the two major categories of government processes and specific episodes were identified along with a series of categories related to the influential causal conditions. The government culture and external trend in the Iranian spatial planning system was introduced respectively as context and intervention categories in efficiency or scrutiny into the institutionalism strategies in the strategic structural plan.

According to the findings of this research and field desk studies, if institutionalism is applied in the planning theory, the rest of the features introduced to the planning action as "good" or its comprehensiveness regardless of being whether strategic or participatory within global approaches or strategic structural plan in Iran, will be archived. In this regard, planning is considered a collective action seeking to improve the physical environment in the context of social institutionalization. Hence, it seems possible to regard the planning system as institutional knowledge and link between governance and land use systems. In other words, if the institutions function as an axial link between the government authorities and public land use, the planning procedure will fulfill the requirements of allocating the land use rights, thus helping to improve the physical environment to certain extent. As a result, the government and state are among the aspects of planning process, which cannot be juxtaposed or perceived as an alternative topic.

## Step Three: Application of Selective Coding and Theory Generation

The selective coding is the main stage of theory generation based on the results of two previous coding stages functioning as preliminary grounding stages for theorization. At this level, effort was made to put together categories around the axial category so as to present a theoretical account for the phenomenon. Furthermore, a relationship was intended to be build revolving around the major subject between the concepts and categories so as to figure out a systematic relationship. For this purpose, the other categories were classified into the following groups, Causal conditions, Context conditions, Axial category, Intervention conditions, Strategies, and Consequences.

Based on the paradigmatic model in the grounded theory, axial coding and selecting the elements of analytical model of Iranian spatial planning system, the application of the theory of Strategic Structural Plans was illustrated in Fig.2.

## Validation of Theory

Finally, it is important to determine whether the theoretical explanation makes sense for the participants, where it is reasonable to render an accurate translation of the events and the

