

AN EVALUATION TO IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS TO THE FEASIBILITY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANS: FIVE DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN URBAN PLANNING IN IRAN

Mohammad Javad Maghsoodi Tilaki^{*1}, A. Abdullah², A. Bahauddin² and M. Hedayati Marzbali²

¹Department of Urban Planning, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

²School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia.

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Abstract: The rapid urbanization in many developing countries has indicated several challenges in different aspects. This is due to inefficient urban planning approaches towards managing the development process. Similar to many other developing countries, Iran has experienced rapid urbanization in recent decades. Although over the last few decades, urban planning processes have been applied to develop Iranian cities, urban planning has failed to tackle the challenges facing the cities. This paper seeks to identify the barriers that have prevented Iranian cities from achieving the goals of urban planning. The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of the current literature on the concept of urban planning and to assess the urban development plan process in Iranian cities. The required data were collected through a review of international theoretical studies, Iranian experimental research and governmental reports. The findings of this study reveal five major barriers to the feasibility of the urban planning process, including the urban plans context, structure of urban planning, related law and regulations, public participation, and financial resources.

Keywords: Urbanization; urban planning; urban development; feasibility; Iran

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* Correspondence to: Mohammad Javad Maghsoodi Tilaki, Assistant Professor, Tel.: +60 17 405 8454; Fax: +60 46 57 6523. E-mail: j_maghsodi@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of urbanization and urban population growth has spread worldwide, especially in developing countries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report reveals that by the year 2025, sixty-one percent of the world's population will live in cities (UNDP, 2006). Hence, the migration of people to cities has become an issue of global importance (Bobilev, 2009). Due to spontaneous development, the urban challenges have been intensified by negative outcomes of migration in developing countries. In fact, the high demand for goods and urban services and increasing demand for a higher standard of living have been important factors in attracting migration from rural to urban areas (Partridge *et al.*, 2009). Urban land, as a platform for urban activities, has been considered as one of the strategies of governments, such as the Industrial Revolution, which took place between the 18th and 19th centuries. Urban land demands increase when governments attempt to address various issues of uncontrolled urban growth. In developing countries, this phenomenon has been emphasized due to the economic situation, in which a large portion of the population reside in the outer area of the cities, which may cause the creation of informal settlements in suburban areas. This has led the governments in developing countries, since 1970, to focus on spatial arrangement through planning at different levels, especially the city level. Although governments have emphasized the concept of urban planning in major cities, urban defects have never been addressed in developing countries.

Iran, as a developing country located in the southwest of Asia, has experienced rapid urbanization over the last five decades. The urbanization of Iran has experienced different transformation in recent years through various events on the national and international scale (such as the Pahlavi Dynasty, industrialization strategy, land reform, the Islamic Revolution, and the Iraq war). Different events have encouraged people to migrate from rural areas to major cities over the last few decades (Ferdowsian, 2002; Gharehbaghian, 1987; Majd, 1987). Several urban problems have resulted from this social movement in cities, such as the shortage of housing, lack of urban infrastructure, and failure of the traditional agricultural process (Kamrava, 2007). Unsuitable functions have simply led to uncontrolled urban growth and the birth of several informal settlements inside and surrounding the cities. Urban planning, as part of the overall process of planning, was seriously considered in Iran in the late 1960s when the government enacted the third national development plan (Ziari, 2006). Thus, a comprehensive planning approach was employed by the government to prepare urban development plans. This function was the one that caused the government to consider urbanization, the

urban development process, and prevention of city extension.

Although different policies have assisted the government in controlling urban development, after five decades, the efforts have still not materialized. Therefore, the present study focuses on the feasibility of urban development plans in Iran. Furthermore, it describes the evolution of Iranian urban planning and the urban development planning process to determine the current situation of the urban development process in Iranian cities. Finally, it seeks to identify the barriers that have prevented the feasibility of urban development plans in Iranian cities over the past five decades.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of the current literature on the urban planning concept and to assess the urban development plan process in Iranian cities. The current research employs an evaluation method using inferential statistics. The type of study fits the requirements of explanation in the current social research.

