

# Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation of Urban Design Plans; The Case of Shohada Square, Mashhad, Iran

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## ABSTRACT

The quality of the implementation of urban design in developing countries usually faces financial, technical, political, and cultural challenges. Despite the important role of urban design in enhancing the quality of urban development in Iran, the implementation of urban design projects is usually evaluated using quantitative methods, and the appropriate process required for reaching the product, contextual requirement, goals, and issues related to the quality of implementation, are neglected. So, with the emphasis on the need to replace qualitative-normative criteria with the quantitative-physical ones, the present study aims to propose a model of the factors affecting the quality of the implementation of urban design projects and understand how they interact by examining the Shohada Square project in Mashhad (the second largest Iranian city) as the case study. The reason for the selection of this project is that it is one of the most important urban design plans in the last decade. To this end, after reviewing the literature, the factors affecting the quality of the implementation of urban design projects are extracted and the relevant challenges are identified using directed content analysis and library study. Next, they are examined in the case study through observations, and semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, concepts associated with the quality of the implementation of urban design projects can be modeled in terms of the hierarchical dimensions of the background and context, the actors, and the design approach. The results indicate that the factors affecting the quality of the implementation of urban design projects are including attention to economic and financial mechanisms, political-legal context quality, identification of effective institutions and groups, the motivations of actors, elimination of conflicts by guiding the decision-making environment, application of the process approach and the hierarchy of design documents.

**Keywords:** Urban Design, Quality of Implementation, Shohada Square, Mashhad, Qualitative Components.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reviewing the urban design literature and experts' viewpoints indicates that finding an answer to the question "why have the proposed projects not been realized?" and providing solutions to this problem have always been one of the main concerns of urban planners and managers. According to Lu (1982), implementation is a basic skill that helps urban designers to realize their designs and proposals, obtain knowledge of legal instruments, administrative entities, financing methods, and decision-making processes in the society under intervention, and ultimately to learn how to establish close relationships with social leaders to attract their political support for implementing their designs (Golkar 2011, p. 211). Pakzad (2006, p. 177) refers to the lack of implementation as the most serious problem in all urban development plans and argues that the main reasons for this include the lack of financial and administrative facilities, lack of coordination among responsible organizations, contradiction with parallel higher-level plans, lack of legislative/executive conditions, lack of macro-level managerial policies, and prompt/short-term decisions on the part of authorities.

Mashhad, due to the Imam Reza (AS) Shrine, is a religious tourist destination that annually attracts about 30 million Muslims from both Iran and other countries. Due to the inefficiency of processes governing urban development and urban design plans as its ensuing projects, profit-making large-scale urban projects, which are sometimes irrelevant to their context, have become a serious problem.

The main reason for the selection of the Shohada Square as the case study is its location in Mashhad city, a city with specific attractions for investment and in which political and ideological considerations greatly play a key role in guiding urban development. Moreover, the 35-ha Shohada Square project has been claimed to be developed with an urban design approach while it has been not qualitatively implemented despite the physical implementation of its all parts, and it is facing different challenges in fulfilling its primary goals. In this project, instead of an urban design projects, the executors and stakeholders have intentionally or unintentionally applied a large-scale architecture approach, making the project be a model for other similar projects in other cities in Iran, for example, the Shahid Beheshti Square in Tabriz and Imam Ali Square in Isfahan. So far, no study has been carried out on the approach abovementioned and the challenges of implementing the Shohada Square project, which are common in many other national urban design projects.

So, the present study aims to investigate factors affecting the quality of implementation of urban design plans based on the analysis of Shohada Square, Mashhad. To this end, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What is the significant role of implementation in urban development plans and what approaches have been adopted to address this issue?
2. What are the theoretically proposed factors affecting the implementation of urban design projects?
3. How is the quality of implementation of Shohada Square project as one of the large-scale urban design projects evaluated according to the factors proposed in the literature?
4. How can a primary model of factors affecting the implementation of urban design plans be proposed based upon the components extracted from literature review and achievements and challenges of the case study?

## 2. METHOD

In this study, directed content analysis was used to trace the notion of implementation in the theoretical literature on urban design. A systematic classification process was followed. First, the variables were defined and then an initial coding was set to develop a set of categories. Next, the categories were thematically divided into main clusters (Iman & Noushadi, 2011; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Thus, the relevant papers were analyzed to form a general structure for the framework. All the texts were carefully studied so that the codes could be extracted from the work of more than one author (Bengtsson, 2016). In doing so, the propositions containing important concepts related to the topic were specified as codes and categorized according to the relationships among them.

To mitigate the effects of the limitations of this methods, the initial categories halfway were revised through the work. Then, the revised codes and categories were compared to the initial ones and the most appropriate ones were selected after discussion and agreement (Mayring, 2004).

In the next step, the case of Shohada Square in Mashhad was assessed using the framework. Firstly, field observations were used to describe the project and the changes it had brought about. In the next step, some of the documents and proposals belonging to the project including the final report of the TARHE VIJHE, the economic feasibility study of the Shohada Square project (1st and 2nd editions) (2001), the physical plan document (2003), the revised Shohada Square plan document, and the brief report of the revised items in the plan (2009) were studied. Due to the complexity of the issue and the large number of people involved, it was decided to interview with the executive managers involved in the project. In the present study, it was attempted to minimize incorrect information such as partial information, pretentious or exaggerated information using techniques such as triangulation (Willis & Kilakanta, 2007, p. 196) and validation/revision (Seale, 1999, p. 73).

