



# **Reading of Developments in Comprehensive Urban Plans-Review of the Iranian Experience (Limitations and problems from Master Plan to Strategic-Structural Plan)**

Elham Lashkari<sup>1</sup>, Mehrshad Khalaj<sup>2</sup>

*1. Assistant of Professor of Urban Planning and Design, Sadjad University of Technology, Mashhad, Iran*

*2. Master of Urban and Regional Planning and Design, Islamic Azad University-Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran*

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## **Abstract**

Although, industrial revolution has considered as turning point to arise great change in the cities but this change belongs mostly to western cities which existed before 20th century. Fast development and prosperity of urban planning along with comprehensive approach refer to first years of 20th century. However, Iran has approximately 50-year-experience to execute master and detailed Plans. All of these variable plans have been executed based on comprehensive planning. Lately, two approaches have been created in urban planning system in Iran: Master plan and Strategic and Structural approach. Although it has been about two decades since the introduction of Strategic plans in Iran, the country's planning system is still wandering between the master plan and the strategic plan. The purpose of this article is to introduce the implementation challenges of urban development plans in Iran from the Master plan to the Strategic-Structural plan. Therefore, this essay uses descriptive, case study and survey methods and tries to analyze and compare these two approaches precisely without any prejudice. The results of this study show that strategic plans have a high capacity to adapt to today's urban society. Although, they face infrastructure problems, weaknesses and inconsistencies in the laws in the process of implementation and participation of different people and sectors. However, to achieve this, we need some infrastructures such as scientific and theoretical, economic and social, legal, administrative and financial, partnership and implementation. As long as these preconditions are not met, no development plan with a strategic approach will be possible.

**Keyword:** *Comprehensive Planning, Democratic Planning, Master Plan, Strategic Plan, Systematic Approach.*

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## **1.Introduction**

The growth of cities or in another word urbanization has been affected by fundamental revolution in economic, social, cultural and politic subjects in most of countries in twentieth century. Investigating these developments and their effects on the formation of new thinking processes in planning is beyond the scope of this article. In general classification, Peter Hall divided dominant urban planning theories in two courses and one midcourse (Transition course) in last century. The systematic approach is considered as the transition from the master plan to the strategic democratic planning and the basis of the later approach in the urban planning system.

## **2- Transition from Master plan to democratic planning with Strategic approach**

The pattern of Master plan has been introduced by Patrick Geddes who established urban planning and his student, Luis Mumford. They were biologist who can use ecology and biology methods to discuss about organic theory in urban planning. Master developing

plans has been done up with combining this theory with new urban functionalism theory over half century. This pattern was based on modernization which is academic rationalism, comprehension and believe to improve (Mehdzade, 2003). It had physical framework and economic features and didn't care about social quality. In this approach, goals of planning have been determined by politician and managers of community and people and planers still haven't been tracing to make decisions (Moradi Masihi & Khalaj, 2011) In master plan procedures, it does not care about making decisions and determine of goals and policies. Gathering information and analyze them was based on rational and academic methodology and it didn't care about some cases like limitation of human cogitation, lacking of accessible information, opportunity of executive program and probabilistic breakage. So maybe this plan was abstruse and visional (Faludi, 1982).The result of this approach was master plan, it had certain, changeless and obligatory character (Hall, 2002).Critics consider some reasons to less efficient of master planning. We can classify their opinion about problems, difficulties of Master plan in three groups. (See Figure 1) 25 years' experience urban planning

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\*Corresponding author.  
elham.lashkari@sadjad.ac.ir

after war demonstrated problems of master plan in Europe. Along with these problems and increasing the critic opinion about fundamental theory, the way of preparing and implementation of master plan in 1960 and publishing and Propagate the systematic theory, urban planning thoughts had been mutated. During two decades 1960 and 1970, theories and experience of urban planning in Western Europe countries, USA, Canada, and Japan intend to approach which can we put name on it urban planning systematic approach (Mehdizade, 2003). Final goals of systematic approach are:

- a) Far from rational planning.
- b) Follow economic, social and cultural goals.
- c) Combine planning and management.
- d) Completion of urban planning and Implementation.