The evidence suggests that determining whether the research under review succeeds or fails, is the most important portion in such evaluation studies (Babbie, 2004). The present study considers the experimental research design as a variation of evaluation research. The methodological review is conducted based on available secondary data from the Iranian government reports as well as a number of international organizations, such as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Nation Habitat (UNDP). Furthermore, a systematic review was conducted of studies that reported on the urban planning process in Iran. Official statistics and published databases provide information for the authors to achieve the research objective. In addition to secondary sources of data, the urban development planning process has been recognized as a common issue in developing countries through a critical review of the available published papers in international journals.

It should be noted that the first phase of this study is an evaluation of a comprehensive approach to urban planning in which both the theoretical and administrative features are highlighted. The current study focuses on Iran as a country that has experienced rapid urbanization since the mid-1950s, through which the author was able to identify potential barriers to the success of urban development plans in Iran. Second, the barriers are classified into different categories in order to demonstrate the inefficiency of urban development approaches in the study area. This is followed by a discussion of the effective factors on urban development control. Finally, the conclusion includes the most

important findings and provides recommendations for improving the urban planning process.

AN EVALUATION OF COMPREHENSIVE URBAN PLANNING

As a comprehensive planning approach has been employed in Iranian cities, the approach is reviewed in terms of the theoretical viewpoint. Generally, a review of the literature reveals that the comprehensive planning pattern was introduced by Geddes and Mumford (Hague, 1991; Slocombe, 1993). both of whom had formed comprehensive planning patterns through the principles of ecology and biology (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009; Udy, 1994). The opinions and principles for comprehensive planning of Geddes were in fact applied in the cities around the world for over fifty years. Nevertheless, although the comprehensive planning pattern was no longer being implemented in the 1960s, this pattern continued to be employed for urban planning in some developing countries including Iran (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009).

Such a comprehensive planning approach relies on rationalism, a holistic approach, and belief in progress (Friedmann, 1971). Faludi (1973) believes that the logical features of comprehensive planning have led to the preparation of plans based on a detailed approach in which the details are forecast. Thus, such a comprehensive planning pattern is known as 'Blueprint Planning'. The comprehensive planning pattern has received various criticisms since the 1960s, and is considered obsolete in the urban planning system in developed countries. Based on a large body of the literature, comprehensive planning includes various weaknesses when the development of cities is conducted (Alexander, 1974; Castells, 1977; Friedmann, 1971; Faludi, 1973; Hall, 2002; Harvey, 1973; Jacobs, 1961; Lindblom, 1965; Lynch, 1984; McConnell, 1981; Popper, 1974; UN-Habitat, 2007; Venturi, 1977). In response to weakness, developed countries implemented strategic spatial planning when the master planning had failed to respond to urban requirements contained in the urban development process, partly from the 1980s to 1990s (UN-Habitat, 2007). A large body of literature has revealed that it is adopted with the environment features to be employed in the urban planning. It can be concluded that the strategic spatial planning is formed by three main elements which are (i) the analysis of environments, (ii) stakeholder participation, and (iii) implementation (Bruton *et al.*, 2005; Davidson, 1996; De Graaf, 2010; Halla, 2007). The strategic spatial planning has a direct connection with aforementioned elements which is considered as a strong instrument to intervene in the built environment. The strategic spatial plans as a consequence of strategic spatial planning, encouraging a particular form of cities to constitute the "compact urban form". Furthermore, a strong

framework for local projects which are recognized by urban design elements can also be found. It should not be forgotten that the strategic spatial planning is influenced by the various effective elements such as the system of organizations, different regulations, and traditional culture (Steinberg, 2005). Strategic spatial planning may be successfully achievable in countries because of a strong independence demonstrated among public sectors (De Graaf, 2010; Korthals Altes, 2000). There is no doubt that the local government as a major official element plays a significant role in creating successful urban planning as well (Denhardt, 1985; Poister & Streib, 2005). The authorities should have a strong influence on the urban planning process as chief coordinators and financial resources at the local level. At last, the strategic spatial planning attempts to organize the use of space. Thus, it can contribute to reduce human spatial disturbances in the cities. Hence, it should be executed by local governments which have appropriate authority (Korthals Altes, 2000).