Given the centralized administrative/executive struc-

ture of management in the Iranian government, three of five executive managers of the project (from 2008 to 2019) were selected to be interviewed to explore their shared experiences concerning the factors affecting the implementation of the project. In addition to having the power to influence the decisions, these managers had sufficient information about the details of the project. The first manager was selected due to his thorough knowledge of the reasons behind the initiation of the project as well as the main limitations at the outset and his influence on the preliminary proposals. During the tenure of the third manager of the project, the largest quantitative and qualitative progress was achieved. Finally, interviewing the current manager is justified by the fact that he is standing in the face of the issues caused during the past decade and observes the results of previous decisions and orientations. The remaining two managers were put aside due to their short tenure, unavailability, and avoidance of interview. The three managers were interviewed in two separate steps, i.e. interview guide approach and standardized deep and semi-structured interview. In this way, the interviewees could carefully decide how to best discuss the implementation of Shohada Square project (Patton, 1987, pp. 116-117; Patton, 2003, p. 343). In the next step, their mentioned factors were compared with the list of factors in our framework and the managers were informed about the comparison results in a written form. In the standardized deep and semi-structured interview, they discussed the status of the project in terms of each extracted category. It was tried to increase the reliability of the analysis of the interview data by correctly coding and decreasing the ambiguity of information. Finally, all of the above-mentioned results were interpreted and discussed in order to answer the research questions.

### 3. CONCEPT OF IMPLEMENTATION

As with the role of implementation, it can be said that the success of any plan is measured according to the extent to which it is implemented as well as its consequences (Linovski & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014, p. 67). Some scholars degrade the concept of implementation and consider it synonymous with realization (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). Another group of scholars have accentuated how the goals and policies of projects are realized (Barrett & Fudge, 1981). Some researchers have adopted a linear and limited approach to implementation. In such an approach, a policy, a project, or a plan is implemented linearly in consecutive steps. Due to the limited nature of linearity, this approach does not allow for changing certain parts of the process and it should be considered a classic model of realization. Implementation has also been viewed as a cycle, that, due to its more complex nature than a linear process, indicates a more comprehensive relationship between policy-making,

planning, design, and execution (Alexander, 1986, p. 107).

In other studies, the issue of implementation has been addressed using a bottom-up or top-down approaches. According to some scholars, implementation is realized with a reliable decision made by higher-level authorities at the outset and it can be controlled with a top-down approach. In contrast, some others know implementation dependent on bottom-up approaches and believe that it occurs due to the effects of lower-level decisions on policy-making. According to them, the effects of this approach are more useful because of its emphasis on local needs and the use of decentralized views (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

In developing countries, implementation is more based on assumptions than on experiments while the issue of implementation in developing countries is quite different (de Oliveira, 2015, p. 423). Discussions on implementation in developing countries is based on a limited number of cases because their political, social, economic, and cultural conditions is highly diverse. Moreover, they are affected by financial, technical, political, and cultural limitations, justifying the application of a different approach to the issue in them (Migdal, 1988).

#### 3.1. Review of Theories

Investigating the views of various thinkers on the concept of implementation can be effective in identifying the implementation mechanisms of urban design plans or projects. For this purpose, the opinions of a number of theorists, whose works have influenced the literature on urban development in Iran, have been examined. This review is indicative of a number of common points among these theories.

Pakzad (2006, pp. 166-167) points out to the role of related groups and institutions in the financial, legal, and social aspects of plans as well as how this role affects supervision on the project execution and management and possible modifications to the plan in the face of certain necessities.

The first step to make urban design projects implementable is the identification of effective groups and institutions. Entities involved in the process of construction should be first specified (Guy & Henneberry, 2000). According to Carmona (2014), identifying the forces and their power relations is indeed a lens in the urban design process. These forces include investors and participants (Cowan, 2002), designers, planners, urban managers, and effective authorities (Madanipour, 2007).

Furthermore, the motivations and aims of these actors should be determined. In his book *Urban Transformations: Power, People, and Urban Design*, Bentley (1999) attempts to coin some terms by conceptualizations concerning the balance of different development factors such as the relationship between stakeholders and designers. He concludes that those urban design-

ers with a better knowledge of the interests of the stakeholders involved in the project are more successful. This balance can be established by public surveys and consultations through supportive meetings with social groups as well as participatory design with the aim of understanding public values (Cowan, 2002; Carmona, 2014; Mc Glynn & Murrain, 1994).

Obtaining the consent of developers before the implementation, provision of purposeful education for engaging communities, and enhancing the ideals of developers, which are ways to shape the decision-making environment (Carmona, 2016), can contribute to the balance between different, and sometimes contradictory, goals (Carmona, 2014; Lynch, 1984). At this stage, therefore, the designer acts as a mediator to select from among different existing values (Mc Glynn & Murrain, 1994). Long-term cooperation among developers and stakeholders, which is an important step in implementation according to Frey (2003), can be achieved through consensus over different issues.

Awareness of the process of development, the power structure among influential actors, and the status of the urban designer in this structure are major factors affecting the output of the process (Britain, 2000; Carmona, 2014; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994; Lynch, 1984; Guy & Henneberry, 2000).

Carmona discusses urban governance from both formal and informal perspectives and classifies the mechanisms involved in both perspectives based on the amount of interaction among the factors. Regarding formal factors, he refers to the system of official urban design documents, financial incentives for investors, and control over development before implementation (Carmona, 2016). Therefore, the political-economic context of space is effective in the implementation of projects (Carmona, 2014) and, in long-term strategic plans, implementation is only possible through political support (Frey, 2003).

The identification of financial mechanisms has also been considered another major factor of implementation by urban designers so that, in many projects, it is the cost-benefit balance that determines the success of implementation (Carmona, 2005; 2007). Thus, feasibility study at the initial phase of the project, evaluation of the conditions of investment and participation (Cowan, 2002), and legal attraction of direct and indirect investment to finance projects (Carmona 2014; 2016) can contribute to the quality of implementation. In addition to all of the above, it is also necessary to adopt a process-oriented approach to projects and take into account procedural considerations (Punter & Carmona, 1997; Carmona, 2014; Lang, 2017).

