A Grounded Theory Approach to the Application of Structural-Strategic Plans in Iran's Urban Planning System[*]

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, planning is no more is considered as a scientific and technical profession or a governmental and state duty rather it is envisioned as a bridge connecting the planners to the institutional changes. In other words, the planning theory is not formed within social, economic and/or political considerations rather it is configured by the individuals in social situations with the objective of elaborating the current status and prescribing of more appropriate procedures and processes. The present study has been conducted with the objective of introducing the elaborative and prescriptive power of the structural-strategic programs on the institutionalism grounds for the enhancement of the capacity of their application in Iran's urban planning system. To do so, grounded theory has been utilized as the study strategy. The data collection instruments of the present study are documentary and library research, interviews with the experts, managers and specialists and participatory observation in the study environment; the instruments are composed of two micro- and macro-levels. In the latter level, Iran's urban planning system's conditions and indicators are taken into account with a pervasive comprehensiveness; in the former level, the sample evaluation is carried out with the objective of investigating the local scales of urban planning and management in the development and civil planning of the city of Mashhad. Following these analyses, 159 concepts and 44 topics and 9 meta-topics were identified in relation to Iran's urban planning system and structural-strategic planning under six titles using a coding method. Amongst the identified topics, institutionalism was selected in the structural-strategic plans as the pivotal issue and the paradigmatic model was delineated with an emphasis on the causal, background and intervening conditions and strategies and outcomes. Based on this analytical model, the structural-strategic planning provides the prerequisites for the development of the scales and various levels as the discourse framework and in respect to the social mobilization.

Keywords: Structural-Strategic Plans, Iran's Urban Planning System, Plan of Mashhad, Institutionalism, Grounded Theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

Being influenced by the common methods of urban planning and dominant planning approach in the west, the preparation of the urban development plans was done as one of the methods of applying planning in Iran in its first steps in 1960s based on the comprehensive approach. The ineffectiveness of such a plan preparation was verified after several decades in guiding the urban development and enhancing the environmental quality regarding all of the factors engaged in urban development and this has also been emphasized in the various studies carried out in the country (Management & Planning Organization of Iran, 1993, Iran's Municipalities Administrators, 1999, Ministry of Housing & Urban Development, 2006, Ministry of Housing & Urban Development, 2008). Based on the awareness of the shortfalls and the considerable failure of the traditional (comprehensive) planning pattern in the preparation of the urban development plans, on the one hand, and expansion of the new needs and goals in the urban development, on the other hand, the preparation of the structural-strategic plans was proposed in Iran as a reformatory approach to the guidance of the urban development (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 1999). After using this approach in the urban development plans and with the investigation of the first prepared practical samples, it was made clear that the structural-strategic plans lack a certain theoretical framework in Iran and that the things practically prepared and enacted as structural-strategic plans (whether in the preparation, enactment and implementation process or in the plan's documents and outputs) are not in accordance, in many of the aspects in terms of both content and procedure, with the conceptual-theoretical and objective-phenomenological dimensions of these approaches or even they are contradictory to them though efforts have been made in some of the aspects to get them aligned with the principles and features of the approaches stemming from the strategic and structural planning (Daneshvar & Bandar Abad, 2013). Therefore, the present study was started with this essential assumption that the structural-strategic plans have been practically incapable of actualizing this concept in the environment of the country's urban planning system.

As it is known, the thing that has happened in the world under the title of structural and strategic pattern is the product of the institutional changes (under social and intellectual conditions and in legal and other grounds) that have been brought about in the planning environment and the current process of the countries' urban planning. This consideration, in itself, underlines the necessity of the interaction between the country's urban planning system and the structural-strategic planning theory for the preparation of the country's urban development plans. Thus, a key question is posited in the present study as to how the indicators of Iran's city building system are related to the structural-strategic programs? In responding to this question, the concepts of Iran's city-building system and structural-strategic plan are elaborated relying on the qualitative research methodology and considering the mutual interactions between the study's theoretical literature and the study environment; then, the relationships between the concepts were elucidated based on grounded theory approach.