Systematic plan leads to have relation between this planning and management with decision making. It based on this attitude planner are not only executive managers rather they are experts who can find best solution for problem and they can show better condition to managers and governors. In this approach was observed qualities change on planning concept. For example, it had been accepted that planning and management has included two distinct and related procedures. Decision making and decision taking are these two parts. Decision making refer to determine goals, strategies and policies and decision taking related to execute of decisions, monitoring and reviewing. Separating decision making and decision taking have in conformity with systematic approach (Moradi Masihi & Khalaj, 2011). The first advocator of systematic approach in urban planning was McLaughlin (1969), George Chadwick (1981) and Allen Wilson (2014) who try to describe general procedure of planning based on systematic relation between goals, opportunities, execution, monitoring and viewing. Peter Hall describes their same though about fundamental concepts (Hall, 2002):

- a) Goals and objectives as a first step in planning procedure which tries to obtain them.
- b) Forecasting and modeling to find behavior now and future and interfering and monitoring them.
- c) Plan design and plan evaluation is not only prepared land use plan but also clarify the future condition in different situation as coherent, coordinated, efficient and realizable
- d) Choosing best option for implementing by evaluating alternatives
- e) Continuum repeating of planning procedure and modeling. Evaluation and choose, monitoring of this procedure by plan test as a subjective model in front of real world and conformity with it. Although systematic approach generates many outcomes in evaluation of science, interfering in natural system and but usage of that in complicated social and humanities realms are unreliable, discussable and doubtful (Hall, 2002). Therefore, Systematic approach cannot have a

permanent situation in urban planning and there were many unsystematic approaches in urban planning contemporaneous. Although Strategic approach has been considerate as on the Systematic approach showing and it refer to mid-1960 decades in private sector in united states of America with this subject "Strategic management" but this approach has been completed since the last 20 century (1980 and 1990) when postmodernism has founded and even we can consider it base of post modernism and Strategic approach has discuss many theories, variable and new methods in urban developing management and spatial planning realms and it includes extended concept from its first concept. Master plan has linear approach to urban planning and it though when it past survey, analyze and plan it could complete its plan. In master plan evaluation has been achieved in the end of planning but Strategic planning is a returnable procedure and it acts like circular. So, it does not end with implementation. It is flexible and ready to accept failure. Also, it is a paradoxical approach. It means that strategic plan has totality characteristic and other hand it is act as method or functional technology. It means it is strategy and other hand it is tactic (Saeednia, 2003). Actually Strategic planning considered all activities, making decisions, and make policies with each other, complete and active forms.

### 3- Research Method

Research Method in this research is a combination of descriptive, case study and survey methods. A descriptive research method has been used to describe the reality of comprehensive urban plans to derive objective results. To examine the master plans and strategic plans as case studies and to generalize the case method has been used. Survey research method has also been used to collect information on various projects, by documentary and library study.

Content analysis method has been used to analyze the comprehensive plans and compared with the urban planning theories. Finally, the challenges of urban master plans in Iran have been introduced and categorized using coding techniques.

### 4- Changes from Master Plan to Strategic approach in the urban planning system in Iran

Criticize of preparing procedure, approval and implementation of Master and Detailed plans in Iran has been initiated since 1970 and gradually this critic includes their container and fundamental theory. Examine the experience of Master plan in Iran (Tehran (Farman farmaeyan Consulting Engineers) & (AteK Consulting Engineers), Mashhad (Khazeni Consulting Engineers) & (Mehrazan Consulting Engineers), Abgarm (Shahr o Barnameh Consulting Engineers) and Khakali (Shahr o Barnameh Consulting Engineers)) specify the problems of these plans in the content,

process of preparation and implementation as described below. (See table 3) The rising of criticism of the theories and implementation of Master plans and the acknowledgment of their inefficiency by the executive agencies, the preparation and implementation of Master and Detailed plans as well as researches in this field in the 1970s, finally the Strategic plan term alongside the Structure Plan introduced by the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development in 1998. They may be argued that the two differ in terms of definitions, concepts, and origins, and on the other, there are many commonalities in the method and the process of studying has for the first time in Iran come together. A suggestion for revising the concept and content of urban development plans has been referred to as Strategic-Structural planning, namely action planning. This type of planning in compare of Master plan is more than concerned with actions. It is related to executive factors and decision-making processes. According to the research in urbanism and architecture adjutancy of Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (Mehdzade & Pirzade, 2018), five main features discusses for Strategic- Structural planning:

