Exploring the Framework of the Strategic Spatial Planning for the Vision 'Tehran 2025'

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The focus of this paper is to study and analyze the need for strategic planning, for the capital city of Tehran, and more importantly the process to formulate the vision for 'Tehran 2025'. Here special attention is reserved to Patsy Healy's strategic framework and four main dimension of *spatial strategy making*. Accordingly the paper aims to investigate whether Tehran's strategic planning is comparable to Healy's framework; if yes, to what extend and in which administrative organization it is feasible. The paper therefore concludes that despite efforts carried out for proposing and framing the strategic plan in Tehran, nevertheless the planning system and implementation in the large metropolis is still confronting confusion and inefficiency.

Keyword: Spatial strategy making, strategic planning in Tehran, comprehensive planning

1. Introduction
While in the Western developed countries the criticized comprehensive planning has been replaced by more efficient models such as the strategic planning, in the developing countries in general, and in Iran in particular, only recently the city governments feel the urge to produce spatial strategies for the future development of the city. In the capital city of Tehran[1], since mid-20th century, different factors have

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[1] Tehran Metropolitan Region (TMR), with approximately 17,000 sq.km has a population of approximately twelve million. The focus of this paper is based on the spatial territory of 'City of Tehran', located in the geographical center of TMR that covers about 700 sq.km and the reported population is around seven million (Habibi, S., Hourcade, B., (2005).

influenced the planning approaches towards a gradual and high-speed development even beyond the city's institutional boundary. Some of these factors are: rapid growth of population, influx of immigrants; the cohesion of surrounded villages and small cities To Tehran's main body; Tehran's inefficient comprehensive plan which resulted in high density construction and therefore increase in land and property prices; uneven distribution of city's resources among citizens; inappropriate provided services for the city users, and etc. Therefor this research will attempt to study and analyze the current planning approaches carried out in the capital 'city of Tehran', with focus the process to formulate the vision for 'Tehran 2025' as an important effort towards strategic spatial planning.

Accordingly the paper is structured in three main sections. The first part will briefly study and outline the historical planning phases in Tehran, from the 20th century, with the aim to answer this question '*what are the deficiencies of the comprehensive planning and why there is a need for strategic planning?*'; a literature review is added to this part in order to build a comprehensive base on the terms 'spatial strategy making' and 'strategic planning'. The second part of this paper is reserved to study the process to formulate the *vision: 'Tehran 2025'* and the meaning of the strategic work, in this specific cases, with reference to Patsy Healy's strategic framework for *spatial strategy making*. The last part, the conclusion, summarizes the main out come of the study while discussing the effectiveness of such planning and its capacity to be inclusive regarding different actors involved in the city development.

2. Urban Planning of the 20th century in Tehran

The capital city of Tehran, has witnessed several planning paradigms since mid-20th century, which led to major physical and spatial transformations. As briefly described below, according to Madanipour, the key planning processes in Tehran can be classified into three main phases from 1930s to 1990s (Madanipour A., 2006).

The first phase (period between the 1930s and 1960s) is considered to be the era of planning through *infrastructure and design,* with the attempt to prepare a base for further growth. By the year 1932, along with the rising figures in population and the emergence of motor vehicles, city walls of the 1870s seemed to be too restricting and incoherent for this fast growing city. These attempts through re-planning and re-building led to major transformations (Lockhart L., 1939); most importantly were the city walls that got destroyed and new boulevards were built, as part of a transport network. Through exploiting Western images and experiences, these physical transformations were part of the major efforts in forming the base for future growth along with modernization. The effects were explicit in the census, with the rise of population from 310,000 in 1932 to 700,000 in 1941 (figure 1). This planning phase was also important from the economic point of view: the new role of the city as a peripheral node integrated in the world market, which in return caused new types of income and wealth inequalities along with socio-economic and cultural polarization [18].