This view will result in higher flexibility of plans in addition to observing their underlying policies (Frey, 2004; Barnett, 2017). Moreover, it will allow for foresight in decision-making in the face of changing conditions (By Design, 2000), the assessment of alternatives through defining indicators, and con-

trolling design by monitoring the process of execution (Lynch, 1984; Carmona, 2016). A process-oriented view should be held not only within projects but also in the hierarchy of official documents. In other words, any successful implementation requires attention to the hierarchical and interconnected nature of documents (Cowan, 2002; Carmona, 2014) as well as to long-term strategic plans (Frey-2003).

### 3.2. Effective Factors on the Quality of Implementation of Urban Design Plans

As the above review indicates, there is a wide range of concepts in the field of implementation. Of course, some may overlap and some may affect others. According to what is discussed in the "Method" section, Table 1 lists the concepts extracted from content analysis of the literature. To provide a more well-formed classification, the categories are divided into three main clusters, i.e. Design approach, Actors, and Context. Since known scientists' theories were discussed and the factors were methodologically extracted, the developed framework is acceptable for assessing the quality of implementation of Shohada Square project. Interpreting the achievements and challenges of the Shohada Square project will help to understand how the identified factors interact.

**Table 1. Hierarchical Relationship of Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation Based on the Content Analysis of Theoretical Literature**

Core Category	Content Clustering of Categories	Categories	Open Codes (Primary Factors)
Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation	Related to Actors	O1. Identifying effective groups and institutions	R1. Identifying developer, including owners, investors and policy-makers (Carmona 2004; 2007 ) R2. Identifying active organizations in construction process (Guy & Henneberry, 2000) R3. Identifying the investors and the level of participation (Cowan, 2002) R4. Understanding relationship between designers, planners, and effective decision-making powers(Madanipour, 2007)
	Related to Actors	O1. considering the motivations of the actors	R1. Understanding the interests of designers, developers, and investors (Bentley,1999) R2. Surveying and consulting (Cowan, 2002) R3. Understanding and balancing the values (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994) R4. Supporting meeting of social groups and collaborative design (Carmona, 2014)
	Related to Actors	O1. Resolving conflicts by guiding the decision-making environment	R1. Resolving conflicts of interests, objectives and motivations (Bentley, 1999) R2. Incentivizing developers in primary steps before execution (Carmona, 2016) R3. Purposive education for engaging communities (Carmona, 2016) R4. Upgrading the level of the aspirations of developers and shaping the decision-making environment (Carmona, 2016) R5. Eliminating cultural conflicts (Lang, 2017) R6. Mediating and selecting between different values (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994) R7. Resolving conflicts among influential and beneficial stakeholders (Punter & Carmona, 1997) R8. Long-term cooperation among stakeholders (Ferry, 2003) R9. Guiding and coordinating different interests (Carmona, 2014)
	Related to Background And Context	O1. Political-legal context qualit	R1. The role of urban development management system in achieving efficiency criteria (Lynch, 1984) R2. Identifying the conditions of urban management system (Lynch, 1984) R3. Identifying the conditions under which decisions are made (Britain, 2000) R4. Managing the implementation of Well-drafted policies (Britain, 2000) R5. Verification of the aspirations and concerns in the context (Carmona, 2016) R6. The elected officials' support of the people and members of the community (Southworth, 1989) R7. Awareness of the development process (Carmona, 2005; 2007) R8. Determining the position of the urban designer in the power structure (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994) R9. Identifying the development process (Guy & Henneberry, 2000) R10. Political support of long-term strategic plans (Ferry, 2003) R11. The role of political context and power in place shaping (Carmona, 2014) R12. Attention to contemporary political context or political economy (Carmona, 2014) R13. Considering political contexts shaping urban design (Barnett, 2017)
	Related to Design Approach	O5. Realization of the process approach	R1. Considering the procedural dimensions of the project (Lang, 1994) R2. Assessment, design, selection, implementation and evaluation (Lang, 1994) R3. Time Coordinated Managment (Southworth, 1989) R4. Procedural considerations of urban design (Punter& Carmona, 1997) R5. Flexibility while maintaining the main policy (Ferry, 2003) R6. Considering design a continuous process (Carmona, 2014) R7. Flexible codes (Barnett, 2017) R8. Monitoring the process of preparation and implementation (Lynch, 1984) R9. Providential decision making regarding the changing circumstances (Britain, 2000) R10. Evaluating the suggestions through defining common indicators and design control (Carmona, 2016)

Core Category	Content Clustering of Categories	Categories	Open Codes (Primary Factors)
Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation	Related to Design Approach	O1. Hierarchy of document	R1. Adapting the project to strategic documents (Cowan, 2002) R2. The need for the use of the design control system and urban design documents (Carmona, 2016) R3. Design control (Punter & Carmona, 1997) R4. The Need for a strategic plan and long time for implementation (Ferry, 2003)
	Related to Background And Context	O1. The quality of economic and financial mechanisms	R1. Evaluating investment and partnership conditions (Cowan, 2002) R2. Economic feasibility (Cowan, 2002) R3. Direct grants or tax incentives that fill a gap in funding (Carmona, 2016) R4. Cost - benefit balancing (Carmona, 2005; 2007) R5. Providing financial resources for urban development (Guy & Henneberry, 2000) R6. Financial participation of owners and inhabitants (Carmona, 2014)

#### 4. INTRODUCTION OF SHOHADA SQUARE PLAN IN MASHHAD

Shohada Square, which is the case of our study, is 1 Km away from the Imam Reza Shrine. With a history of 70 years, Shohada Square was built in the Pahlavi I era. It was constructed as the results of the decisions made on street construction in that era and its establishment coincided with the prevalence of street construction in different cities with the aim of making the cities modern. The square was constructed to meet new needs, make Mashhad a modern city, and show the power of Reza Shah, as the first person of the

country (Pakza, 2006, pp. 233-235).