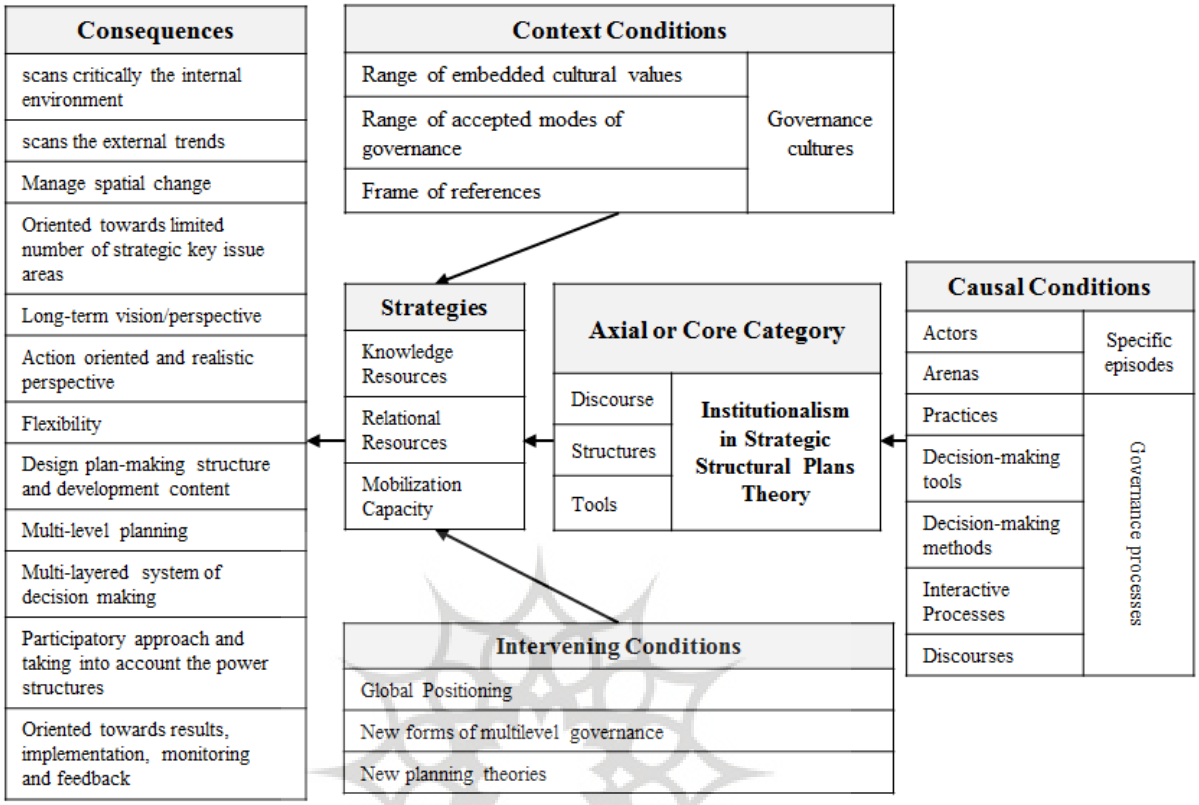


Fig.2: Axial coding based on the paradigmatic model and the proposed research model.

sequencing. In the grounded theory, validation is an active part of the research process (Creswell, 2005). In order to assess the validity of the results in terms of concepts, categories and axial/core coding, a set of strategies were employed in this study. The strategies used in this regard included the confirmation from participants (The findings were presented from three of the respondents whose comments were applied.), involvement of the researcher with the phenomenon (The researcher worked for 7 years as expert and head of the group responsible for master plan at Mashhad urban studies Institution.), and collaborative nature of the research and hypotheses (At the beginning of this article, the attitudes and orientations were clearly described.) multiplicity of methods and data collection resources (Participatory observations made in preparation of the Master Plan in Mashhad through a strategic structural approach; examining the literature and documents concerning the preparation of the Master Plan in Tehran through a strategic structural approach; interviews with people involved in the preparation procedure, review and approval of development and construction plans; reviewing the relevant research and articles related to Iranian spatial planning systems and urban development plans).

## CONCLUTION

Nowadays, the relationship between theory and practice of planning has been the limelight, where planning is counted for an integral part of the society. This paper attempted to provide a solution within the framework of the theory of Strategic Structural Plans in order to overcome the separation of planning theory and practice in Iran. The analysis of the Iranian spatial planning system according to the theory of Strategic Structural Plans revealed that the nature and function of planning were influenced by various groups of legal regulations and governmental structures on the one hand and the planning theory on the other hand. Therefore, it wasn't easy to introduce a general theory of planning. In the contemporary world, theories similar to the truth are social constructs and can be considered as discourses that give meaning to the society at specific eras. The application of Strategic Structural Plans in the Iranian urban development planning indicates the non-compliance of processes and outputs with the theoretical foundations proposed in this approach. Accordingly, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between the characteristics and principles of this approach and the circumstances of the Iranian urban development system. The results of this study showed

how a strategic structural theory could be applied to the current circumstances of the Iranian planning system. Moreover, what kind change it reflects on the Iranian spatial planning system components based on the features of the theory of Strategic Structural Plans. It is essential to note that any corrective action in the planning process of the country will require major reform of procedural and substantive aspects of urban development plans. On the one hand, the strategic structural approach of flexibility and uncertainty. Flexibility in decision-making levels ensuring the interests of society needs some change in the legal context and urban management. On the other hand, reform made throughout the process and content of the theory requires extensive development efforts in order to understand and analyze the components of the plan, monitoring how the policies are prepared as well as priorities more reasonable according to the latest physical and non-physical aspects. Any planning with strategic approach should offer a model appropriate to the nature of the political, social and economic system at national and local levels. The Iranian planning model under the framework of strategic approach should be devised in the light of the valuable experience from the past 5 decades. This is in turn a never-ending process so that the model should be permanently placed under criticism and correction. At the same time, as the methodology evolves or even before that, there must be new organizational and essential laws in accomplishing such a mission.

