Contemporary Urbanization Review: To Identify the Impact of Policies and Events on the Evolution of Urbanization in Iran

M.J. Maghsoodi Tilaki, A. Abdullah, A. Bahauddin and M. Hedayati Marzbali

School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia

Abstract: The rapid expansion of urbanization and urban population growth has spread worldwide. There are several reasons for the intensified rural-urban migration, which have perverted efforts to manage growth poles in developing countries. Similar to many other developing countries, Iran has experienced rapid urbanization in recent decades through various policies and events. This research attempts to evaluate the evolution of urbanization in Iran in the contemporary period (1950-2010) to identify effective policies and incidents that have influenced the process of urbanization, population growth and the increasing rate of people migration. The research assessment indicates that, generally, eight elements have contributed to Iran’s urbanization including industrialization, land reform, Islamic revolution, war with Iraq, reconstruction period, family planning program, city council establishment and housing strategies. However, waves of urbanization have given birth to many problems due to the lack of good governance, diverse economic reforms and unsuitable development strategies. Therefore, this research presents that urbanization as a process needs government efforts to create organizational synergy for management in rural and urban areas as well as adequate national and regional policies to ensure equitable distribution of the common wealth for all people in urban and rural areas. This will make sure that authorities are equal to the development in Iranian settlement areas and reduce the rural-urban migration rate and informal settlements around Iranian cities.

Key words: Rapid urbanization %Industrialization policy %Land reform %Demographic changes %Rural migration %Iran

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations report revealed that the world’s urban population will rise by 4 billion by 2030, with the birth of 90% of this population in developing or undeveloped countries [1]. From an overview of the contemporary literature on urbanization in developing countries, it appears that despite generally different approaches, various government structures, widely implemented policies and several viewpoints of the policy makers and researchers, the dominant perspective is that the developing countries have experienced rapid urbanization and migration. Furthermore, the wave of globalization and world industry revolution have intensified the rural-urban migration trends and the fast pace of urbanization [2]. As a result, investment has increased around cities, especially major cities in developing countries. Subsequently, the employment rate rose once the industrial complexes were located in the suburbs of the cities. The workers were employed in the factories and the workers attempted to reside in the low cost housing units in the cities. This operation has increased the demand for goods, urban services and the demand for a higher standard of living. Consequently, due to the restriction and demand for the urban land supply, the subsequent living costs and urban land prices have increased in the cities [3].

The governments in developing countries have attempted to control the expansion of urbanization through employing different policies. Although, they focused on balancing regional development in different settlements, the actions have failed in most developing countries. The review of the literature reveals that the presented packages of solutions have not been properly prepared or implemented. However, there are various reasons for the rapid urbanization due to the various strategies of the governments and the variable features of cities in the developing countries. Hence, this research...
focuses on contemporary urbanization in Iran as an example of the rapid urbanization and population growth rate in the Middle East.

Although the urban population has exploded over the last six decades, the urbanization of Iran has experienced a different transformation during this period through various events on the national and international scale (such as the Pahlavi Dynasty, industrialization strategy, land reform, the Islamic Revolution and the Iraq war). Notwithstanding the different events that have encouraged people to migrate from rural areas to major cities [4-6], several urban problems have resulted from this social movement in cities, such as the shortage of housing, lack of urban infrastructure and failure of the traditional agricultural process [7]. Unsuitable functions have simply led to uncontrolled urban growth and the birth of several informal settlements inside and surrounding the cities. Although different policies have assisted the government in controlling the urbanization process, after five decades, the efforts have still not materialized. Therefore, the present research concentrates on the rapid urbanization process and reasons for migration in Iran.

Methodology: The main objective of this study is to present a comprehensive review of the urbanization process and to explore the reasons for the rapid growth of urbanization in the Iranian context. This research uses an evaluation method employing inferential statistics. The current study is assessed by means of various evidence and proof, which is recognized as the most important in such evaluation research [8]. The experimental research design is a type of evaluation research and the methodological review is addressed based on the secondary data obtainable from the Iranian government reports as well as the outcomes of the national census. Moreover, a systematic review was directed at research that focused on the urbanization process in Iran. Certified statistics and published databases supply awareness for the authors to achieve the study objective. Furthermore, the rapid growth of urbanization and rural-urban migration has been identified as common matters in developing countries from the overview of the accessible published papers in international journals.