Around the square, buildings with emerging uses such as fire station and municipality were formed. The establishment of these buildings, along with the main axes related to it, which were the vital and efficient parts of the city with administrative and recreational functions, transformed the complex to a symbol of a non-traditional urban space and made it the most important urban center after the Imam Reza shrine. The Shohada Square, before the Iranian Revolution, was a place for gathering people, holding political meetings, rituals, and royal celebrations.

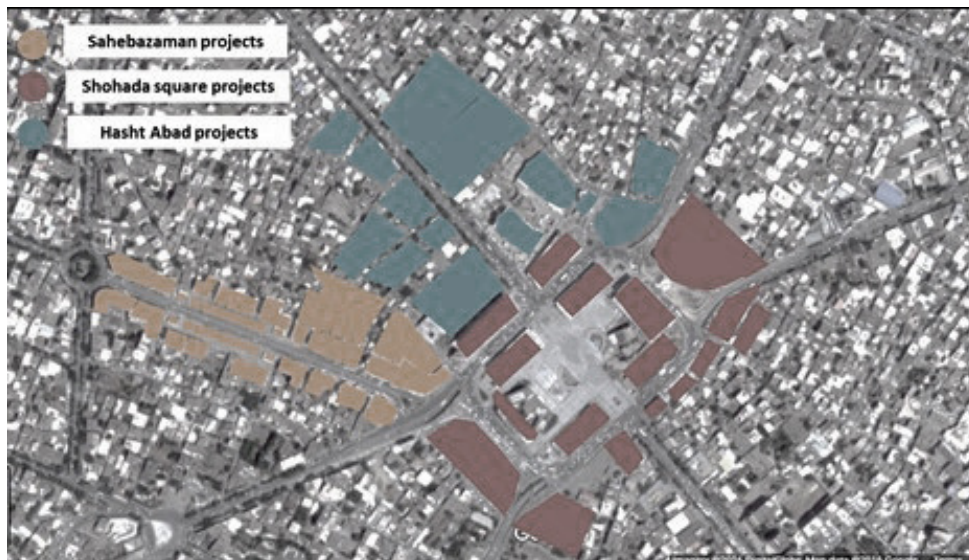


Fig. 2. Shohada Square Location

In 2000, due to the disorder and deterioration in old and historical fabrics, in general, and the shortcomings in the surroundings of the Shrine and the center of Mashhad City, in particular, the Shohada Square

as one of the crucial points in Mashhad, and the necessity of transforming it to a civil space, along with solving its mobility-related issues (both for pedestrians and vehicles), had been emphasized. In the mean-

while, two other projects, i.e. Hashtabad Park and Saheb-al-Zaman Axis, had been proposed to be initiated in close proximity to the Shohada Square. In 2002, the mutual effects of these projects and the necessity of establishing planning and physical-spatial connection among them resulted in the development of an integrated plan for which Rah-Shahr Consultants Co. became responsible.

The project has an area of 34.7 hectares, and consists of: 1) the special project of Shohada Square; 2) the urban complex of Hashtabad; and 3) the special project of Saheb-al-Zaman Street.

In 2004, after presenting the general plans of the three zones, a national contest was held for the detailed design of the field of Shohada Square.

In 2008, six years after the beginning of the project, it was observed that the plan needed to be revised because of the changing physical and economic conditions. The implementation of the project has been pursued since 2009.

## 5. THE QUALITY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SHOHADA SQUARE PROJECT

Challenges of the quality implementation of Shohada Square plan, are explained by examining the effective components of implementation presented in Table 1 and the relevant documents recorded in the period from 2004 to 2015. Effective factors in renovating the area are recognized according to existing pieces of evidences and documents, the official plan presented in 2005 by Tash consulting engineers, its revised version in 2011 by Bavand consulting engineers., and targeted interviews as discussed in the "methodology" section.

To observe research ethics and respect the interviewees' lack of consent for revealing their identity, the interviews are sorted in numbers. It was tried to keep the prejudice to a minimum level and base the analysis on the connections among the interview data, inference from documents and empirical evidence, and theoretical findings from the literature.

### O1. Identifying Effective Groups and Institutions

In the case study, owners, investors, political, administrative, and religious institutions, the citizens of Mashhad and pilgrims and also designers, planners, and executive agents involve in the implementation and execution of the project (Interviews No.1 and 3). The owners have been not surveyed on the necessity of the plan and how it is implemented. They have only been effective in assigning property and providing land for the plan (Saeidi Rezvani and Nourian, 2009, 87), while according to Carmona's (2007) classification, this group encompasses all effective formal and informal mechanisms that should be involved in the implementation process. Compared to Arnstein's participation ladder (1969), participation is within the degree of rated partnership. The political context of Mashhad (due to its religiosity), which is influ-

enced by the opinions of scholars, religious leaders, and management of the Astan-e-Qods, has not been subject to a comprehensive survey (Interviews No.1 and 2). Due to the plurality of the endowed properties and mosques in the area, relevant organizations, i.e. endowment organization and the board of trustees of the mosques, are influential but they had been not surveyed before the presentation of the plan.

As Henneberry and Guy (2000) point out, identifying organizations involved in the construction process can be effective in the implementation of the plan. During the preparation of the revision plan, more than 13 influential institutions in investment, including a significant number of financial and credit institutions (such as banks, social security organization, etc.) and active investors in the construction industry, have been surveyed. The review of the plan shows that despite this dramatic negotiation, its outcome has not been effective in offering suggestions and the degree of participation of these institutions was not clear (Saeidi Rezvani and Nourian, 2009, pp. 87-90). Eventually, the plan was approved by the municipality authorities and the investors of some projects were identified during negotiations with the executive manager in order to implement the proposals.