- a) Separation of planning procedure into main level, Strategic plan and implementation plan;
- b) Creating hierarchism in decision taking, decision making, management and implementation;
- c) Constituting framework goals of urban plans with economic and social goals;
- d) Constituting of planning factors with implementations factors and public participation;
- e) Emphasize on activity, flexibility and adaptation of urban developing plans

However, moving from physical planning and Master plans to defining goals, objectives, strategies and policies in Strategic-Structural plans are caused many developments in the urban comprehensive plans in Iran, there have been some problems in these plans implementations. One of the most important bottlenecks facing Strategic-Structural planning in Iran is the existence of a value system dominating society. Therefore, it is necessary for each movement to pass its own audits, though it is the wishes and demands of the majority of society. Such a historical perspective is in stark contrast to the flexible and endogenous approach of Strategic-Structural plans. In addition, weaknesses in the executive and technical management of the country are other major obstacles in this regard.

Nearly two decades have elapsed since the preparation of Strategic-Structural plans in Iran, study of these plans documents and implementation of that (Tehran (Strategic-Structural Plan of Tehran), Tehran Region (Comprehensive Plan of Tehran Region- Hassan Abad Region), Mashhad (Strategic-Structural Plan of Mashhad), Mashhad Region (Comprehensive Plan of Mashhad Region), Bushehr (Strategic-Structural Plan of Bushehr), Bushehr Region (Comprehensive Plan of Bushehr Region), Borazjan (Strategic-Structural Plan

of Borazjan), Ardebil (Strategic-Structural Plan of Ardebil), Qazvin (Strategic-Structural Plan of Qazvin), Islam shahr (Strategic-Structural Plan of Islam shahr), Pardis (Strategic-Structural Plan of Pardis) and Hassan Abad (Strategic-Structural Plan of Hassan Abad)) the most important barriers and bottlenecks to applying the Strategic-Structural Planning in Iran are outlined in table 4. The challenges facing these projects are related to the lack of coordination of laws and legal problems to engage the various sectors. Investigating these plans also shows that strategic-structural plans focused on long-term goals, formulating short-term policies instead of long-term plans and avoiding definitive assignments for future cities have been able to bring forward a new structure according to today's needs of cities and their changes. These developments are referred to Hall, Lindbloom and Faludi ideas.

Table 1: Dominant urban planning theories in last century  
(Hall, 2002))

Subject	Period of Time	Goals	Patterns
Master plan	1920-1960	- Macroeconomic development - Physical organization	- National and regional physical plans - Master and detailed plans
Systematic Planning	1960-1980	- Improving economic and social systems - Guidance and Monitoring of urban system	- Modeling of Urban Systems - Long Terms Plans - Local Structural Plans - Strategic Plans
Democratic planning with strategic approach	1980 until so far	- Sustainable development - Social Justice - Participatory Management	- Hierarchism of Plans - Variety of Local Plans - Urban Design Projects