These plans were implemented in Iranian cities when cities were developed in an unplanned and undisciplined manner. Thus, the plans could drive the cities towards a more planned development although weak results and inefficiency in implementation had surfaced. The plans caused positive effects in the urban planning field, based on the changing of the views among the urban planners, managers, and experts.

This study has extracted the Strengths and weaknesses of comprehensive planning based on different scientific documents and the opinions of scholars.

Strengths of the current approach of the urban planning in Iranian cities can be merged in five major parts as follow:

- Proving the necessity of urban planning for the supervision, management, and control of urban development in the cities
- Consideration to the transformation of urban planning as interdisciplinary knowledge to solve the problems and to response to the requirements expressed by the new society;
- Attempt to employ different techniques and concepts towards better quality of life;
- Consideration to land as basic foundations to establish activities, and
- Attempt to innovate for housing production and upgrade network transportation (Sharmand Company, 2003).

In the other hand, the consequences of the implementation of urban development plans based on the comprehensive planning approach have revealed a marked difference between plans forecasting and the achievement of results among Iranian cities which weakness are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Classification of comprehensive planning weaknesses in different domains

Domains	Weaknesses
Theoretical	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation based on rationalism, holistic, positivism, and functionalism. 2. Lack of realistic view for supervision and intervention. 3. Lack of appropriate attention to dynamism and complexity of nature of cities. 4. Impossibility of forecasting. 5. Ambiguous urban planning knowledge among different sciences, such as engineering, biology, and social science. 6. To focus urban planning on physical planning while neglecting urban space. 7. Inattention to the process of decision making, goals and setting of policies. 8. Inattention to quality of life, social justice, and indigenous values.
Method & Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plans are prepared and approved by methods that are prolonged, imperious, and top-down. 2. The urban plans are prepared based on the studies which are detailing, overview, non-transparent, and causeless. 3. Emphasis on quantitative methods, abstraction, and statistics. 4. Lack of continuity among urban planning stages (preparation, implementation, and management). 5. Emphasis on quantitative measurement, artificial partitions, and similar patterns. 6. To restrict the direction of the development of cities in future by inflexible and static land use maps. 7. Inattention to features of local communities and their desires, and requests.
Administrative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political viewpoints influence the decision and direction of urban development plans. 2. Inattention to applicability of instruments and feasibility of facilities. 3. Lack of public participation and beneficiary groups in decision making and decision taking. 4. Lack of transformation in the urban development process as collections of administrative procedures and static regulations. 5. Lack of appropriate attention to financial, technical, and organizational resources. 6. Lack of forecasting revision and improvement. 7. Lack of public participation and local facilities used in executive and management phase.

URBAN PLANNING BACKGROUND IN IRAN

Basically, reconstruction and improvement activities in Iranian cities started in the Ghajarieh period when the 'Municipality Act' was passed by the government (1907). The bureaus, embassies, new constructions, theatres, cinemas, stores and guest houses were constructed based on the latest design principles, with little arrangement or regulations (Mashadizadeh, 1995). However, formal land use planning and management in Iran commenced in 1933 with the enactment of the law by the government for the building, and widening of streets and alleys (Ehlers, 1993). Due to the Second World War (1939-1945), urban construction activities deteriorated in Iranian cities, however, several urban development functions were implemented during this period in the direction of urban modernization in major cities, especially in Tehran (Ferdowsian, 2002).

Subsequently, urban planning was focused upon after the Second World War. The government enacted two Acts, which provided the legal framework to implement urban development functions. Since 1961, contemporary urban planning began when Iranian cities experienced the preparation of the master plan based on the third national development plan policies (Saraf, 1999). Initial master plans had not considered all aspects like the cities' growth concerns, but they were prepared through a comprehensive planning method and emphasized the physical aspects. Consequently, these plans promoted urban land speculation, physical expansion, and the development of suburbs (Clarke, 1981). In the same

period, the Ministry of Housing and Reclamation was established followed by the secretariat of Architecture & Urban Development High Council (AUDHC), which was founded in 1964 with the responsibility for the supervision on the preparation of the master plans.