Despite surveying a number of decision makers in the field of urbanism in Mashhad - such as Ministry of Roads & Urban Development, Construction Engineering Organization, etc., their opinions had no significant impact on the final plan (Interview No.1).

### O2. Considering the Motivations of the Actors

Identifying the goals and motivations of decision-making actors and making them consistent with development goals can lead to the implementation of the plan (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994). The Shohada Square reconstruction plan developed in 2001 aimed to eliminate traffic congestion and environmental pollution, reorganize incompatible uses, etc. (Bavand Consulting Engineers, 2003, p. 21). Finally, Article-5 committee introduced "the creation of an urban space based on people's memories" as the main goal (Tajir Consulting Engineers, 2015, p. 6).

Firstly, identifying the influential factors and then, understanding their needs and motivations will help designers to provide more executive suggestions that can eventually address some of the users' needs. The residents had not been properly involved in the plan at the beginning of the plan and their comments, suggestions, and values have been not considered (Interview No.4). Therefore, they would not consider the plan responsive to their problems after the implementation of the plan. Some people were forced to migrate inland, and according to the studies, some did not have a sense of belonging to the space (Interview No.4).

As the case study of this research is located in the vicinity of the holy shrine of Imam Reza, all groups such as religious and public institutions who have spiritual expectations from this area should be taken into account and their expectations should be fulfilled.

Reviewing the recorded views in local publications such as newspapers indicates little attention to them. Other effective users are public agencies and meeting their needs can help to improve the qualities of the plan and achieve its initial goals (Interview Nos.1 and 2). One reason for changing the scope of intervention from 10 hectares to 35 hectares in 2011 revision plan was the lack of attention to the requirements of some government departments, even municipal departments, as well as some cultural needs at the city level which could be met by the plan. So, they have been considered in the revision plan (Bavand Consulting Engineers, 2003, p. 8).

The investors are also influential on the project when profitable and abrupt returns of the plan encourage them. In the initial plan, proposals such as the continuation of round-the-clock executive activities existed to boost the desires towards investment (Bavand Consulting Engineers, 2003, p. 15). But, in practice, the prolongation of the plan has negatively influenced the investment process (Interview No.3).

Generally speaking, users and their requirements, needs, and motives have not been properly considered in this project and this has led to the prolonged implementation of the project. Consulting engineers and city managers have significantly influenced the proposals presented in the plan while it is not possible to attract the support of other groups in the implementation of the plan on the basis of the opinions of a single group.

### **O3. Eliminating Conflicts by Guiding the Decision-Making Environment**

Owners have assigned their property and went out of the area according to the property transfer laws in Iran. In some cases, residents have been forced to give up their properties (Saeidi Rezvani, and Nourian, 2009, 97-98). In order to achieve maximum profit, the investors have disagreed with suggestions from the municipality in some cases, and in two cases (higher building density in Sahib-Al-Zaman axis and change of use and higher building area in Hasht Abad), the municipality's financial needs and the key role of investors in the implementation of the project have led to a change in the proposed plan (Interview No.1). During the period in which the greatest degree of implementation has been achieved, conflicts of executive agents and influential political factors have also been resolved through the acquisition of special powers from the mayor by the executive director (Interview No.1). Thus, the third executive director has been directly in contact with the mayor and acted independently. Currently, with the change of administrative mechanisms, the executive director should be responsive to the municipality's deputies. This slows the process due to the lack of a defined and specific structure (Interview No.3).

The conflicts in the project must be properly identified in the first step, and this involves identifying effective groups, goals, and motivations, which are sometime

conflicting (Bentley, 1999). The urban designer, as a facilitator, can organize these conflicts and methodologically choose the alternative that would benefit the majority of the groups (McGlynn & Murrain, 1994). In the Shohada Square plan, due to the variety of the effective groups and the lack of a mediating structure for decision-making in the state of plan development and execution, there have been conflicts between the decision makers in the project, which have slowed the implementation process, led to residents' dissatisfaction, and in some cases, changed the plan, while these conflicts could have been resolved in the planning process (Interview No.3). Eliminating conflicts between decision-makers can be divided into three parts: conflicts between owners and executive agents, between investors and executive agents, as well as between influential political and executive agents.

### **O4. Political-Legal Context Quality**

In the Shohada Square plan, the investors have advanced their goals -in some cases- via informal relationship with city managers while their goals contradicted the existing plan (Interview No.1). The mayor, as the city's top executive authority, supported the project and provided the executive director with an "approval of the necessity of implementing the plan". The City Council has announced its official support at various stages, including agreeing to issue bonds. This can be considered the support of the official authorities selected by the public (Southworth, 1989). In addition, rules and regulations supporting the implementation such as the "Law on Land Tenure for Public and Government Projects" have been an effective factor in the ownership. However, the reduced construction rate due to the recession in the property market throughout the country has slowed the implementation process. also, the concurrence of the plan with projects such as Majd Project, Abkouh District Renovation Plan, Vakilabad Renovation Plan, and the renovation of the fabric surrounding the shrine, the profitability of the project and how it was constructed have been effective in attracting investors (interview Nos. 1 and 2).