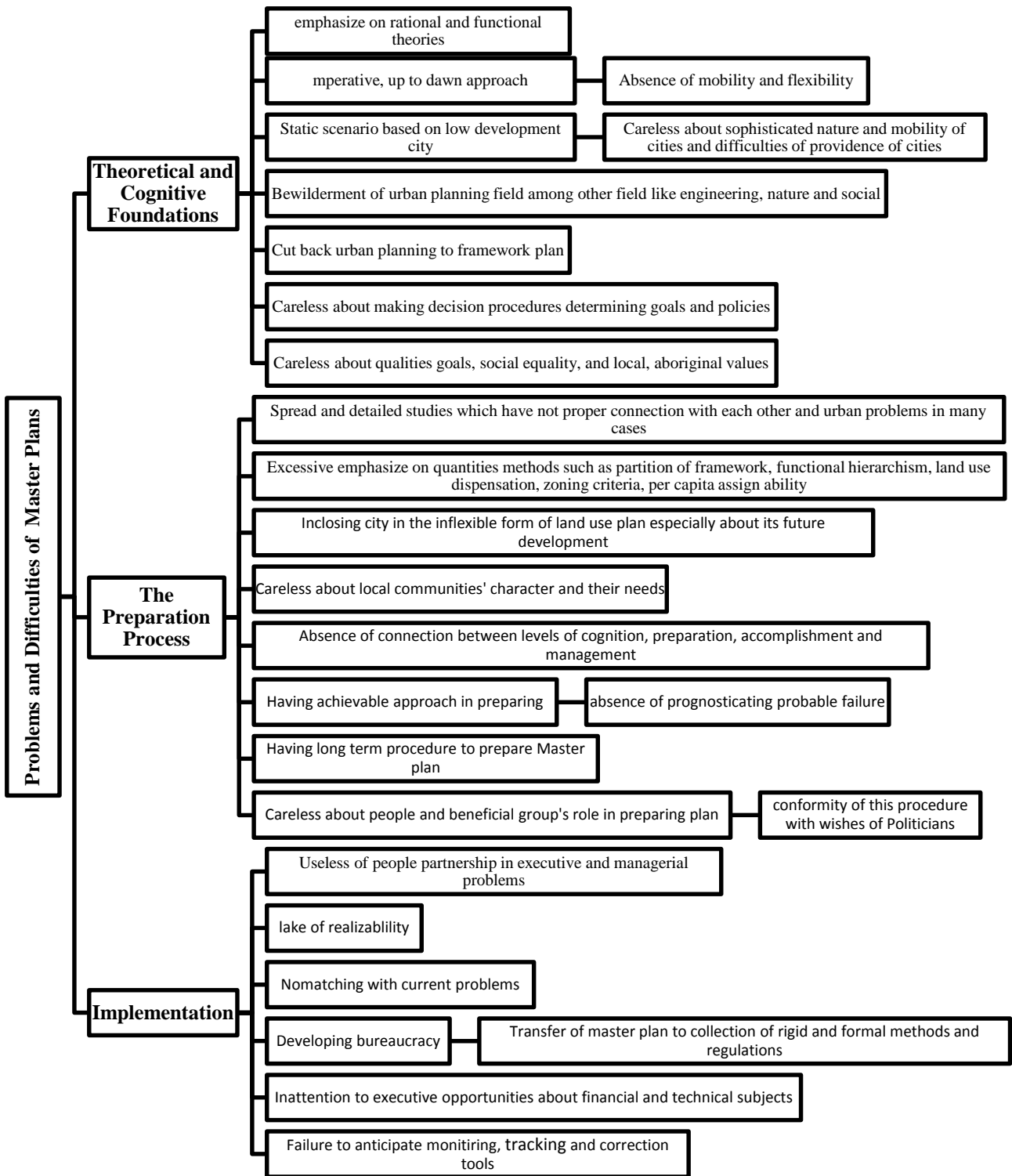


Figure 1: Problems and difficulties of Master plans (Faludi, 1982) (Hall, 2002) (Meyerson & Banfield, 1969) (Mehdzade, 2003)

Table 2: Effective theories about criticize of Master plan pattern and present Strategic planning pattern