2. A REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Nowadays, the planning theory has been underlined and considered based on the latest perceptions thereof (Watson, 2002; Albrechts, 2004; Campbell & Fainstein, 2009). In other words, it is expressed unedr the effeect of postmodernism that the reality does not feature an outside existence as an objective and absolute concept rather there are predicates that should be enumerated amongst the social constructs in terms of nature. These are constructs that are produced by the interaction of such factors as power, profit, value, social prestige of the scientists, organizational structure of the institution producing knowledge and so forth. Resultantly, the formation of the planning theory as impressed by the norms (values) and thoughts (intellectual discoveries) and its multiplicity at a single instant and its being influenced by power (Allmendinger, 2010) are properties of the contemporary era's planning theory. It is by the emphasis on the planning theory that there is made daily increasingly emphasis on the possiblity of usiing the spatial strategy within the format of an institutional approach with a participatory perspective.

Although, there is no single theory for the strategy and strategic planning, this planning method is currently used as a term for describing a vast spectrum of planning activities that have been occuring in the entire Europe since 1990s in scales higher than the local governments' levels, on the one hand, and it is, on the other hand, applied in the planning theories to promote a new set of normative theories for introducing the methods of good planning. Generally, the contemporary strategic planning properties can be categorized within the format of table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Strategic Planning in Contemporary Planning Theories

Row	Attribute	Source
1	Planning as a social-spatial process	(Healey, 1997b)
2	Guidance of planning by the state sector	(Kunzmann, 2000)
3	Paying attention to the power structure	(Poister & Streib, 1999; Sager, 1994)
4	Paying attention to the various levels of planning	(Albrechts, Healey, & Kunzmann, 2003; Quinn, 1980)
5	Application of the landscapes and realistic and long-term strategy	(Healey, 1997a , 1997b; Kunzmann, 2000; Mintzberg, 2000)
6	Concentration on a limited number of the key strategic areas	(Bryson & Roering, 1988; Poister & Streib, 1999)
7	Study of the external processes, forces and available resources	(Poister & Streib, 1999; Quinn 1980)
8	Paying attention to the competitive values	(Healey, 2006a)
9	Recognition of the strong and weak points and opportunities and threats	(Poister & Streib, 1999; Kaufman & Jacobs, 1987; Quinn, 1980; Bryson & Roering 1988)
10	Codification of the strategies in various levels and according to the political, economic, cultural and social structures and based on the comeptitive and variable values	(Sager, 1994; Bryson & Roering, 1988; Quinn, 1980; Poister & Streib, 1999; Healey, 1997a, 1997b; Mintzberg, 2000; Albrechts, 2004; Kunzmann, 2000)
11	Concentration on decision making	(Bryson, 2018)
12	Concentration on the achievement of the goals	(Poister & Streib, 1999)
13	Concentration on intervention and implementation	(Bryson & Roering, 1988; Faludi & Altes, 1994; Bryson, 2018)
14	Concentration on supervision, evaluation and revision	(Mintzberg, 2000; Bryson & Roering, 1988; Albrechts, 2004; Poister & Streib, 1999; Bryson 2018; Faludi & Altes, 1994)
15	Uncertainty	(Quinn, 1980)
16	Identification and gathering of the major shareholders (public and private)	(Bryson & Roering, 1988)
17	Setting the grounds for the pariticpation of the expanded (various levels) and diverse (state, economic and civil society) groups in the planning process	(Albrechts, 2004, 2006)
18	Construction of the new ideas and processes for operationalization of the planning process	(Albrechts, 2004, 2006)
19	Creation and guidance of a better future based on common values	(Albrechts, 2006)