The second phase of planning in Tehran was in the 1960s, with major focus on *preparing plans to regulate and manage future change.* The comprehensive planning in this era was realized as a tool to confront the growing complexity of the city's spatial management. By the 1960s, due to the influx of rural dwellers to the city, Tehran grew at a faster rate and the population grew up to 3 million in 1966 from 1.5 million in 1956 and therefore in 1976 rose to 4.5 million (figure 1). From mid-1950s by the revenues gained from oil industry, industrialization started to grow, creating new jobs especially in Tehran and hence attracting new labor force. Affected by these trends, Tehran expanded in all directions, mainly based on under-regulate private sector and speculative development [18]. As indicated by Tehran's Mayer in 1962, the buildings and settlements in Tehran 'have been developed by whoever has wanted in whatever way and wherever they wanted' (Nafisi A., 1964); in fact the city is a combination of towns connected to each other in an inappropriate way. The municipality was enquired to do something but had neither the power nor money. However, the Urban Planning High Council was established by the Municipality act of 1966, to formulate the land-use planning through comprehensive plans. This act along with other new laws, were considered as efforts of the Municipality and the Ministry of Housing to control and manage the growth of Tehran.

Accordingly the first comprehensive plan of Tehran was produced in 1968, in which the major problems were high density, pollution, inefficient infrastructure, unemployment and the rising migration of low-skilled workers to Tehran. Hence, the comprehensive plan, proposed by the joint Iranian and American Associations, aimed at changing the physical, social and economic dimension of the city (Farmanfarmaian, A., Gruen, V., 1968). However, the result was mainly physical transformations; influenced by the British and the US planning ideas of new town. Zoning was also used as a planning tool to control the physical and social dimension of the developed areas.

The end of 20th century (1990s onward), the post-revolutionary period, is defined as the third phase of the planning in Tehran that was based on *policy development for reconstruction and reform* after the war period [18]. The influx of immigrants to the capital grew faster than before and led to a population of 6 million by 1986 (figure 1), producing new challenges to prove the incapability of the comprehensive planning to cope with them. The plans were simply physically based developments having major implementation difficulties. Therefore the need for strategic planning was seen essential; the first attempt was the plan for the period between 1986-1996, prepared by a firm of Iranian consultants (A-Tech), which was approved by the Urban and Planning High Council. One of the major outcomes of this plan, which is still in use today, was the division of the city into 22 districts with their own service center. However the Municipality rejected the plan in 1993, for them to be improbable in expenses and implementation phases. Later on the Municipality proposed a strategic plan for 1996-2001, namely Tehran Municipality's First Plan (Tehran 80), which is known to be the first plan to focus on a set of strategies and policies instead of land-use planning. The plan's vision for the future of the city was prepared considering five set of problem: lack of resources, the pattern and speed of urban development, pollution, inefficient public transport and the improper bureaucratic system. Accordingly six main objectives were outlined to guide its strategies:

- "Clean City: a city in which pollution is under control"
- "Smoothly Moving city: an efficient intra-city traffic and transportation"
- "Green city: an expansion of green areas"
- "A high cultured City: expansion of cultural and educational space in order to enhance the city's culture"
- "Dynamic city: the needs of citizens for administrative services are met as quickly as possible"
- "Modern-Traditional texture: the realization of an intermixed urban fabric of traditions and modernism" [4].
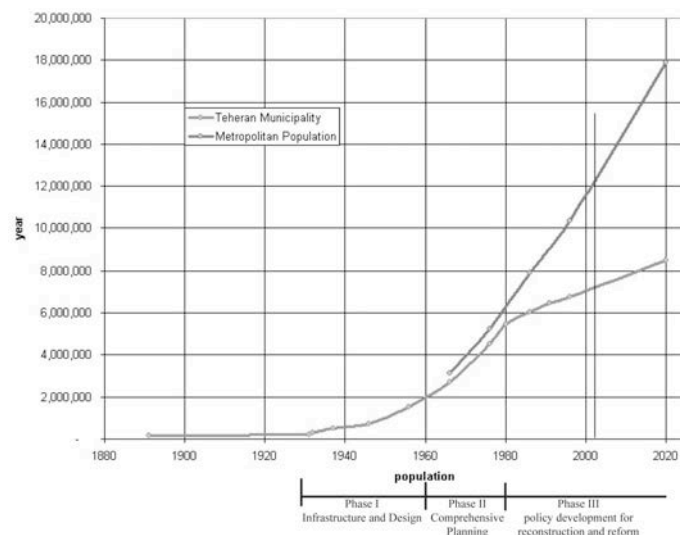