It should to be clear that the first phase of this study is a comprehensive review of the evolution of urbanization in Iran. The current study focuses on Iran as a country that has experienced rapid urbanization since the mid-1950s. This leads the authors to explore the impact of the effective phenomena on the rapid urbanization as well as the socio-economic transformation in Iran. Second, the effective policies and events are described and their impact on urbanization are presented in order to highlight the challenges and opportunities in the study area. This is followed by an illustration of the interactions among rapid urbanization growth, rural-urban migration and the expansion of informal settlements surrounding Iranian cities. Third, the demographic changes are examined and the population changes and migration are discussed in respect of the mentioned events and implemented policies. Finally, the conclusion includes the most important findings and major consequences of the reasons for rapid urbanization in the Iranian context.

Evolution of Urbanization in Iran: Iran is a Middle Eastern country located in Southwest Asia, with a total area of 1.6 million square kilometers. The review of official reports reveals that the number of cities rose from 373 in 1976 to more than 1,000 cities in 2008 [9]. In 2011, the population of Iran increased to 75 million and the population density reached 44.2 persons per square kilometer. In addition, deserts and mountainous regions cover more than half of the area of Iran and only one fifth of the land is suitable or has the potential for cultivation [10]. Consequently, half of the country is not suitable for habitation and only 20 percent of the land can be used to produce food by agricultural means, which presents a significant reason to monitor the growth of urbanization and movement of population in Iran.

Generally, various evidences have demonstrated that the Iranian traditional urbanization was formed before Christ [11, 12]. The first major urban revolutionary process pattern in Iran occurred after the emergence of Islam in Iran and, hence, the core of the cities have witnessed the introduction of some new elements, such as the Bazaar (market or agora), mosque, school and the subsequent considerable connections established among them [13]. Indeed, the traditional urbanization started to change in Iran from the ‘Ghajar period’ [14] when economic dependency began due to the lack of the government’s ability to employ resources, support a production system and set fiscal policies [4]. Therefore, the cities had to confront various crises and changes through recession [13]. In 1906, this dynasty crumbled, before the Pahlavi Dynasty was established in 1925, which accelerated the industrialization and modernization that played a significant part in the urbanization of Iran. Actually, meaningful effects were attempted to rapidly move Iran
towards modernization [4]. The urbanization transformation began with the construction of buildings, such as embassies, theaters, movies, shops and hotels, which provided for the needs of the new lifestyle. In addition, buildings were constructed without due attention to urban issues and proper discipline [14]. Furthermore, in 1963, the government executed land reforms, which had an influence on the Iranian urbanization [15]. However, the government had rapidly implemented capitalist economic methods, which further led to the country’s dependency on European countries. Capitalism and industrialization promoted the separation of the social levels and immigration from the rural areas to the few big cities, especially Tehran [4]. In addition, the income from oil, as the main financial resource, helped the government to materialize the industrialization and modernization in Iran, as oil prices grew suddenly in 1973 due to certain international events [16]. Thus, the Iranian government had not faced a great obstacle in applying its industrialization policy when the oil income reached around 20 billion USD annually [5, 7]. This resulted in the domestic production and agriculture being neglected during this period with the oil income being spent on importing production, thereby leading to the introduction of ‘consumerism’ to Iranian society. These reasons influenced the urbanization process before the Islamic revolution occurred in 1975, which created macro changes in the country. Actually, each revolution has specific characters, which separate it from other movements and revolutions. The identifying features of the Iranian Islamic revolution can support the current research to recognize its impact on the urbanization process and patterns after this revolution. In this line, Tilly (1973) expressed that revolutions can occur based on different elements, albeit some of them are recognized as major reasons like population growth, industrialization and urban development [17]. In fact, from the review of Iranian urbanization it appears that all the mentioned elements had occurred and persisted rather strongly in Iran before the Islamic revolution. Alternatively speaking, it can be said that the urbanization transformation during the period of 1960-1975 had intensified the events surrounding Iran’s Islamic revolution. Consistent with the latter discussion, Skocpol (1982) believes that Iran’s Islamic revolution, unlike the Chinese revolution, to quote another example, is an urban revolution where the farmers did not play a major role [18]. From another viewpoint, Rafipoor (1997) presented a model for the Iranian Islamic revolution, stating that this revolution occurred due to social-economic inequality and perceptions of injustice [19]. Thus, the Islamic revolution sought for the removal of barriers towards justice and also removing social classes. Therefore, the urbanization transformation influenced the social structure in the 70s in a major way, considering that the social protest encompassed the whole of Iran. Although, urbanization had a massive effect in the Islamic revolution, the urbanization was influenced by certain events after the Islamic revolution, such as the attack of Iraq, reconstruction of destruction caused by war and establishment of the City Islamic Council (city council). An overview of urbanization reveals that urban management has met various challenges to direct the affairs of cities. The municipalities had depended on the government budget while the government reduced financial support to the municipalities due to budget limitations [7]. This resulted in cities experiencing inefficiencies of investment in the supply of urban infrastructure and urban expansion control. Additionally, several matters influenced the Iranian urbanization process and rural-urban migration, which this study reviews in the following section together with their impact on the urbanization of Iran.