In some of the individuals' minds, this type of look at the streagic planning baseed on the abovementioned properties is very expanded. However, many of the planning theoreticians (Healey, Khakee, Motte, & Needham, 1997; Albrechts, Healey, & Kunzmann, 2003; Alden & Da Rosa, 2001) support this extensive perspective in which streategic planning is not a single idea, process and/or instrument rather it is a collection of concepts, processes and instruments the most suitable of which should be applied according to the conditions so as to achieve the best possible result (Bryson, 2001; Bryson & Roering, 1996). In sum, the goal of streategic planning is not necessarily the production of a strategic program

rather it is contributing to the production of decisions and interventions that shape the activiteis of the organizations and institutions (Friedmann, 2004). In other words, streategies form the institutions, on the one hand, and strategic planning is influenced by the institutions, on the other hand, meaning that it takes various forms according to the set goals and used ground (for example, a plan, a perspective and/ or a practical intervention) (Mintzberg, Ashlstrand, & Lampel, 2005). In explaining the institutions effect on strategic planning, it has to be stated that the strategic planning depends for the achievement of its intended goal on the political, cultural and professional attitudes towards the spatial planning (in terms of

planning content and its processes) as well as on the political determination of the organizations involved in the planning process (Albrechts, 2006; Mintzberg, 2000).

Institution is a collection of base regulations determined by a society for implementation and it can create a coordinated pattern between the individual interventions and be transformed inot a capital of public knowledge in the course of centuries (Moroni, 2010, p. 277; North, 1994; Kasper & Streit, 1998). As a theoretical framework and methodology, institutionalism dates back to long ago in the area of political, economic and social areas. However, the new institutionalism was proposed in 1980s with a novel theoretical and practical approach and different from the prelimianry bases and seeks finding a new interpretation of the human activities in the complex and diverse institutional frameworks. This approach underlines the multilevel nature of the political, social and cultural subjects and looks for figuring out whether they influence resources and structures as well as institutions and policies even with the existence of struggles between actors and change by the effect of the more extensive political concepts or not?

The eextensive subjects related to the new institutionalism can be categorized in three areas of intellectual choice, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996). The sociological institutionalism approach has been taken into consideration from various perspectives in the environmental studies. One of the dimensions recently utilized in urban planning is the participatory and cooperative approach within the format of spatial strategy generation (Forester, 1999; Innes & Booher, 2003; Healey, 1997a). In this regard, Healey suggests the spatial strategy production in his recent works (Healey, 2005; Healy, 2006a & b) as an institutional approach that posits planning in connection with the political, social, cultural and economic changes and characteristics. Based thereon and with an awareness of the problems and flaws of the participatory plannning theory, the struggles were commenced for institutional changes within the format of the production of strategy in making plans for the creation of consensus in the interests, theories and various powers. The institutional approach was developed and expanded in strategic planning with two primary goals: the first approach seeks legitimization of the planning activities and the second approach seeks observing the main institutional processees in relation with the operationalization of the programs and projects (Salet & Faludi, 2000). This approach is occasionally reminded as creation of institutional capacity, as well. Based on the new approach towards institutionaliazation and its application in the urban planning literature, institutionalism dimensions can be counted based on the perspectives of the various theoreticians as explained in table 2.

Table 2. Aspects of the Institutionalism in Contemporary Theories

Source	Theory	Theoretician
(Healey, 1999)	Knoweldge resources, mobilisation capacity, relational resources	Healey (1999)
(Healey, 2006b)	Government culture, special sectors, government procedure	Healey (2006)
(Healey, 2006b)	System of concepts, power structure, distributive structure	Giddens
(Waterhout, 2008)	Ideas, regulations, sources	Waterhout
(Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995)	action Network aspect, institutional concept of the public sector, human resources aspect, organizational aspect, environment of action	Grindle and Hilderbrand
(Khakee, 2002)	Capital, social capital, political capital	Khakee
(Janin Rivolin, 2012)	Instruments, programming system, land, practical experiences, governmental system, structures, discourses	Janin Rivolin
(Afrosai, 2005)	Legal framework, standards and methodology, management of the beneficiaries and communications, human resources, organizational management	Afrosai