## AKNOWLEDGMENT

The paper is part of Ph.D. Dissertation written by Maryam Daneshvar, supervised by Dr. Ali Ghafari and advised by Dr. Hamid Majedi, titled “Analysis of Iranian Spatial Planning System with Regard to the Theory of Strategic Structural Plans”.

## REFERENCES

Aladdin, D., Dayshmn, U., & Shahriari, H. (2011). Informal settlements in Iran: Evaluation of Bandar Abbas, Kermanshah, Zahedan. *Iranian Anthropological Research*, 1(1), 35–59.

Albrechts, L. (2003). Planning and Power: Towards an emancipatory planning approach, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy.*

Albrechts, L. (2001). How to proceed from image and discourse to action: as applied to the Flemish Diamond. *Urban Studies*, 38(4).

Albrechts, L., Healey, P., & Kunzmann, K. R. (2003). Strategic spatial planning and regional governance in Europe. *the American Planning Association*, 69.

Albrechts, L., Alden, J. & Da Rosa Pires, A. (Eds) (2001) *The Changing Institutional Landscape of Planning,* ldershot: Ashgate.

Albrechts, L. (2006). Shifts in strategic spatial planning? Evidence from Europe and Australi. *Environment and Planning* A, 38.

Andalib, A. R., Daneshpour, A. H., Motavaf, S., Zaker Haghighi, Barati, N. & Kazemian, Gh., (2009). Special letters of the Tehran Urban Development Planning. *Manzar, Issues* 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Andalib, A. R., Daneshpour, A. H., Motavaf, S., Zaker Haghighi, Barati, N & Kazemian, G. h., (2010). Special letters of the Tehran Urban Development Planning. *Manzar, Issues* 5, 6 , 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Apour (Paris Institute of Urban Development), (2005), *Technical Cooperation Agreement with the Tehran Center of Urban Planning.* Tehran: Tehran Center of Urban Planning.

Barati, N., (2006), *A response from doctor Naser Barati to the article composed by Tehran Urban Studies Institution.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8510-08725/.

Balducci, A.m (2003), *Policies, plans and projects: governing the city-region of Milan*, DISP, 152.

Balducci, A., Fedelli, V. & Pasqui, G. (2011), *Strategic Planning for Contemporary Urban Regions,* Aldershot: Ashgate.

Center of Tehran planning, financial management and infrastructural management, (2013), *A draft of the comprehensive urban management law,* Tehran: planning and research center.

Charmaz, k,. (2003), *Grounded Theory.,* In J. A. Smith, Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods. London: Sage.

CSD, (1999), *European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union*, Brussels, Potsdam: Office for Official Publications of the European Communittes.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* NJ: Pearson.

Cities Alliance. (2005). *Submission of proposal: Preparatory assistance to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) of CDS into the urban planning process in Iran*. Iran: Cities Alliance & Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) of Iran.

Dale, B., (2002), *Using an Institutionalism Approach as Analytic Framework in Regional Studies*, Oslo:University of Oslo.

Davoudi, S. & Strange, I. (Eds) (2009). *Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning*, London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K., & Y. Lincoln. (2000). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research.* In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds). *The Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed. (pp. 1S28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Farnahad Consulting Engineers, (2008). *Reforming the urban development management in Iran based on the strategic approach.* Tehran: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Farnahad Consulting Engineers, (2015), *Mashhad Master plan.* Mashhad: Mashhad urban studies institution.

Faludi, A. (2000) The Performance of Spatial Planning. *Planning Practice and Research*, 14(4).

Faludi A., & Van der Valk A., (1994), *Rule and Order: Dutch Planning Doctrine in the Twentieth century*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Faludi, A. & Waterhout, B., (2002), *The Making of the European Spatial Development Perspective: No Materplan,* London: Routledge.

Forester, J., (1999). *The Deliberative practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*. London: MIT Press.

Ghalibaf, M. b., (2006). *A comprehensive plan, requirements and strategies Tehran*. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8510-10803/.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publication Co.