Figure 1. *The Population growth according to the three introduced planning phase. Source: Bertaud A. (2003).*

The new road networks and green spaces were developed as part of the implementation phase derived from both the 1968-masterplan and the plan for Tehran 80. In the period of 1990s onward, the illegal practice of 'selling zoning variance'[2] was a major development strategy that was not envisioned in the planning considerations. Through this practice, the Municipality insured its financial independency[3], which in time proved to be beneficial for the developers and unfavorable for the citizens. The result was newly developed high rise constructions which led to rapid expansion of the city boundaries beyond the administrative lines; along with the increase of built-up densities and infrastructure deficits in the declined regions [25].

3. The deficiencies of the Comprehensive Planning in Tehran and the Need for Strategic Planning

This section of the present paper shall outline the deficits of the comprehensive planning in Tehran and the need for strategic planning. In the developed countries, the comprehensive approach has been severely criticized from the 1960s onwards, for paying too much attention to details and overemphasizing the framework dimension of the plans (Williams G., 1999). Many studies also reveal the fact that Comprehensive Planning paradigm in Iranian cities, such as Tehran, has not been successful in solving the issues, concerning the rapid population growth and the urban development dilemmas. Criticizing the aforementioned planning approach in Tehran, started with the focus on the legal processes in which the plans were prepared and implemented, however the concerns gradually extended to consider the content and the fundamental theoretical base behind the comprehensive urban planning (Ministry of Housing & Urban Development, 2006). The most important theoretical problems facing the comprehensive plan in Tehran are described as below:

- Planning approaches based on top down processes by bureaucratic principles, paying too much attention to various marginal issues that led to inflexible and rigid plans.
- The objectives of the plans and policies related to its supervision and implantation were not transparent.
- Lack of considering the dynamic and complex nature of the city and thus moving towards inability to anticipate future problems.
- Insisting on the physical planning and the lack of attention to socio-economic aspects.
- Less considering ideas and interests of actors at different level (Farhoodi, R., Gharakhlou, M., Ghadami, M., Panahandeh Khah, M., 2009).

In the developed countries, many efforts have been carried out to replace this planning approach, which is based on technocratic and bureaucratic principles which is inflexible and lacking in transparency, by strategic approaches that include participation, flexibility and transparency (Hall P., 2009). Accordingly, to overcome the above-mentioned deficiencies of the comprehensive planning in Tehran, the need for strategic planning seems necessary. This planning encompasses a step-by-step process considering the relationship between different levels of planning and its stages. Further more, the strategic planning emphases on the key issues, avoiding too much attention to the less important masses of detail and also provides the opportunity for the active participation of different actors at different level (Albrechts L., 2004). The table below summarizes a comparison between the comprehensive planning and the strategic

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[2] The selling zoning variance, also known as 'selling densities, was a practice in which the municipality would permit developers, an increase of the FAR, to build in higher densities and alteration of land uses, in exchange for a fee (Zebardastm E., 2005).

[3] In some years, about 90% of the Municipality's total revenues was earned from selling density (Bertaud, A. 2003).

planning in the processes of preparing the plans, considering the goals, participation of actors and the implementation capabilities (table 1).

Field	Comprehensive Plan	Strategic Plan
Conceptual Framework	1. Insisting on having detailed knowledge about problems of City 2. Rigid and inflexible planning 3. Lack of consideration to the economic aspects 4. Being comprehensive in studies 5. Land-use map or master plan as the final document	1. Having to know the city's major issues, while avoiding being unnecessarily detailed 2. Flexible planning, and open to urban changes 3. Considering city's economic development as an important factor 4. Being selective and target-based in studies 5. Dynamic functional and practical plans are preferred
Goals and Planning Process	1. The main goal is to prepare a land-use plan (physical output) 2. A top-down decision making process in preparation and implementation 3. Fixed goals and principles for determining the future 4. Main Objectives and processes to reach them are not transparent clear enough 5. Fragmented structure in decision making process	1. Considering the physical aspects along with the social and economic issues at the same level 2. An effective balanced top-down and bottom-up relation in preparation and implementation 3. Dynamic process of decision making with regard to the future vision 4. Clear future vision and defined strategies to gain the goals 5. Reciprocal and interrelation decision making process
Participation of Actors at different levels	1. No attention to public participation and social institutions in decision making processes 2. Plans proposed from the main power in charge 3. A technocratic-based approach with lack of creativity in creating the plans 4. Socio-political aspects are not the matter of concern	1. Considering different actors at different level and public participation in decision making processes 2. Different interests of actors are considered in preparing the plans at different levels 3. Having faith in public participation in creating innovative approaches 4. Respecting socio-political demands
Implementation Capacities and Capabilities	1. Lack of attention to the strength and weak points of the bodies in charged in implementation phase 2. Local authorities are not empowered through preparing and approving the plans 3. The implementation phase lacks efficient supervisory 4. The plan is based on an Idealistic scenario which is far from reality	1. Accounting both strength and weakness regarding organizations in charge of implementing the plans 2. Local authorities given relevant power in strategy making processes 3. Dynamic process of supervision and control 4. The real capacity and resources of the city are the base for planning approach