Usage in Strategic Pattern	Theoretician	Main Approach
Chadwick compared planning model and systematic model. He believes that regarding to complication of urban Society and interfering many factors, Master plan which are prepared rationally isn't realistic and there are infeasible.	<b>Chadwick</b> (1981)	<b>Systematic Approach</b>
Peter Hall emphasize to use strategic planning. He believes that urban planning has to concentrate on main principles and to emphasize on procedure to reach goals.	<b>Peter Hall</b> (2010)	<b>The Procedure of Systematic Approach</b>
Lindbloom recommends to planners use short term goals instead of long term polices and plans	<b>Lindbloom</b> (1973)	
Faludi believes that one of the best solution to obviate Master plans limitation using Strategic plan. He thinks that Strategic plans are credible reliable plans and decision making can be used in the rational way.	<b>Faludi</b> (1998) , (1982)	
Resell Ikaf believes that according to permanent changing in the world and its complications, we have to face with this anarchic. We have to determine communicability among different sectors the action policies of communicable plans are: participation, permanent and totality approach based on goals planning.	<b>Resell Ikaf</b>	<b>Social, Participatory Planning Approach</b>
Paul Davidoff Knows the limitation of Master plans and attempt to realizing them by using public participation.	<b>Paul Davidoff</b> (2008)	
Norman and Susan Fainstein emphasize on local community role and public participation in urban problems.	<b>Norman and Susan Fainstein</b>	
David Harvey believes that we have to consider urbanism as a collection of social relations. This collection has to have its low which creates the urban structure actually spatial and social realities have mutual connection.	<b>David Harvey</b> (1985)	

Figure 2: Decision making pattern in Strategic- Structural plan (Saeednia, 2003)