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is an applied and developmental research in terms of the objectives; it is a qualitative research in terms of nature and it has been carried out baseed on the grounded theory method. To do the researches wherein theory is created and developed, there are three primary research plans, includiing the systematic solution which is recognized by the names of Strauss and Corbin (1998); the phenomenological or

emergence solution that has been put forth by Glasser (1992) and the structuralist solution that is supported by Charmes (2000). The present study makes use of systematic approach that has been explored in the common works by Strauss and Corbin. Based on this method and unlike the linear research process that gives priority to the theoretical assumptions, the theoretical literature is solely informative and the data and the study field are given priority. In the systematic approach, the theory is shaped in a chain processfrom the interactions between the individuals and the incidents related to a subject (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The reason for using this method is its more coordination with the study subject and the type of its expected result as an elaboration of a paradigmatic model of the relationship between teh country's city building system and strategic structural plan. In the systematic approach, the topics are formed based on the realities (unlike the structuralist solution that underlines the values, beliefs and ideologies of the individuals) and expresses the quality of the relationship between the topics with one another within the format of a diagram (quite contrary to the phenomenological approach that emphasizes on the highest level of abstraction in the theory and distantness from the apradigmatic model).

Although staging cannot be considered for a method many of the procedures of which take place simultaneously and entails a lot of reciprocal motions in the majority of the casees, theoretization is carried out based on Strauss and Corbin's proposed techniques in three priamry stages: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Lee, 2001, p. 47).

3.1. Stage One: Open Coding

In this coding stage, emphasis is made on the docuemntary data, participatory observrfation and interviews for creating the concepts, topics and meta-topics. The selection and analysis of the data is based on theoretical sampling and special sampling decisions have been made within the study process and in a voluntary (not random) manner and concentrated on the generation of a theory. In line with this method of research and in order to respond to the study questioon, open coding has been conducted in two specific and general levels as explained beneath:

3.1.1. Country's Urban Planning System in General Level

Generally, the notable thing in this level is not the national scale of planning but the properties and processes and the common pervasive streams existent in all the levels of the country's urban planning levels. The investigation of the country's urban planning system in general level has been conducted within the format of the studies related to the urban planning

system and the country's urban amangement system and the theoretical perspectives related to Tehran's strategic-structural program (appoved in 2008). The reason for paying attention to the perspectives is the recent development and civil construction projects in Tehran; in regard of the majority of the subjects, the group of the measures taken in the capital city is rapidly used as a pattern in the entire country. The documents used in this section incorporate three main sets: the first set is comprised of the reports published by ISNA that include the round-table for the investigation of Iran's city building system not the workshop of criticizing the comprehensive plan of tehran and the discussions in an article written by Tehran's institution of studies regarding the comprehensive plan. The second set includes the articles and the interviews published in ten special issuances of the landscape journal regarding the institution of studies and urban planning of Tehran and the third set is the report of Tehran's comprehensive plan evaluation by Paris City Building atelier. Although no precise elaboration of the structural-strategic programs was made at least in the first decade of the approach's introduction, some of the few elaborated key concepts in this regard can be extrated from the country's general planning system with an emphasis on the temporal conditions, related works (Mashhoodi, 1996; Ministry of Housing & Urabn Development, 1999; Majedi, 2010, 2012; Ahmadian, 2003; Moradi Masihi, 2005; Ministry of Housing & Urban development, 2006) and practical measures (enacted at 02/01/2008 by the Supreme Council of Iran's architecture and city building under the title of the necessity of preparing comprehensive urban plans with an approach to the strategic structure and development and civil construction plan in Tehran and Mashhad).

The result of open coding in general level: in a general scale after the interaction with the theoretical literature of the study and, especially, the dimensions of the institutionalism in planning, three meta-topics were elaborated for the special sectors, government process and governance culture and, in total, 146 concepts and 42 topics were identified. Furthermore, in this section, the exogenous stimulants were introduced within the format of three topics, namely global position, new forms of multilevel global governments and new theories of planning.