With the beginning of the fourth national development plan in 1968, the first master plan was enacted by the secretariat of AUDHC. The government ordered the preparation of master plans for another 20 cities. At the same time, the government attempted to achieve urban plan strategies by improving the authority of the municipalities, however, the development of cities did not completely follow the recommendations of the urban development plans. Consequently, the government continued its efforts to provide an appropriate legal framework for planning functions, which included the preparation of detailed plans for those cities that had approved master plans. Pursuant to Clause (5) of the 1972 Act, the comprehensive urban plans included master plans and detailed plans. In addition, the agreement for the urban development plans, which was called 'Agreement Twelve', was approved in 1984 (AUDHC, 2006; Kamrava, 2007; Madanipour, 2003).

As a result of the 1972 Act, the AUDHC introduced a mechanism to prepare the final report for the urban master plans. Accordingly, a commission in each province was responsible for the revision and approval of the detailed urban plans. The Governor General of each province headed the commission. In 1974, the name of the Ministry of Housing and Reclamation

changed to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD). The Urban Development Plans Act was classified into three categories, namely the master plans, detailed plans and guidance plans, which were each defined in the Act. Furthermore, the MHUD was in charge of preparation of the comprehensive urban plan and detailed plan by private urban planning consultants. Afterwards, the guidance plan was provided to solve the critical urban problems in those cities without master plans. The authority that was in charge of the plans had been provided by the Ministry of Country since 1974 (MHUD, 1992). In 1979, the Islamic Revolution brought about numerous transformations in Iran. The revolution attempted to offer independence in Iran in different fields. In addition, some international companies were ousted, and, afterwards, many specialists lost their jobs, especially in the planning and policy making sections. Generally, these functions were due to the nature of the revolution and inevitable issues that might result from any such revolution. In addition, Iran was attacked by Iraq for eight years from 1980. As a result, urban planning was somewhat neglected, which led to the uncontrolled growth of cities.

The lack of adequate housing was one of the biggest problems as a consequence of rapid urbanization in Iran, which was intensified after the Islamic revolution. Thus, the government attempted to implement different policies to respond to this need in which vacant urban land was a major requirement (Kamrava, 2007). The urban development plans and related policies were critically neglected by the government within this process, and, consequently, the government did not have any control in the subdivision and transfer of the urban land, which was agriculture land, outside the city boundaries, and infrastructure reserve land (for example, high voltage power stations). Generally, the executive and provision system of the government were disorganized due to the revolution in the early years which had an extreme influence on urban governance. Land speculation was on the rise, which the government attempted to control by direct action including three laws. Nevertheless, the power of the municipalities were at a low level from 1979 to 1987 due to the intervention of different governmental organizations, such as the Housing Foundation and Urban Land Organization (ULO) (Kamrava, 2007).

In addition, the income of the government was reduced through the decline in oil prices. The government could not consider the urban planning system during the War, which caused the AUDHC to be dormant between 1980 and 1982 (Moradi, 2005). After the end of the war in 1988, the government began the reconstruction of Iran. In 1987, the AUDHC prescribed 'zoning, determination of building density and land use criteria', which permitted the municipalities to change

the density and land use that were previously prescribed in the master plans.

Furthermore, the High-Rise Buildings Act and Density was passed by the government in 1990 (AUDHC, 2004). The construction companies and landlords employed these Acts to earn more profit when they filed for change of land use and building density. This Act caused considerable damage to service land use distribution and population per-capita in cities through the change of the approved urban development plans, especially in some major cities. Regarding the improvement of public participation, city councils were established by public election since 1999, which allowed for the new authority to interfere in the urban management in Iranian cities. The city council is the highest level of public participant in the urban management until now, and is recognized as a participant in the urban planning process.

In fact, the government attempted to prevent the physical extension of cities when it passed the 'Definition of Boundary and Border for Cities, Towns, and Villages Act' in 2005. However, the demand for housing had been a pressure on the government and people, especially young couples.

Therefore, the government focused on two strategies to respond to the housing needs in recent years. These included (i) renewal of old urban fabric, and (ii) the Meher Housing Scheme (Ahmadi, 2009). Actually, the old urban fabric affected major parts of the cities, which were constructed in a rather disorderly manner, non-normative, and lacked adequate infrastructure over the last seven decades. Furthermore, these districts were usually found around the core of the cities with a small population and low building density, which could be employed as opportunities for rehabilitation projects (Davoudpour, 2005). Therefore, two regulations were enacted by the AUDHC; the first was the 'regulation for identity indicators of old urban fabric in 2006, and the second was the regulation of the Grants for Building Density Incentive in Old Urban Fabric in 2007 (AUDHC, 2010). Accordingly, the government tried to obtain successful implementation by providing broad facilities to participate in this process including construction companies, and landholders and house buyers; however, the rehabilitation process was not satisfactory.