Table 1. *Comparison of comprehensive and strategic planning in different fields of action*
Source: Farhoodi R., et al. (2009)

4. A brief literature review on terms 'Strategic Work' and 'Strategic Planning'

In the field of planning, as clearly stated by Healy, the term 'strategic work' refers to the efforts, both interactive and geared, towards altering the direction, to capacities and possibilities and getting distance from the past situation (Healey P., 2009).

Considering the planning work in a broad context such as the city region, for Albrechts the term 'strategic' refers to the set of actions and decisions that are more important than others, since it is impossible to give a high priority to everything that needs to be done. Therefore the difficult task is to make a fair decision in giving priority and importance to the critical problems, challenges and diversity (Albrechts L., Healey P. & Kunzmann, K., 2003).

Back in 1960s, strategy makers tend to follow a more 'scientific' approach; a methodological process along with a sequence of scientific analysis to arrive at the so-called strategy. In contrary to the past, the recent approach towards strategy making tends to focus more on the sociological perspective, with emphasis on the control of 'agency' with relation to the upper and stronger powers (Healey P., 2006). Current debate over the development in theorizing planning and policy-making activity is extensive, which stresses the importance of understanding the complex interrelation and power struggles among the different actors and agency at different scale.

In this paper while describing the process of strategic plan for vision of 'Tehran 2025', we shall refer to Patsy Healy's definition of spatial strategy making and the four main dimensions introduced by her, which is considered essential and worth referring (figure 2). The first dimension of the framework, which is 'mobilising attention', refers to how and why an urban context becomes the focal matter of concern and attention. The second aspect is *'scoping the situation'* which focuses on what and where are the main issues and to whom to be addressed in the specified urban context, along with what governance arrangement and power system. The third point, *'Enlarging intelligences'* refers to the gathering and improvement of knowledge-based resources, which is essential for the strategic plan. The last point, *'creating frames and selecting actions',* considers about the importance of how visions are framed as key principles to guide the future directions [12].
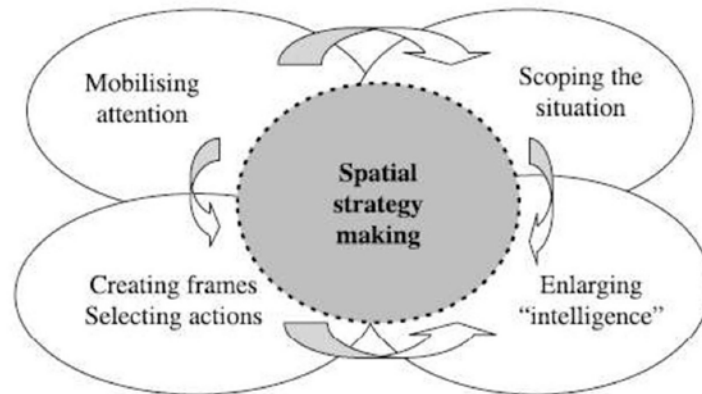

Figure 2. *Dimensions of strategy making - Source: Healey, P. (2009)*

5. The Governmental Structure of Tehran; A Fragmented Governance System

In this part, the research will briefly illustrate the fragmented governance structure of Tehran Metropolitan Region, by introducing major figures and institutional components and their power and role in the decision-making processes.