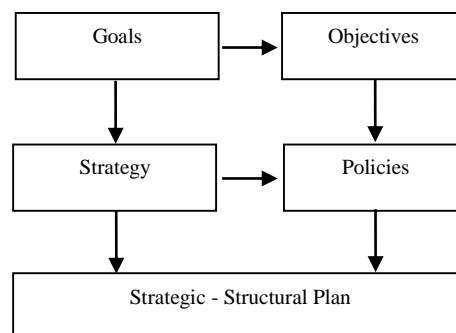


Table 3: Master plans problems in Iran

<b>Master Plans Problems</b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inflexible, unrealistic and ambitious plan</li> <li>- Non-consistency with Iran situation</li> <li>- Ignoring production and service facilities</li> <li>- Non-coordination between studies and designing</li> <li>- Ambiguous national and regional policies</li> <li>- Ignoring local customs and condition</li> <li>- Poor theoretical bases in philosophy and human science</li> <li>- Unrealistic and inflexible programming</li> <li>- Theories related to urban dwelling in Iran are not homogenous.</li> <li>- Dearth of urban development knowledge</li> <li>- Dominance of architectures and planners in urban planning</li> <li>- The methods are no longer practical due to lack of inclusiveness</li> </ul>
<b>The Preparation Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ambiguous policies on urban development and distribution of population</li> <li>- Lack of national and regional macro plans for comprehensive plans</li> <li>- Inconsistent and unbalanced development of cities in the past and cash</li> <li>- Consuming urban reforms and public and social welfare system</li> <li>- Lack of related and responsible organizations to manage public affairs in rural areas</li> <li>- Scattered villages and unwarranted migration of rural population to cities</li> <li>- Limited and micro development plans and non-consistency of planning system of comprehensive plans with the state public planning system</li> <li>- Urban investment decline under special circumstances like wars</li> <li>- Insufficient focus on review and ratification</li> <li>- Emphasis on evaluation of content proposals</li> <li>- Insufficient attention towards executive capabilities</li> <li>- Lack of organized supervision, non-participation of citizens</li> <li>- Unfeasibility of targets, especially in economic and social sections</li> <li>- Ignoring demand and role of the citizens in city formation</li> <li>- Improper physical regulations (static building density-replacement of local services)</li> <li>- Targets are not compatible with proposals</li> <li>- No method is being delivered to achieve targets</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problems of plans in correct evaluation of population and their real needs</li> <li>- Deficiency, weakness and lack of correctness in codification of rules and regulations and lack of precise rules governing construction in boundaries</li> <li>- Focusing on development of new districts to help release burden on old quarters of cities</li> <li>- Ignoring the role of people and non-participation of them in implementation of plans</li> <li>- Preventive role of strict rules governing division of lands and construction in the way of building activities, unnecessary limitations</li> <li>- Considering ambitious per capita and ignoring the financial and technical capabilities of municipalities</li> <li>- Incapability of municipality in ensuring consistency among organizations responsible for urban services and implementing required mechanisms for coordination</li> <li>- Difference in approach of municipalities with other state organizations owning non-private urban lands and natural resources</li> <li>- Non-compliance of state bodies of comprehensive plans and their poor respect of rules governing these plans</li> <li>- Ambiguity of main targets of plans</li> <li>- Non-estimation of costs of implementation of proposals</li> <li>- Ignoring the urban dwelling processes in Iran in recent years</li> <li>- Financial Problems (Low financial capability of municipalities and non-continuous income resources of municipalities- Non-codification of financial balance for plans and low financial clout of municipalities in execution of plans- Cut in government financial assistance to municipalities and insistence on self-sufficiency of municipalities- Private lands and division of suburban lands in the past and need for paying compensation to private owners for implementation of plans)</li> <li>- Management, organizational and human resources problems (Inefficiency of municipalities in employment, organizational and management sections and poor related regulations- Shortage of urban development experts and low experience of the available cadre, inability of municipality in attraction of professional personnel due to limitations in organizational charts and low wages, limitations of state and municipal employment regulations in paying sufficient wages and incentives to professional experts and recruiting of the experts by private sector- Lack of executive bodies need for implementation of plans in urban-oriented organizations)</li> <li>- Legal Pitfalls (Lack of proper rent and regulations to fix their amount- Lack of any rules to guarantee proper execution of comprehensive plans-Extensive private ownership of urban lands and lack of division of suburban lands in the past - Lack of proper system to distribute costs and profits of comprehensive plans justly- Existence of numerous contradictory regulations pertaining to farms and agricultural lands in cities)</li> <li>- Inconsistency between urban plans and district development plans</li> <li>- Ignoring financial capabilities and executive obstacles and their impacts on citizens and the country</li> <li>- Lack of proper mechanism and management in evaluation of plan in different levels</li> <li>- Lack of coordination between ministries and institutions and between them in enforcement of policies of plans</li> <li>- The targets are not realistic anymore and do not meet the current needs of the city and urban dwelling.</li> <li>- The theoretical model is obsolete and lacks scientific base.</li> <li>- The plans do not fit the current condition of the cities.</li> </ul>

Table 4: Challenges facing implementation of Strategic-Structural planning in Ira

Description	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unbalanced growth and distribution of population</li> <li>- Unbalanced urban development and excessive migration</li> <li>- Shaky urban dwelling and employment (unofficial urban settlement) due to complicated urban land turning into a commodity with high value added and rent issue under weak urban</li> <li>- Weakness in planning and execution of plans, leading to resistance of citizens</li> <li>- Housing crisis and lack of basics needed for settlement of citizens</li> </ul>	<b>Shaky socio/ economic infrastructure</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High number of inconsistent rules and regulations, particularly in municipal regulations</li> <li>- Bloated administrative and management organizations engaged in urban development evolutions</li> <li>- Lack of coordination between executive organizations due to their localized function</li> <li>- Undefined role and status of environmental- and cultural heritage-support bodies and regulations as backbone of move towards sustainable development</li> </ul>	<b>Lack of coordination between urban development bodies as well as regulations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous decision-making and responsible organizations for urban lands</li> <li>- Conflicting macro and micro-ownerships</li> <li>- Per capita planning system</li> <li>- Inability of municipality to buy lands needed for implementation of plan</li> <li>- Lack of cooperation between numerous bodies engaged in implementation of plan</li> <li>- The current method used in determining the usage of land is incompatible with social justice</li> </ul>	<b>Pitfalls in property and law of Iran</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralized governmental management</li> <li>- Local management is under control of central government and not citizens</li> <li>- Official organizations and institutions taking local management. under control include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macro level: Interior Ministry, Housing and Urban Development Organization, High Housing Council</li> <li>• Regional Level: Governorate Generals Offices, Provincial Planning Council</li> <li>• District Level: Municipality, Cities Islamic Councils, Governorates Offices</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Informal elements having influences on local management: Parliament deputies, Friday prayers leaders, pressure political, social and economic parties, specialized and expert groups</li> <li>- Inability of local management in implementation of urban development plans</li> <li>- Inability of local management in attraction of financial resources to implement urban development plans and their inclination towards improper methods to develop cities</li> <li>- Lack of experience in management of Islamic city councils</li> <li>- Lack of authority for Islamic city councils and municipalities</li> <li>- Political inclinations of Islamic city councilors and mayors</li> <li>- Unstable urban development decisions and management</li> </ul>	<b>Weak planning and local management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Localized performance of ministries and important governmental bodies and lack of supports</li> <li>- Conflicts between interests of private sector with public interests, objectives, urban development plans</li> <li>- Weak NGOs</li> <li>- Urban development plan not welcomed by the public</li> </ul>	<b>Lack of partnership facilities in urban development</b>