Another strategy was the Meher Housing Scheme. In this scheme, the government encouraged the private sector to build housing for young people who did not yet own their own home. This constitutes the latest government attempt to solve the urban housing shortage and prevent illegal development outside the city boundary. Finally, although the government has tried to control the urban development process in recent years, the results indicate that the efforts have failed.

PROCESS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN IRAN

Regarding the comprehensive planning concept, the preparation of urban development plans in Iran consists of three phases. As mentioned previously, the framework process for urban development plans was established by the Iranian government, which is entitled 'Agreement Twelve'. According to Agreement Twelve, the first phase refers to the study and knowledge of the city, which results in the basic information about the city, such as geography, history, and economy. The second stage applies to the analysis of the data obtained in the previous stage. Lastly, the third stage describes the development plans including forecasting, recommendations, and rules. In this case, Agreement Twelve determines the urban development plan contents which are shown in **Table 2**.

EVALUATION OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

As explained previously, the urban development plans were prepared based on comprehensive planning. After five decades from the implementation of these plans, for most Iranian cities, most of the problems should have been solved. However, the achievement of the plans reveals that the ideas and aims of each master plan hardly correspond to the original goals and objectives of the plans when they were executed. According to the literature, several barriers for the failure of the feasibility plans can be recognized, however, the current research focuses on those that have considerably affected the cities and citizens. These have been subdivided into three major categories, which are explained in the following sections.

Preparing of urban development plans

The plans are provided based on the comprehensive planning approach in spite of the fact that the comprehensive planning method is no longer used in the countries in which it originated, i.e. developed countries. In fact, these plans are prepared based on the functionalism theory. As the functionalism theory has limitations through self-nature, a major part of these plans are considered to be the physical aspect of cities (Ministry of Country, 2000).

These terms have caused urban planning to be reduced to physical planning, which does not consider the social and cultural issues in these plans (Sharmand, 2003). The plans are prepared despite being disconnected from the upper and lower levels plans (such as national socio-economic development plan, improvement and renovation plans) (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009). Hence, the plans are not prepared in cognizance of the major policies of the government at

the urban level. Consequently, the urban development plan might disagree with the different levels. On the other hand, goals are influenced by the political authorities' opinions in these plans (Mozayani, 2001). In addition, unsuitable regulations, such as fixed building density have caused these plans to fail to address the requests and requirements of the citizens after the plans were prepared. Plans have been prepared with little consideration of the economic aspects, which reflects the urban economy situation such as urban land cost after implementation of the urban development plans. Finally, decision-making processes are not separated in the current master plans, and different organizations, institutions and urban management have not been coordinated through the lack of clear regulations in the preparation of the plans (Ghamami, 1999). In this way, people's opinions are not considered in the preparation process (Mashhoudi, 2001).

Moreover, government contracts with the private sector (urban planning consultant companies) to prepare development plans based on the homologous agreement with Agreement Twelve, which is typical for each Iranian city. Agreement Twelve, as the preparation framework, is considered to be one of the major issues in the preparation process due to the enactment of this agreement in 1984 (Nourian, 2002; Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, it has not been upgraded in many years, in contrast to various countries that transform their preparation process for the urban development plans every few years.

Pre-approval process of urban development plans

Basically, the urban development plans have been prepared through the capabilities, requests, and policies of the central government. Thus, the opinions of the central government are fully implemented in the preparation and approval process (Ministry of Country, 2000; Nourian, 2002). In other words, the requests and facilities of municipalities are not necessarily considered in either the preparation or the approval process. This may happen because these plans are linear top-down. In this respect, the centralization of the government system has made the approval process very time-consuming (Saeidnia, 1999). Consequently, the policies and strategies are not updated. Moreover, municipalities do not have a direct role in the approval process, as provincial authorities are initially responsible for this process (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009). In addition, a large body of literature indicates that the people do not play any role in the approval process of master plans. Hence, their requests and opinions are not considered in the approval process of the master plans (Ministry of Country, 2000; Nourian, 2002; Barati, 2006; Majedi, 2001; Zarivani, 1995).