Glaser, B. G., (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociological Press.

Ghanbari, P. & Madanipour, A. (1988). A Review of Methods of Public Land Ownership and Allocation for Housing in Iran. *Enviroment, Planning and Management*, 31(2): 110-115.

Harris, N. & Hooper, A., (2004). Rediscovering the 'spatial' in public policy and planning: an examinal on of the spatial content of sectoral policy documents. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 5(2), pp. 147-169.

Healey, P., (2008). Knowledge flows, spatial strategy making, and the roles of academics. *Environment and Planning* C, 26.

Healey, P., (2007) .*Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: Towards a Relational Planning for Our Times*, London: Routledge.

Healey, P., (2006). *Transforming Governance: challenges of institutional adaptation and a new politics of space.* European Planning Studies, 14(3).

Healey, P., (2005), *The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory and its Implications for Spatial Strategy Formation,* in Campbell, S. and Fanstein,S. Readings in Planning Theory, Balck Publishing, Oxford.

Healey, P., (2004). *The treatment of space and place in the new strategic spatial planning in Europe,* International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 28(1).

Healey, P,. (1999), *Institutionalist Analysis, Communicative Planning and Shaping Places,* Journal of Planning and Environment Research 19(2).

Healey, P., Khakee, A., Motte, A. & Needham, B. (1997) (Eds). *Making Strategic Spatial Plans: Innovation in Europe,* London: UCL Press.

Healey, P., (1997a). *Collaborative Planning. Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*. London: Macmillan Press.

Healey, P. (1997b). *An Institutional Approach to spatial planning In Making Strategic Plans.* London: University College of London Press.

Hall, P. (1979). *Methods and processes in urban planning, the experience of Great Britain* London: Papers and Proceedings.

Innes, J. E., (1995), *Planning theory's emerging paradigm: communicative action and interactive practice,* Journal of Planning Education and Research 14.

Innes, J. & Booher, D. (2003). Collaborative policy-making: Governance through dialogue, in Hajer, M. and Waagner, H. (eds.) (2003) *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Janin Rivolin, U., (2012). Planning System as Institutional Technologies: a Proposed Conseptualization and the Implementation for Comparison, *Planning Practice & Research,* 27(1).

Janin Rivolin, U., (2008). Conforming and performing planning systems in Europe: an unbearable cohabitation. *Planning Practice & Research,* 23(2).

Jourdan, D. (2008). Grounding theory in intergenerational citizen participation employing a grounded theory approach in the context of housing research*. Qualitative methodology,* (10)249-270.

Jourdan, D. (2004). *Planning to reduce worry: Designing an intergenerational planning process to lessen relocation-related anxieties experiences by those displaced in the pursuit of a Hope VI revitalization grant*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.

Kazemian, Gh. & Rezvani, H., (2004). *The feasibility of transferring new responsibilities to municipalities, Volume IV: Analysis of tasks assigned to municipalities in Iran,* National Organization for Municipalities Publications, Tehran.

Khakee, A., (2002). Assessing Institutional Capital Building in a Local Agenda 21 Process in Goteborg, *Planning Theory and Practice,* 3(1).

Knapp, W., Kunzmann, K.R. & Schmitt, P., (2004). A cooperative spatial future for RheinRhur, *European Planning*

*Studies*, 12(3), pp. 323-349.

Kunzmann, K. R., (2001). *State planning: a German success story? , International Planning Studies*, 6(2).

Kunzmann, K. R., (1996). Euro-megalopolis or themepark Europe? Scenarios for European spatial development. *International Planning Studies*, 1(2).

Lambregts, B. & Zonneveld, W., (2004). From Randstad to Deltametropolis: changing attitudes towards the scattered metropolis. *European Planning Studies,* 12(3), pp. 299-321.

Karimi, (2012). *The draft bill of the Law of Planning and Architecture*. Tehran: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Mansouri A., (2006). *A response from Doctor Amir Mansouri to the article composed by Tehran Studies Institution*. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/service/Social/3001/.