Generally, one can refer to the positive effect of legal and financial supports and the negative impact of the economic conditions due to the cruel sanctions. How to manage the project also plays a significant role in the realization of the plan's policies (Britain, 2000). Therefore, regarding the political-legal context quality, one can refer to the support of formal and political authorities, the effects of macro-economic conditions in the country, the effects of rivalry projects, and the laws and rules supporting the plan

### **O5. Realization of the Process Approach**

Flexibility of the project and its flexible codes are the result of applying a process-oriented approach, especially in urban design projects with numerous stakeholders with various (sometimes, contradictory) interests, as well as more effective variables com-



pared to architectural projects. The mission of the Shohada Square project was to improve the qualities of the space (Interview No.1). However, it has been implemented with a radical approach and the existing qualities of the space have been ignored. Also, some of the prominent commercial spaces such as Ayany Passage as an active and high quality pole in the area were destroyed based on a rigid approach, although, on a micro-scale, it was possible to change the use and propose new functions in line with the changing needs within the framework of the Article-5 committee (Interview No.1). As one of these changes, for example, one can refer to the establishment of transport infrastructures that were absent in the original plan and it has led to a revision plan (Bavand Consulting Engineers, 2003, p. 10).

In the project, there were changes in demand, both in the requirements of state agencies and institutions and in private-sector investors' tendencies. Forecasting and locating police offices, emergency rooms, blood transfusion centers, power stations, strengthening terminals or bus network stations, increasing hotel capacity or temporary residences, fire stations, mosques and cultural-religious centers are a number of these needs. These Changes resulted in the removal of public parking at the basement level and converting it to the subway station, increased scope of intervention and increased capacity of Hasht-Abad Hotel (Bavan Consulting Engineers, 2003, pp. 36-41).

It may be argued that increasing the scope of intervention meant that the project did not have sufficient flexibility to meet some of the needs. Therefore, the ability to be coordinated in time and update the project without the need for structural changes in the project is also a result of having a process-oriented approach. In the process-oriented approach, one of the most important steps after the presentation of the project is to supervise and monitor the plan (Lynch, 1984). Here, despite the lack of acceptance and inactivity of the proposed commercial constructions in the project, after the feasibility stage, the process of commercializing continues due to the lack of revising the proposals (Interview No.3).

Generally, it could be claimed that the project is entirely product-oriented. In addition, it is not possible to change the project proposals based on the current non-flexible trends at the initial level and the needs have only been met by increasing the area of the project. A process-oriented approach can result in the adaptability of the system at any time. This issue should be considered by providing design guidelines and proposing more flexible alternatives instead of implementing the final one-sided and rigid plans.

#### **O6. Hierarchy of Design Documents**

Investigating the related plans and documents indicate a lack of proper and rational linkage between the Shohada Squar plan and the master and detailed development plans of the city. Only, the Article-5 committee's command, as a higher-level document, has

been considered, which could not be a good guideline for the redesign of the square since it included general suggestions on the land-use and building density. . Ferry (2003) emphasizes the need for a strategic program to realize the plan. In the Shohada Square plan, the executive management decided about the priority of the components at each stage In the beginning, the realization of profit-making projects was intended to obtain funds for the realization of nonprofit projects, but in order to respond to the social demands and political criticisms, public projects such as underpasses and roads were first executed and then, the project's profit-making sections were implemented as the second priority to show the non-financial objectives of the municipality in this project. The relationship between the plan and the lower-level documents in the renewal plan was established by turning large-scale projects into small projects and transferring them to the private sector- Cooperative Foundation affiliated to the Institute of Police in the Hasht Abad Complex project, Kohu Noor Investment Co. in a commercial building in the northeast of the square, Hashtom Mass Building Co. in Sahib al-Zaman Complex, and it was attempted to shorten the realization process

#### **O7. The Quality of Economic and Financial Mechanisms**

Economic and financial power is measured by exploring capital supply mechanisms. The Shohada Square plan has been funded to start the projects as follows: cash and non-cash license during projects and partnerships with the private sector (about 8 companies for 25 projects through general sales of the building or units); foreign loans in 2005 for the acquisition of part of the property from the Bahrain ABC bank with the agency of a foreign bank and an internal bank for \$ 20 million and selling public participation bonds at 6 stages for 17 projects (started since 2005 and the bonds were issued once per year, and the last bond were issued in2011) (Interview No.1). According to the stakeholders, cost-benefit analysis has not been reliable due to changes in the plan, and the account balance is negative at the current time. The municipality's profit from commercial and profitable projects did not fit with the costs paid for executing infrastructures, the imposed expenses such as the cost of advertising for selling and transferring projects and the expenses induced by paying the interests on equity bonds because it has directly invested in projects such as infrastructures and public spaces and unknown costs has been imposed to it at the beginning of the plan (Interview No.1).

One of the methods used to fund the project was the sale of bonds. Purchasers of bonds in this plan had to have the possibility of taking profit on an annual basis, and they could return the bonds to the bank at any time and receive the equivalent value of the bonds. According to the officials, this plan has received a great deal of public welcome based on reviewing the documents on the participation in this project Inter-

view Nos.1 and 2. In general, two factors can be effective in this regard. On the one hand, the attention and accountability of the people towards this area and the changes they expected to occur can affect their willingness to invest and, on the other hand, economic profitability will be effective. The first case was insignificant in the Shohada Square plan since none of the documents refer to the public participation in providing suggestions or justifying people about the proposals. Therefore, people are less likely to be involved in the process and do not feel responsible about it. Analyzing the second viewpoint indicates that in the base of Mashhad situation where people find governmental and quasi-governmental power reliable, and they are sure about the profitability of the project due to the political power of the municipality, and when the profits made in buying the securities is more than investment in the productive sectors, they participate in the project with financial incentives. Other reasons include the religious beliefs of Iranians which appreciate investment in a project near the shrine of Imam Reza. This has not only led to the purchases by the citizens of Mashhad but also the citizens of other cities.

As it has been observed, a variety of financing methods have been used in this project. Some of the methods in Iran have been new but have not been successful due to little experience in this field. Investment in the project, if done by constructive interaction with the stakeholder groups such as habitants and retail business, could accelerate the process of attracting capital without imposing additional costs, due to the sense of belonging to this area by the habitants and retail business.