Normally, the revision and approval process of the urban development plans are not integrated. For example, urban authorities (city council and

Table 2.The components of the common urban development plans

Type of Plan	Major contents	Description
Master Plan	Urban development structure	1. Physical features 2. Determination of major operational area 3. Display transportation networks system 4. Determine system of municipal divisions 5. Find out special elements and particular fabric in the cities
	Urban development directions and urban capacity	1. Forecasting of population in the city 2. Estimate resources and other urban infrastructure for a certain city 3. Approximate density of urban population 4. Determination of city boundary
	Regulations and criteria in various fields	1. Determine different per capita consumption and per capita land use 2. Establishment of various functions in different municipal divisions 3. Distribution of population density 4. Special elements and particular fabric 5. Maintenance of heritage facades and buildings, and natural landscape 6. Consideration of culture, architecture of fabric, and climate characters 7. Environmental protection
Detailed Plan	Detailed maps for city neighbourhoods	1. Display transportation network up to alleys 2. Determination of building and population density 3. Detailed land use maps 4. Sample maps for proposed cases, such as urban spaces
	Preparation of regulations and criteria	1. Suggestions for improving urban construction functions 2. Preparing regulations and criteria for employing land use, density, subdivision, and building construction
Guiding Plan	Detailed maps for city neighbourhoods	1. Display transportation network up to alleys 2. Determination of building and population density 3. Detailed land use maps 4. Sample maps for proposed cases, such as urban spaces
	Preparation of regulations and criteria	1. Suggestions for improving urban construction functions 2. Preparing of regulations and criteria for employing land use, density, subdivision, and building construction

municipality), and professional institutions do not have any role in the revision and approval process. Plans are revised or approved over a long period of time (Ministry of Country, 2000; Nourian, 2002). The lack of clear regulations and criteria about urban development constitute another reason in this case (Ministry of Country, 2000). Unfortunately, plans have been revised and approved without comprehensive regulations in the process of revision and approval. Therefore, the functional goals of the plan can be changed even in the final meeting of the approval process (Ministry of Country, 2000). In addition, the lack of comprehensive laws and regulations has led to the lack of integration of the urban development plans with the regional and national plans (Majedi, 2001).

Implementation of urban development plans

The Iranian government practised a centralization system, which influenced the authorities of organizations, institutions and departments in the implementation of the urban development plans. In addition, different organizations in the urban planning process were not adequately coordinated due to the absence of comprehensive urban planning laws, regulations and policies (Majedi, 2001; Nourian, 2002).

Therefore, there is no integrated urban management among the different urban authorities. Moreover, municipalities are not considered as urban management. Therefore, various bureaus and organizations at the provincial or urban level may restrict the functions of municipalities in the implementation of the urban development process in terms of their legal responsibilities and lack of appropriate horizontal coordination among municipalities and other organizations (Ministry of Country, 2000). For instance, ownership rights and the authority to interfere in urban land have been delegated to different institutions, organizations, and councils, such as the MHUD, ULO, the Documents Registration Office, and the Organization of Natural Resources (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009).

Furthermore, the municipalities face barriers in the implementation of the plans due to the fact that they lack financial and human resources, and the human resources of the Municipalities are incongruent with what they are expected to do in respect of the urban development plans (Panahandeh Khah *et al.*, 2009; Ministry of Country, 2000). In practice, there is no consultation between the municipalities and the private sector, and the intermediaries of the non-governmental

organizations in the implementation process (Nourian, 2002). In fact, implementation of the urban development plans seems impossible in these municipalities. In addition, the multiplicity of laws and regulations in Iran's urban planning system has caused some confusion in the implementation of the urban development plans (Barati, 2006; Sharmand, 2003).