**Effective Policies and Events Pertaining to the Urbanization of Iran**

**Industrial Development:** Generally, different policies have influenced the change in urbanization patterns in Iran over the last five decades. One of them refers to the establishment of industries and factories on the cities’ outskirts. Actually, industrial development began when the government implemented the first national development plan in 1948, however, it was kept doing with the establishment of the industrial poles in the second national development plan (1955-1962) surrounding major cities, such as Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz [4]. According to this policy, most of the heavy industries and factories were built around the major cities. The implementation of this policy caused a change in the relationship between the urban and rural areas. According to the first public census in 1956, 41.6 percent of the urban population resided in five major Iranian cities-Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz. Among these cities, Tehran, as the capital city of Iran, experienced the highest urban population growth rate (25.4%). In fact, this rate remains the highest urban population growth rate in Iran until now and , consequently, the boundaries of Tehran have developed widely. The analysis of the growth pattern of Tehran revealed that Tehran has grown around the major transportation network where the industries were established. Furthermore, it gave birth to different
Table 1: Population distribution in urban / rural areas from 1956 to 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Rural Population</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>18,954,704</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5,953,563</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>13,001,141</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>25,788,722</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9,794,246</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>15,994,476</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>33,708,744</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15,854,680</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>17,854,064</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>49,445,010</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26,844,561</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>22,600,449</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>60,055,488</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>36,818,000</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>23,237,488</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>70,391,065</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48,259,964</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>22,131,101</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [20-25]

residential settlements around the major roads, especially around the roads in the south, west and south east of Tehran between 1976 and 1996.

Meanwhile, the censuses indicated that although urban populations have increased, since 1956, the urban population growth rate has reduced in major cities (Table 1) [20-25]. Therefore, one possible explanation is that rural populations prefer to immigrate to cities and, consequently, they settled in the Iranian middle-sized cities. Some of the major effects are described as follows:

- C to improve cities position with respect to villages in the regions;
- C to establish more independency of urban areas from different production in rural areas;
- C to disconnect the historic relationship between the urban and rural areas; and
- C to promote a capitalist system in the market system [26].

Generally, most of the rapid urban population growth occurred due to the industrial development, as mentioned above. A review of the general population and housing census reveals that until the present time, most of the population migration into cities happened after implementation of the industrial development policy (Table 1).

Land Reform: Land reform is acknowledged as another major strategy that had a major effect on the urbanization of Iran before the Islamic revolution (1979). This policy was executed based on the third national development plan (1963-1967), although the Iranian government implemented this policy from 1962 to 1971. The implementation of land reform led to different socioeconomic transformations in Iran’s social structure [6].

Furthermore, this policy also influenced the socioeconomic aspect of the rural structure [27]. In other words, before the implementation of this policy, each rural area had one or two major land holders that employed poor people to work on their agricultural properties. However, after the implementation of this policy, the major landholders were dispossessed of their agricultural lands by the regulations for land reform. Land reform was seen to have destroyed the social relationships in the rural settings. Due to the land reforms, the poor people were able to obtain suitable land to work on, but they did not employ adequate facilities independently for cultivation work in rural areas. Hence, eventually, they sold or released their land and moved to the cities looking for better jobs [28]. Therefore, the land reform did not achieve the determined goals, but, instead, destroyed the socioeconomic structures in rural areas. In addition, Iranian cities were not able to employ the poor and unskilled migrants in their industries. Although it is clear that they needed shelter or housing, they were unable to achieve this through a legal channel, due to their inadequate level of income. Consequently, the residential settlements appeared uncontrolled and unplanned and shelters were built without building regulations and urban development policies [7].