3.1.2. Country's City Building System in Special Level (the Development and Civil Construction Plan of Mashhad)

Mashhad is the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Iranian people. Two important factors, to wit the establishment of the holy city of Mashhad in one of the oldest centers of human civilization formation, i.e. Khorsan, and the existence of the holy Shrine of

Imam Reza (PBUH), have provided the city with a particular role and position in Iran. Accommodating a population of about 3372660 individuals in 2016 and reaching in area to about 30000 hectares, Mashhad is the country's second largest city of the country. Many reasons can be enumerated for selecting the special ground of the study. One of these reasons is the properties of the development and civil reconstruction of the city of Mashhad. The project was assigned in the mid-2008 by the housing and city-building organization to the institution of studies, development planning and civil construction of Mashhad (as an inter-sector and local institution between the city's Islamic council, municipality and the ministry of housing and city building) and its plan was prepared based on a strategic-structural perspective for 2027 horizon.

The process of preparing the new comprhensive plan for Mashhad based on a strategic-structural approach included eight stages: offering of a perspective, investigation and analysis and futurism, codification of goals, codification of strategies, evaluation and selection of the optimal scenario, codification of the strategic plan, the method and organization of the implementation and supervision and revision that eventually led to the development pattern and zoning map that was the product of the conversation in numerous expert and managerial sessions in provincial level. But, based on the instructions of article 24 on the procedures of investigating and enacting the prepared plans, passed in 01/12/2008 by the supreme council of the country's architecture and city building , and the enactment for making more exact the definitions and concepts of urban land use and determination of its per capita in 2010, the final documents of the comprehensive plan of Mashhad were confirmed in February, 2014, to be proposed in the sessions by the supreme council of country's architecture and city building organization following which they were subjected to extensive changes and they were finally approved within the format of three proposed documents, i.e. criteria and regulations, land use map and network of passageways and the map of the limits and arenas. The advisor preparing the comprehensive plan for Mashhad has also prepared the whole city's plan, the urban districts' plans, the contextual plan of Khorasan; he has also authored two books, named "correction of the urban development management system with a strategic approach" and "strategic planning, recent global experiences". The participation of the present study's author in the process of supervision on the preparation of the plan in the studies and planning institution set the ground for performing research in a real environment and by the use of participatory observation instrument. The existence of various forms of power, including Astan-e-Ghods-e-Razavi in Mashhad as one of the effective organs in urban management, has provided the city

with a special ground of institutionalism in this city due to its extensive and diverse role in the various social, economic, cultural, service, civil construction and financial sectors. All of these considerations have transformed the study's case study into a perfect specimen in terms of the feasibility of doing research by the researchers and the posibility of using the results in a broader sense.

In open coding of the special level, besides the study of the documents and reports, participatory observation and regular interview have also been applied. The documentary studies include the explication of the minutes of the plan's investigation and enactment. Participatory observation was carried out within the fromat of the researcher's presence in the eight-year process of the preparation, investigation and enactment of Mashhad's development and civil construction plan as the head of the comprehensive plan's group in the institution of the studies and planning. The interview was used as an instrument after substantial coding of the documentary data in macro- and micro-levels. In this regard, snow-ball has been the sampling method and the study sample volume was set through theoretical saturation; to do so, 24 interviews were conducted.

The result of open codinng in special level: determination of the meta-topics in special level of the country's city-building system according to the concept of institutionalism in the theoretical literature in three areas, anmely knowledge sources (ideas and concepts), communication resources and mobilization of the resources (executive mechanism). If the knowledge resources are realized as composed of two subjects, i.e. identification of the issues and positing of the subject and the offering of a solution, and if the communication resources are realized as being dependent on the management process and the assembling of the resources are considered as being connected with the method of implementing the urban development plans; the concepts identified in this section constitute the country's planning process from statement of the problem to implementation . In regard of the concepts related to the planning theory, it has to be pointed out that the planning method has been introduced herein as an institutional knowledge and as an issue the general function and capacity of which are changed in the course of time. This issue posits the change in the planning performance in the course of evolution in the social norms as the internal stimulant and global norms as the external stimulant.

3.2. Stage Two: Axial Coding

In order to analyze the frameworks of the country's city building system and considering the structural-strategic planning theory, the obtained topics were subjected to axial coding and one of the topics obtained from open coding was identified as the axial topic.