Mansouri, A., Barati, N., Ghamami, M., Azadi, J., (2006). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, first workshop: Process and the designing organizations.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8504-14520/.

Mansouri, Motavaf , Shafiq, Barati, Daneshpour, Ghamami, Sadri & Habib Allhyan Jalil, (2006a). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, second workshop: Methodology of plan formulation.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8505-11835.43414/.

Mansouri, Mousavi, Dolatabadi, Motavaf, Daneshpour, Barati, Elahian, (2006b). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the third workshop: Plan content.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8507-08740/.

Mansouri, Motavaf, Mousavi, Dolatabadi, Fariborz, Daneshpour, Behzadfar, (2006c). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, fourth workshop: Plan goals.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8505-11835.43414/.

Mansouri, Motavaf, Sharif, Dolatabadi, Behzadfar, Shie, Elahian (2006d). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, Workshop five: Plan goals.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8504-14198/.

Mansouri, Sattarian, Ziyari, Farjami, Athari, Khatam, (2007a). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the sixth workshop: Housing.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8505-11835.43414/.

Mansouri, A., & Mousavi. M., (2007). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the seventh workshop: Worn textures*. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://

Mansouri, A., Sattarian, Athari, K., & Khatam, A., (2007b). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the eighth workshop: Housing plans.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8609-11948/.

Mansouri, Sattarian , Pourmusavi, Barati, Khoshchehreh, Farjami, Haeri (2008). *A detailed report criticizing Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the ninth workshop: The process of evaluation and approval of the plan at the Iranian Urban Council.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8612-14239/.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. (2009). *The provisions of Planning and Architecture in development plans adopted by the Planning and Architecture Council.* Tehran: Iran publication development.

Mintzberg, H., (1994). *The rise and fall of Strategic Planning.* New York: The Free Press.

Motavaf, S., (2006). *A response from doctor Sharif Motavaf to the article composed by Tehran Studies Institution.* Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8510-11869/.

Panahandeh Khah, M., Farhoodi, R., Gharakhlou-N, M., & Ghadami, M. (2009). A critique of the prevailing comprehensive urban planning paradigm in Iran: The need strategic planning. *Planning Theory*, 8(4), 335–361.

Poister, T.H. & Streib, G. (1999). *Strategic management in the public sector: concepts, models and processes, Public Management and Productivity Review*, 22(3).

Salet, W. & Faludi, A. (2000). (Eds). *The revival of Strategic Spatial Planning.* Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Sharmand Consulting Engineers. (2003). *Methods of Urban Development Realization.* Tehran: Municipalities Organizations Press.

Sharmand, Consulting Engineers. (2000). *Formulation of Iranian development and urban planning, Volume II: Experiences in preparing and implementing urban development plans in Iran.* Tehran: Municipalities Organizations Press.

Sharmand, Consulting Engineers. (1999). *Formulation of Iranian development and urban planning, Volume III: Experiences in devising and preparing urban development plans in Iran.* Tehran: Municipalities Organizations Press.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J., (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Tehran City Council (2006). *Questions of Tehran's City Council from the institution devising the Tehran comprehensive*

and detailed plans. Retrieved December 29, 2014, from http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/8512-12550/

Verma, N. (ed.) (2007). *Institutions and Planning*, Elsevier, Oxford.

Haughton, G., Allmendinger, P., Counsell, D. & Vigar, G. (2010). *The New Spatial Planning: Territorial Management with So Spaces and Fuzzy Boundaries,* Abingdon: Routledge.

Waterhoud, B. (2008). *The institutionalization of European spatial planning,* Sustainable Urban Areas, 18.

Webster, (1970). *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary.* Merriam Webster, Springfield, MA.

Zekavat, K., (2010). Tehran Development Program Discours., *Bon* (77)64-72.

Zista Consulting Engineers. (1993). *Assessment of urban master plans in Iran's Management and Planning Organization,* Tehran:Management and Planning Organization Press.