### 5.1. Classification of the Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation of Urban Design Plans According to the Case Study

This study attempts to explain the factors affecting the quality of implementation of urban design plans using the theoretical literature and the case study. Based on the categories extracted from the content analysis of the reviewed theoretical literature -Table 1- The interviewees' questions have been compiled. Then, the content of the higher-level documents related to the Shohada Square plan and the answers of the interviewees have been analyzed, and the corresponding codes of the categories extracted in the first step of the study have been determined through open coding. Finally, the codes were reclassified according to the relationships between them in a way discussed in the "method" section (axial coding). The result is presented in Figure 3 to show the levels of the effective factors and the relationships between them according to the theoretical literature and the case study. In this model, the concepts related to the quality of implementation of urban design plans are classified into the dimensions of context, actors, and design approach. For each dimension, similar components and relevant

considerations can also be discovered. How these multi-level concepts and the interaction among their components are addressed will influence the quality of implementation of urban design plans.

In the context dimension, the effect of related concepts is more inclusive, less concrete, and more indirect while this effect is most concrete and objective in the design approach. The effective components in the context dimension include the quality of economic and financial mechanisms and the quality of political/legal context. Concerning the economic and financial mechanisms, considerations such as economic feasibility study, financing methods, and cost-benefit analysis, which should be transparent right from the beginning, are most effective. In the current economic conditions, this issue can be included in local requirements to make use of foreign investment opportunities. Considerations affecting the political/legal context of implementation in urban design include political officials' support, general economic conditions, the status of rival projects, and supportive laws and regulations.

The dimension of actors includes a correct understanding of actors and how to resolve their conflict of interests, objectives and motivations. Involved here are suppliers (owners, inhabitants, and investors), users (present and future), and producers (technical, executive, legal, and political institutions) which can possess their own definitions and sub-groups based on contextual features.

The design approach has the most direct and concrete effect on the manner and quality of implementation. The components of this dimension include a process-oriented approach and observing the logical hierarchy of design documents. In a process-oriented approach, considerations such as flexibility of the plan, timely management, and a strategic view are necessary. Other important considerations are including surveillance over the execution process through a description of design services content and official documents as well as appropriate hierarchy of official documents in each phase. Implementation should be pursued based on a process-oriented system and it is required to consider structured mechanisms for monitoring and revision in each phase. The relationship between design and implementation teams should be close and bilateral so that executive managers' prompt decisions would not deviate the plan from its course. The findings of the present study could act as a basis for governing and monitoring the factors affecting the quality of implementation of urban design products. It should be noted that this model was developed based on a case study in the economic-political meta-context of Iran and the city of Mashhad and can be further complemented and generalized by replications in different spatial, economic, and political contexts.