Considering the national governance system of Iran on one hand and the urban management organization on the other hand, the spatial interdisciplinary characteristics among different governmental and non-governmental (public) sectors for TMR can be defined as the table below:

As illustrated in table 3, the governmental authorities of Tehran have more legislative power and play a major role in the decision-making processes and the final approval of the plans. The public institutions have only executive powers, which cause conflict and confusion facing the governmental bodies while creating, proposing and approving urban plans at different level.

Since the focus of the paper is on 'City of Tehran', therefore the key role of the main organizations (actors) in decision-making processes for proposing and implementing the plans are the followings, ordered with regard to the institutional power hierarchy:

- *City Council:* composed of fifteen members; elected by citizens and hold legislative power. Their main responsibilities are: electing the mayor, approving the plans for the city, approving the local legislation proposed by the mayor, approving the budget and municipal rates, etc.

- *Municipality (Mayor):* Elected by the City council, the Mayor has managerial and executive power in City of Tehran[4].
- *22 sub-Municipal districts*: each district has a Mayor, selected and supervised by Tehran Municipal Mayor, which conducts administrative operations and reports to the City Mayor.

Territories	Division Units	Governing Authority	Appointing Authority	Type of Institution Governmental/Public
Political Division	Province	Governor General	The Cabinet	Governmental
	County	Governor	Interior Minister	Governmental
	District	District Governor	Governor General	Governmental
	Parish	Reeve	Governor	Governmental
Managerial Division	City	Mayor	City Council	Public
	Village	Reeve (Head of rural districts)	Village Council	Public

Table 3. *General Characteristics of Political Territories and local management*
Source: Akhoundi A., et al (2006).

6. The Plan for 'Tehran 2025'

In 2001, the City Council published its own 'Charter of Tehran', which in 2005 was used as a base for preparing the vision for 'Tehran 2025'. The content of the charter was agreed by the council members, non-governmental organizations and urban professionals, which focused on sustainability and democracy regarding urban management; transport, social, cultural and economic issues.

The City council of Tehran, in order to over come deficiencies of previous plans towards a more effective way of integrating and merging different aspects of economic, social and environmental perspectives, intended to translate territorial development into specific investment programmers and regulatory, similar to the concept of Albrechts et al [3], by proposing the Vision, Tehran 2025.

In 'Tehran 2025', the relevant territory to be addressed is the national capital and the economic, cultural and social hub of Iran. The following map shows 'City of Tehran' along with its 22 districts, which is the matter of concern for the City Council and other institutions in charge for preparing the Vision (Map 1).

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[4] The Mayer's main activities are limited to the following areas in the 22 districts: legal, council and parliamentary affairs; social and cultural issues; traffic and transportation; planning and management; financial and administrative sector; urban planning and architecture; ICT developments and etc.

Map 1: *Administrative divisions of 'City of Tehran' in 1996 - Source: Habibi S., Hourcade B. (2005), p.47*

Table 3: *Different sectors in charge for preparing the strategic vision - Source: official site of City Council*

At the very beginning of the process a commission, entitled "strategic plan committee", including experts and specialists of different areas were created to supervise the vision, actions and implementation (table 3).

Each group is concerned with a particular topic. Here the main activities of each group are outlined to understanding how the vision was sketched and finalized.

- *Project Team for Literature Review:* based on the accumulated experience from planning practice and analyzing the planning literatures, the group creates the base for analyzing the institutional design and mobilization to define a framework for future vision of Tehran.