In this regard, the institutionalism was introduced in the strategic-structural planning theory as the axial topic due to the numerosity of the emphases thereon in the interviews and the study of the documents. The precondition for the selection of the axial topic was its repetitive emergence in the cases, the logical and robust relationship with the other topics and its abstract nature as proposed in theories by Strauss (1987) for the preservation of the usability in the other substantive areas. In this sense, considering the quality of formation and change and operationalization of the spatial policies, institutionalism seeks regulating the relationship between the spatial elements and society, economy and politics. This is an approach that puts forth planning in relation to the political, social, cultural and economic changes and properties. This had been focused and emphasized in the data collected based on various methods.

The other condition for the selection of the axial topic is that it has to be able to explicate the main point drawn on the data to the same extent it is capable of explaining the change; it means that the elaboration made by the axial topic should be still preserving its strength even with the change in the conditions (Lee, 2001). In the intended paradigmatic model, the institutional designing is the quintessence of the planning. The goal of institutionalism in this regard is finding the creative methods for matching with the changes through breaking the institutional paths and structural forces. This approach seeks elucidation of the way movement is made from governance (state) towards ruling (government) and demands distribution of the concentrated power of the central governemnt to the lower levels. This important goal is accomplished in the local governments' levels in a horizontal form and through creation of cooperation between the organizations and interested groups based on the scales of knowledge sources, communication sources and mobilization of the resources (Healey, 1999). The urban governance proceess is subsequently transformed from the institutions organized about market (economic activities' logics), hierarchy (effective rationale in the establishment of the welfare government in 20th century) and/or networks (the logic of creating social relations and webs) as well as from a space-time subject to an institution-oriented action that re-regulates the relationships between the society, economu, politics and spatial elements (Healey, 1997a, p. 300).

3.3. Third Stage: Use of Selective Coding and Theory Creation

Selective coding relates the axial topic to other topics in a systematic way and clarifies the relationships within the framework of a theoretical narration. In elucidating the method of applying structural-strategic planning within the framework of the country's city-

building system, two meta-topics, i.e. governance and special sectors, along with the series of their connected topics were identified as the influential causal conditions. In this model, the causal conditions include the topics that influence the formation of the axial topic. In case of knowing the strategies as actions or certain interactions resulting from the axial phenomenon, the strategies for the actualization of the axial topic in this paradigmatic model would be the knoweldge sources, communication sources and the ability of assembling the resources. As it was mentioned before, the institutionalism in planning seeks distribution of the central government's concentrated power to the lower levels. This is the issue done in the local governments' levels in a horizontal manner and via creating cooperation between the interested organizations and groups based on the scales like knoweldge, communication and resource mobilization. Based thereupon, following the selection of institutionalism in the structural-strategic planning as the axial topic, the strategies of actualizing this axial topic have been introduced based on these three levels (knowledge scales, communications and assembly of the resources). It is with the introducing of the grounds as the special conditions influencing the strategies that the planning culture is introduced as a background topic. Planning culture elucidates the properties of the country's city-building system wherein no hasty changes can be brought about and can be investigated amongst the background institutions. These conditions can influence the way in which the identified strategies are emerged according to the micro-cultures existing in a region and the spatial-temporal effects. The conditions intervening in the proposed paradigm are the geneal background codnitions influencing the strategies. These would be influencing the approaches and methods of urban planning in the country in Iran's planning system as exogenous stimulants under the current status of the global system.