Table 5: comparing of the Strategic-Structural plans in Iran with the theories

Theoretician	Main Idea	Challenges of Strategic-Structural plan	
Peter Hall	- long-term goals	✓	---
Lindbloom	- formulating short-term policies instead of long-term plans	✓	---
Faludi	- Avoiding define assignments for cities	✓	---
Resell Ikaf	- determining communicability among different sectors	×	- Lack of coordination between urban development bodies as well as regulations
Paul Davidoff	- using public participation	×	- Weak planning and local management
N & S. Fainstein	- emphasizing on local community role and public participation	×	- Lack of partnership facilities in urban development
David Harvey	- Finding the Relationship between Social Relations and Laws	×	- Shaky socio/ economic infrastructure - Pitfalls in property and law of Iran

## 5- Conclusions

A review of the experience of comprehensive urban planning in Iran shows that deterioration of urban problems has created two points of view in the urban planning system:

### **First approach: Master plan and rational approach**

This approach asserts that there are not suitable condition and enough infrastructures to use acceptable new tools in urban planning and states that planners have to follow their traditional way in urban plans.

### **Second approach: strategic and structural approach**

Thinkers of this approach believe that qualitative changes during the time, insufficient pattern in urban development plans in order to obviate of demand of society, globalization and the necessity of adapting changes with urban plans clarify the necessity of use of new pattern in society. Specifications of Strategic-Structural plans show they are fully better than comprehensive plans. The most important specifics of these plans are:

- Cyclical process of preparation of these plans;
- Flexibility and envisaging probable failures and the possibility of reviewing the perspective, general objectives and strategies;
- Possibility of participation of people in preparation, approval, implementation and review of these plans.

A comparison of the achievements of Strategic Structural plans in Iran with the theoretical foundations of these plans shows that structural strategic plans with continuous targeting and short-term policy have been able to develop a flexible and tailor-made plan for each city. They face infrastructure problems, weaknesses and inconsistencies in the laws in the process of implementation and participation of different people and sectors. (See Table 5) Iranian managers are supporting comprehensive plans despite the fact that such plans are proven outdated in other countries more than over five decades ago. Supports extended by Iranian officials to comprehensive plans are main challenges facing Strategic-Structural ones. High capacity of strategic-structural plans to adapt complicated and changeable social and economic

conditions have been proven. It is obvious these features show advantages of Strategic-Structural plan to master plan but to use this plan need some condition such as scientific, theoretical, economic, social, legal, financial, administrative, partnership and implementation basics. Until such preconditions are not being materialized, implementation of a plan with a strategic stance is impossible. These prerequisites are:

- Scientific and Theoretical: Developing of theories and knowledge regarding to planning and management of developing
- Economic and Social: The stability of the political system, balanced population growth, Balance between towns and villages.
- Legal, Administrative and Financial: Hierarchism of national and local governments, sufficient financial sources, Comprehensive urban planning laws.
- Partnership and Implementation: Public information, Professional community, Social community, and executive tools.

Finally, it is emphasized that Strategic and Structural or Master titles do not determine the content of any development plan, but rather distinguishes the type of attitude and how its components are formulated.

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