Another difficulty arises when the implementation process is affected quite considerably by the land market, which has caused opposition to private benefit and public benefit through the lack of qualified laws and regulations in the cities (Mashhoudi, 2001; Tavakoli, 2001). Generally, the physical and functionalistic views of the current urban planning approach have degraded the land use determination to the only major purpose of the urban development plans in Iran. The fixed land use map and fixed criteria tables are major aspects of the current urban development plans through particular concentration on the physical expansion of cities. From another point of view, the lack of an integrated system including the laws, regulations and policies for land use planning has caused some social, economic and legal problems for implementation of the urban development plans, especially land occupation, which is the main element in the implementation of urban development. This has contributed to the decadence of urban management and the structural growth of cities in recent years.

CONCLUSIONS

The study focused on the urban development plans as the main instrument of the government for managing urban growth. The review of the urban development plan process indicates that although urban development plans have been implemented, urban development did not follow the rules and recommendations of the plans. Hence, the paper attempted to determine the barriers to feasibility plans in Iranian cities. In this way, the urban development plan process was reviewed based on a comprehensive review of the literature to understand the different experiences of other countries. The results reveal that different paradigms attempt to provide suitable urban development in consideration of several aspects of society including economic, social and cultural, as well as the physical aspects. This research recognizes and introduces certain obstacles for successful urban development plans. These barriers can also be seen in other developing countries due to the similarities in the features of the institutions and society. Generally, urban planning institutions have met several challenges in developing countries (Van Dijk, 2006). A single urban management control is not recognized in Iranian cities inasmuch as several departments, offices and bureaus are involved in the decision taking process for urban development. Therefore, development and investment for urban infrastructure and public services

are confused or neglected. This causes the related institutions to attempt to provide urban infrastructure and basic services through urban development plans. Furthermore, the lack of sufficient urban services and inappropriate urban infrastructure has meant that the needs of people's daily lives are not being met by the urban development plans. Therefore, this condition encourages people to disregard the rules and policies, and, consequently, the recommendations of urban development plans are not achievable.

On the other hand, there is another major barrier in the preparation and implementation of urban planning paradigms. This barrier can be named as the instability of the economic and social infrastructure in the cities. In fact, Iran, as a developing country, has rapidly experienced change and transformation in its political, economic and social structures regarding effective internal and external elements. The changes in the agricultural system and industrialization policies have led to Iran experiencing rapid urbanization over the last few decades. These events have affected the normal population distribution in the habitable areas of Iran. Consequently, rapid changes can be seen in almost all Iranian habitation complexes including cities, towns, and villages. These changes in the habitable areas indicate that the current planning and administrative framework is unable to respond to rapid changes in population distribution. Furthermore, a review of the development process of Iranian cities reveals that urban land plays a key role in the feasibility of urban plans. The restriction of urban land and increasing demand have intensified the need for the effective role of urban land for a successful urban development process. Thus, several prerequisite functions are considered necessary before each action to improve the urban planning system in Iran. These prerequisite functions should solve the shortage of urban land, the lack of an appropriate urban infrastructure, incompatible administrative organizations and lack of public participation.

In sum, the present study identified several barriers in the urban development plan process that can be merged into five major categories – context, structure of urban planning, law, public participation, and financial resources. Therefore, the Iranian urban planning process can be improved through institutional cooperation, the employment of the participatory approach, decentralization of power mechanism to local authorities, and the generation of interactive opportunities among different urban stakeholders. The aforementioned functions will be affected when the government decides to enforce the modification of the planning system towards greater flexibility, adapt the legislation status properly, review the process of decision making, increase public trust, and enhance social responsibility in the city.

However, it can be concluded that the process of urban development plans can reach optimum efficiency if the overall aspects of the needs of society are accommodated within the urban planning paradigms. It should be noted that Iranian society has specific situations in terms of the social, cultural and economic conditions. Thus, it would be useful for future work to include evaluation of Iranian urban planning system for using the new paradigms of urban planning such as City Development Strategy (CDS) in accord with specific characters of Iranian cities. It support Iranian urban planning for a better understanding of the impact of new paradigms features in efficiency of urban land and environment protection across Iranian cities. Finally, it is not feasible that urban development plans are prepared and implemented based on the specific urban planning approach while each approach and process should be localized based on the exclusive situation of Iranian context. This matter refers to the differences of conditions in administrative, legal, and social characteristics between Iran and other countries.

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