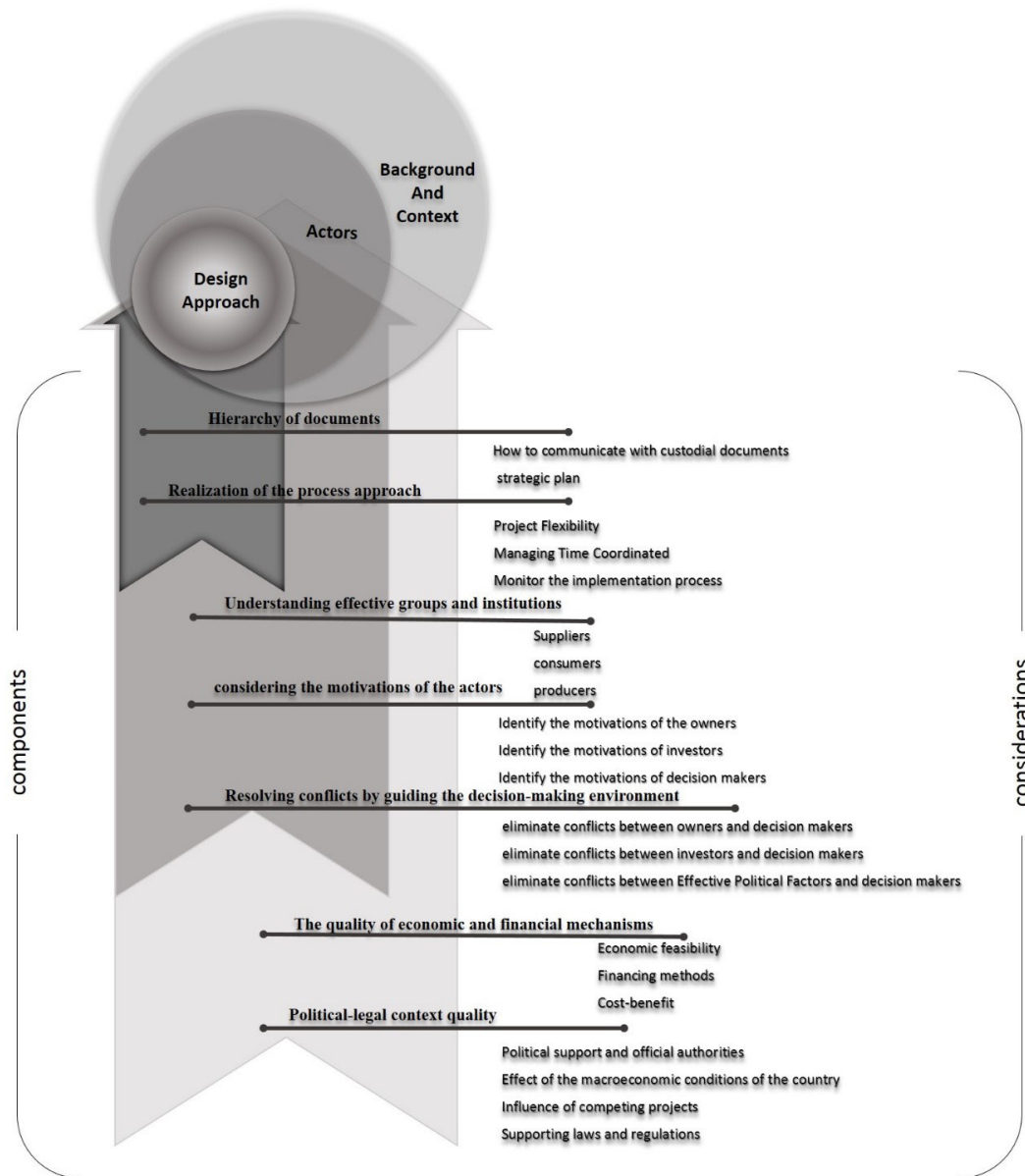


Fig. 2. The Relationships between the Factors Affecting the Quality of Implementation of Urban Design Plans

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Iran, the implementation of the majority of urban design plans are assessed through quantitative criteria rather than through the quality of achieving the initial goals and objectives of the plan. However, the implementation of urban design products is beyond the physical development of several spaces and buildings and the economic, political as well as social conditions should be considered in addition to the technical aspects.

Findings of this paper suggest that the dominant view of implementation in this project has been an instance of what Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) called a limited, direct, and linear view of practitioners. The au-

thorities of the project have indeed favored physical implementation over other aspects. In the higher-level official documents, the main goal has been stated as “creation of a complex as an active, civil space which suits the valued status of the Holy Shrine while at the same time creating a desirable cityscape based on urban identity and citizens’ memory”. In reality, however, only the technical drawings have partially come to physical realization and the most important goal of the project has remained unfulfilled. According to Golkar’s classification (2011), this project is considered a construction-oriented approach. The predominant view of its implementation has been limited to centralized, top-down decision-making in

which interaction took place only among investors and users were not involved. In Lang's (2005) division of democratic and non-democratic urban design, the Shohada Square plan can be regarded as an instance of non-democratic urban design due to its large scale, lack of citizen's supervision and control, and conformity to the government's decisions. In fact, it is a type of project-oriented urban design which, according to George's (1997) criteria, is a product-oriented, first-order design which has been implemented without regard to the realities of the decision making environment. George maintains that the underlying approach of such projects should be called huge architecture instead of urban design.

In line with the theoretical criteria proposed by Carmona (2014), our findings show how power relations among major investors, political authorities, municipality officials, relevant administrative institutions, and banks have affected the product of the Shohada Square plan. Also, the political economy governing a prominent religious city in the Islamic World and in a country which is dependent on oil revenues as well as the methods of financing in this context have created a top-down system in which the demands and motivations of inhabitants and initial owners have low priorities. The findings of the study and the changes brought about by revisions in the plan as a result of demands and pressures is reminiscent of the opinions of McGlynn and Murrain (2007), who argue that designers must be well aware of the motivations, aims, relationships of the involved groups to be able to lead the process of place-making.

In our study, the concurrent present of a rival project, i.e. the development of the surroundings of the Imam Reza Shrine, has challenged the attraction of investment and resulted in more flexibility in the Shohada Square project. This conforms to Cowan's (2002) argument that potential rival developments and the economic status of estate market tend to affect implementation. Concerning the flexibility of the Shohada Square plan in dealing with the demands of investors or new requirements, it would be better to take into account what Barnett (2017) has described as the difference between real flexibility and favoring personal preferences that can lead to power abuse. Lang (2017), too, points out to this issue and states that one of the greatest challenges ahead of implementation is to find options which simultaneously cover the differing opinions of investors and the public.

The Shohada Square plan was put in a black box which has been often affected by financial and managerial expediency. Of course, the problem has also been aggravated by superficial views prevalent in urban design mission and lack of clear-cut boundaries between urban design and other disciplines, particularly architecture and civil engineering. This project has led to a kind of scale transformation and extended the functional scale of the area in the city, but the requirements and deep consequences of this transfor-

mation in the large, immediate surrounding fields have been neglected. In the study of the documents of the project, it could not be find what is known as pre-implementation assessment or the study of consequences, assessment during implementation or path correction, and post-implementation assessment or performance evaluation.

In this study, following Barrett and Fudge (1981), high-quality implementation of urban design refers to the realization of appropriate goals in an urban design plan. In addition to being based on correct and methodical problem statement in the context of the often contradictory values and motivations of the actors, institutions and organizations, these goals have to be realistic and follow the requirements of upper official documents. For this purpose, a flexible approach should be adopted and different design options should be presented to achieve the specified aims. These options should be assessed through correct measurement criteria as well as the values of users and influential and beneficial stakeholders. In the implementation of these options, the methods of financing should be considered as compared against rival projects, supportive laws and regulations, and political support. During implementation, the design options should be constantly assessed and revised if necessary. Further modifications may be needed after monitoring the consequences of implementation.

Implementation in urban design is not a simple step, but a meta-concept that incorporates the entire process of urban design. Implementation and physical execution concept should be distinguished. It should be noted that approaches towards the implementation of urban design, as in other areas of environmental sciences, are bound to vary with cultural/political context and technical/financial limitations. To enhance the quality of implementation in the Iranian context, the description of services related to urban design plans both in the professional and legal space may require to be revisited in terms of content and procedures.

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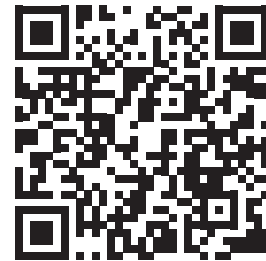
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