- *Project Team for benchmarking:* the group takes a critical view of the environment in terms of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the context; the external trends, forces and resources available is also studied to develop a long-term vision and set of strategies at different levels of actions.
- *Project Team of Visionaries:* The team analyzes different strategic frameworks and visions including the economic, environmental, cultural, and social aspects. Within each area of study, the main goal(s) is outlined in a vision statement, set of objectives and implementation strategies.
- *Project Team for Interviews and seminars:* the team organizes a set of interviews with high-level executive figures, experts and professionals. The interviewees are classified in three main topics: specifying the status quo; illustrating the ideal condition; challenges and strategies regarding the desirable situation for the future. Furthermore, numbers of seminars were held; consisting of experts, scholars and public figures within a particular area of focus, with the aim to accumulate different interests, ideas and relevant strategies.
- *Project Team to lead competitive practices:* different forms of participation are studying, programming and implementing as intermediary level to increases the level of participation in order to face with environmental decision making socially, culturally, and spatially to extend and adapt personal and social values for different key figures. The team proposes more open, flexible and less prescriptive method to respond the values and the images of what society wants to achieve
- *Project Team for Study and Analysis:* the data and information from the above mentioned project teams were accumulated to outline the primarily draft of the vision and its strategies for 'Tehran 2025'. The draft was then studies, reviewed and analyzed by a group of professionals to evaluate its capacity and efficiency.

The outcome of the comprehensive study and analysis by the professional groups along with the legislative committee was the vision for 'Tehran 2025' which the main concept and image was outlined and framed as, *'Tehran global city as a center of culture, knowledge, welfare and model for the Islamic world'.*
The objectives and strategies introduced in the vision 'Tehran 2025' have important and specific capacities and play an important role in directing citizens and diverse sectors, actors and departments at different level. Here some major points are stated:
Accordingly the output of the process constitutes a consensus between citizens and public sectors to make official guidelines for implementation, and realistic commitments to action engagement.
The Vision, 'Tehran 2025', is proposed with the aim to invite the whole community to intervene in the future of their city by imagining and expressing their desirable condition through a reasonable vision, strategy and direction. The residence of Tehran has big ideas and dreams for their future which is revealed in "Tehran 2025'. Now, the question is, *to what extend this plan has the capacity to change the past situation towards the future vision?*

7. Conclusion
This study critically argued that the outcome of traditional comprehensive planning in Tehran and the critics made against it in the developed world are very much similar. However considering the fragmented governance system in Tehran, the question is to what extent this strategic planning can be effective; while it serves as a replacing tool for the comprehensive planning.
Since 2001, with intention to overcome the implementation and participation deficits of the Tehran Comprehensive Plan, there have been some efforts to introduce the strategic planning approach. The focus of this paper was on the emerging form of document, the *Vision for 'Tehran 2025'.* As insisted by Healy [12], this is a fact that a lot of 'strategies' have been carried out by those involved in urban development, however, only a limited number of these efforts can be considered as actual 'work' to shape the urban context. This is also the case in the Vision introduced for Tehran. Indeed, spatial strategy making is not an easy activity that can be carried out with simple procedures, instead it is known to be "a messy, back-and-forth process, with multiple layers of contestation and struggle" [12].

With the aim to observe the term 'strategic' in the plan, considering Healey's idea on strategy making [12,] table 4 illustrates the adaption of the Vision 'Tehran 2025' to her framework.

Dimensions of strategy making	Tehran's Vision
1. Mobilising attention	Initially carried out successfully with the high level authority, yet insufficient for the whole member of the committee in charge/municipality; attention weakened after document submission
2. Scoping the situation	Coalition was built among potentially affected City divisions and agencies for the framework document with holistic objective; while most projects and detailed plans under the strategy were planed for each division individually.
3. Enlarging intelligences	The process in gathering and improvement of the knowledge-based resources were conducted successfully during the document composition; formulating a network of professionals, experts and actors at different level were followed step-by-step studies.
4. Creating frames and selecting actions	On-going projects and detailed plans have been prepared according to the set of strategies introduced in the Vision. Prioritizing actions within the comprehensive long-term strategy required time and resources; selection of action and implementation processes seems not so cleat and in consistency.

Table 4. *The Vision of 'Tehran 2025' adaption plan in Healey's strategy making dimensions - Source: Own table*

According to the table above, the Vision 'Tehran 2025' seems to be effective for the future development however we should insist on the controversial role of the Municipality as one major factor shadowing the preparation and implementation of the plans in Tehran is. Although the city is becoming even more democratic than before, however the central government has the dominant power over Tehran, and the municipality, despite its financial independency has merely an executive power with no control over the preparation or modification of the plans. Even more, in implementation phase, the Municipality has some difficulties in supervision due to lack of transparency in the relations among different level of governance system. Therefore the planning and implementation processes of the large metropolis are still facing confusion and inefficiency.

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