From the perspective of the present study and according to the field studies and library researches' findings, in case of exerting institutionalism in the planning theory, the other properties introduced for the good planning action would be attained as outcomes of the abovementioned paradigmatic model in Iran's city-building system disregarding their being strategic or participatory in the global approaches and/or featuring a strategic structure and/or being comprehensive. Based on the paradigmatic model in the grounded theory development process and performing axial coding and selection of the pillars of the analytical model of the country's city-building system in relation to the application of the theory, the structural-strategic programs are elaborated as expliacted in figure 1.
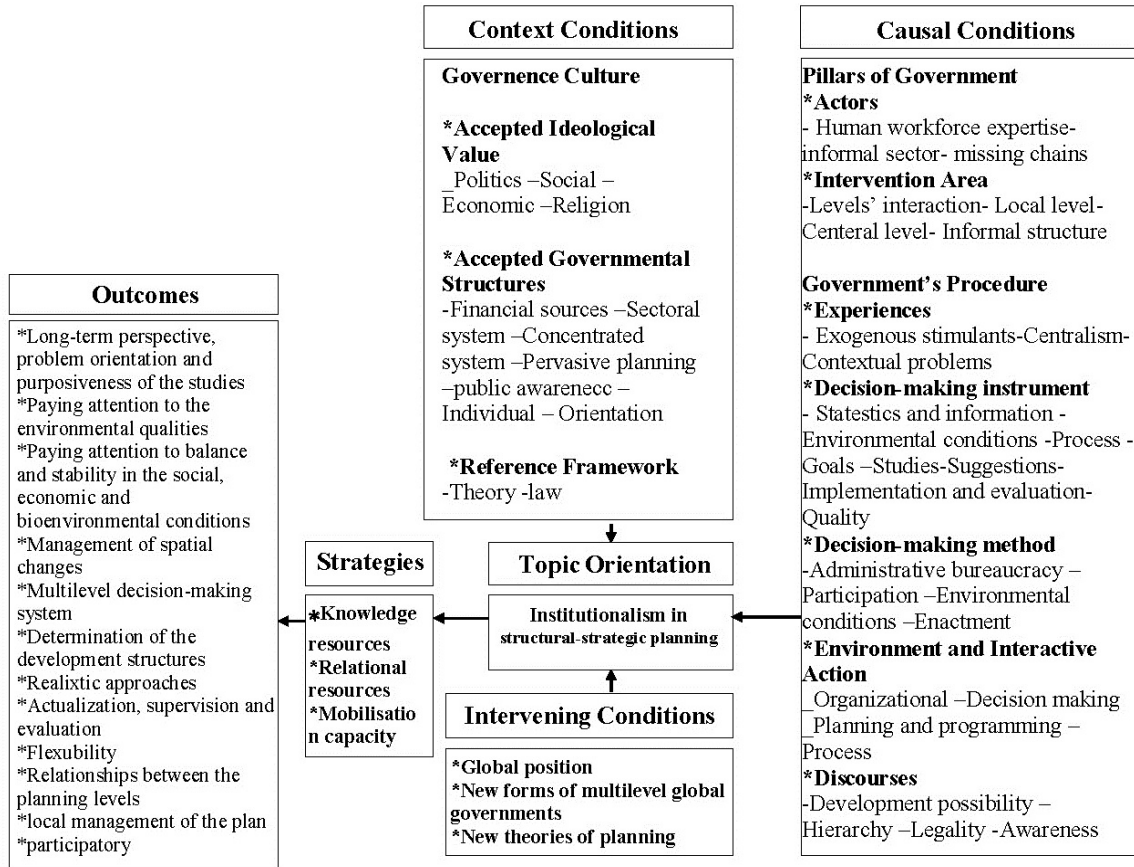
Fig. 1. Axial Coding Based on the Paradigmatic Model and Offering the Study Model

4. THEORY VALIDATION

In the end, it is important to make it clear whether the performed theoretical elaboration is meaningful and sensible to the participants or not and is it an accurate translation of the events and their sequences or not?

In grounded theory, validation is an active part of the study process and it is implemented within the format of a series of strategies (Creswell, 2002). The explication of the strategies and the amount and method of applying them in the present study have been given in table 3.

Table 3. Starategies for Increasing the Internal Validity in the Grounded Theory Researches

Strategy	Explication of the strategy	Amount and form of applying strategy in this study
Numerosity of method and resources of data colelction	Use of the various methods and different data in the information gathering stage	- Participatory observation in the preparation of the development plan and civil construction in Mashhad using a structural-strategic approach. - Investigation of the studies and docuemnts of Tehran's development and civil construction plans using a structural-strategic approach. - Interviews with the individuals involved in the process of preparing, investigating and enacting of the development and civil construction plans. - Investigation of the studies and articles related to the investigation of the country's city-building system and development plans
Confirmation of the participants	Acceptability by the interviewees	The findings of this research have been offered to the interviewees and their ideas have been implemented
The reseaercher's engagement in the phenomenon	Long presence and observation in the study field or repetitive observation of a phenomenon	The researcher of the present dissertation has been the corresponding author and head of comprehensive plan group in Mashhad's institution of development and civil construction studies and planning.

Study's participatory nature	Participation and cooperation by some of the participants in the study process	The present study has been compiled under the supervision of an expert in the area of structural-strategic plan's theory
Researcher's presumptions	Clarity of the assumptions, attitudes and the theoretical orientations of the researcher	In the beginning of the article, the attitudes and orientations of this research have been explicated.

5. CONCLUTION

Urban, regional and spatial planning is a vast arena of the theories and approaches that underwent considerable progresses during 20th and 21st centuries. The planning method of each country and region of the world has been differently devised under the influence of the complicated vertical and horizontal processes and interactions addressing the social life. In the contemporary world, theories are truths based on the social constructs and can be considered as discourses granting meaning to the society in certain temporal spans. These are discourses formed based on the experiences and paving the way for change in the macro-structures. Considering the planning theory as a discourse and part of the society, this article was carried out with the objective of analyzing the quality of the relationship between structural-strategic planning and the frameworks of the country's city-building system for enhancing the possibility of its application. The identification of the quality of the aspects in the country's city-building system and quiddity of the structural-strategic program was carried out within the format of the grounded theory method and in an interaction between the study's theoretical literature and study environment. In line with this and in order to better underrstand the conditions, the country's city-building system was introduced in two general and special levels and, considering the properties of Mashhad, it was examined as the special level of the country's city-building system. With an emphasis on the change in the strategic and participatory planning literature based on the institutionalism concept in the contemporary theories and accepting the planning as an evolving discourse, the relationship between the frameworks of Iran's city-building system and structural-strategic program was offered within the format of a paradigmatic model of the grounded theory. In this regard, the institutionalism would be the axial topic in the structural-strategic program and it underlines the quality and the necessity of the relationship between the planning theory and the properties of the environmental ground. The actualization of the institutionalism in this approach towards planning is influenced by the causal conditions that have been categorized within the format of two meta-topics, i.e. government processes and special sectors, in the country's city-building system. The strategies of actualizing the institutionalism, as well, have been adopted according to the identification of the study's special environment (Mashhad) and with

awareness of the concept of institutional capacity-making in local levels, communication resources, knowledge resources and resource assembly. These strategies are used according to the governance culture (as the background conditions) and the global theories and approaches (as the intervening conditions) and, eventually, the properties of the structural-strategic program would emerge with the centrality of institutionalism under the influence of the causal conditions and as the product of the strategies recrystalized based on the governance culture and the global changes. Resultantly, planning is elucidated as an institutional knowledge and the issue the gneral capacity and function of which is renewed in the course of time and, in other words, as a general discourse. This issue proposes the change in the planning function under the effect of evolution in the social norms as the internal incentives and global norms as the external stimulants. Surely, the change and revision in the planning approach is an endless process in this regard in such a way that new properties of the structural-strategic program would be recrystalized with the emergence of the new causes in the general elvel of the planning system and application of the new strategies in the special level thereof. Based thereon, it is suggested that required researches should be carried out in relation to the evaluation of the experiences in using the structural-strategic pattern in accordance with the causal topics (special sectors and governance processes) for the creation of the proper grounds parallel to bringing about change in the frameworks of the expressed model. In addition, the quality of the relationship between the structural-strategic planning and the properties of the governance culture (as the background condition) should be investigated and, eventually, suggestions can be offered within the format of ideas and concepts, communication sources and executive mechanisms (as strategies). After finishing this path, a set of studies can be performed for elaborating the institutionalized pattern of each of the properties related to contemporary planning theory (outcomes) in the structural-strategic planning.

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