Islamic Revolution: Due to the injustice in the pre-revolutionary period, the Islamic revolution was born to seek social justice based on independence gained by other countries. Furthermore, the government began to develop based on the independence from its oil income. In turn, they focused on the agriculture and industrial sectors [4]. On the urban scale, further activities occurred based on idealistic thinking. As explained previously, the urban management, as the government representative, depended on the government in the pre-revolutionary period. Hence, people had become divided about the urban management, which had brought about some conflicts. However, after the Islamic revolution, although the government and regime had totally changed, people’s distrust remained for a few years [7]. For instance, people refused to pay urban-renewal taxes normally. In contrast, people met different idealistic actions after the revolution, such as the cost of urban facilities for poor people were covered by the government. Similarly, house rent was
reduced by 20 percent and urban land was transferred by
the government at no cost [29]. Consequently, the
displacement of the population to cities was one of the
major features in this period, which caused the
disconnection of the traditional relationship between
cities and villages [30]. Generally, this stage can be
recognized as a period of change in the Iranian society.

Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988): As an overview, war is easily
labeled as a tragic event for all human societies with
multifarious consequences-massacre, injury, destruction
and homelessness-to name but a few. Iraq attacked Iran
out of the blue when the Islamic revolution regime was
created. The war involved the west and south west of the
country from1980 to 1988. In addition, major cities
experienced continuous attacks from Iraqi missiles. Thus,
one of the consequences of this war may also be the
movement of billions of people from the western part to the
eastern and central parts of Iran. The lack of adequate
settlements as the first requirement caused temporary
informal settlements that were established in the suburbs
on the cities’ outskirts. The destruction of cities and high
cost of war caused the government to clampdown on
investment in major projects and, therefore, construction
activities ceased throughout the country. Such events
happened because of the apparent independency of the
government’s budget on the oil income and as an
immediate outcome of the drop in crude oil value on the
world markets. Additionally, Iran had met serious
limitations in the production and export of crude oil.
Consequently, the budget was not available for
construction activities in the cities [7]. Although this war
seriously affected various issues in the country, it had
different benefits in some aspects, such as consensus
building, self-sacrifice and independency in industrial
fields [31]. However, by the time this war ended in 1988,
several cities of Iran had been destroyed and, unplanned
urban growth had been experienced in the urbanization
process due to the mass migration of people from the war
areas to other settlements and the inattention of the
Iranian government to urban affairs.

Reconstruction Period (1988-1997): After the war, Iran
attempted to recover in a period called the reconstruction
period, however, the world was facing one of the major
political events at this time regarding the fall of
Communism in Russia (1989) and the end of the Cold War
in 1991 [32]. One of the consequences was the promotion
of capitalism in the neighboring countries of Iran, which
influenced the lifestyle of Iranian society [7]. Within the
country, the government prepared the socio-economic
development plan, which focused on the reconstruction
of infrastructure-power plants, dams, steel industries,
cement factories and railways-in the first phase.
Furthermore, the government attempted to achieve capital
investment and increased exports through the
development of trade promotion, attraction of foreign
investment and establishment of the duty free zones [33].

On the other side, people engaged indifferent
activities in the cities for the first time after the Islamic
revolution, which advanced their quality of life. In this
line, urban authorities focused on the development of the
urban services, public network transportation and
beautification at the urban level. The implementation of
the mentioned policies commenced with Isfahan and then
Tehran and other cities [34].

During the war conditions, various activities had
been forgotten that the government now wished to
address in the reconstruction period, however, such
undertakings necessitated some financial resources,
which raised the price of goods and services in Iran,
especially in the cities. Consequently, the surge of
inflation caused considerable damage to people living on
fixed incomes between 1988 and 1995. For instance, the
average annual inflation rate was 24 percent between 1990
and 1995, rising to 50 percent in 1995-1996 [35,36].
Furthermore, governmental organizations earned their
income from fees for services irrespective of the
backgrounds of the people from this period, which caused
urban management to seek more commercial profit in their
activities on the urban fabric [7, 29].

However, municipalities have earned more income
since 1991 by changes of approved urban regulations
such as urban boundary to applicants In lieu of receive
funds [7]. Although this method partially obviated the
financial shortage of municipalities, the cities expanded
against the backdrop of the enacted policies and plans.
Afterwards, people received more urban services without
paying a further tax or toll, which caused considerable
damage to the cities financial resources, especially in
some big cities (such as Tehran, Esfahan and Shiraz) and,
encouraged the people to migrate from rural areas to the
urban environment. Consequently, the cities were
transformed as a place for living with extensive facilities
and low cost for residents.

Family Planning Program (1989): The first time the
family planning program was applied in Iran, was in 1967,
however, it was stopped after the Islamic revolution in
1979. Subsequently, Iran’s population doubled in twenty
years from 1968 to 1988. Although the special conditions
of war did not allow much consideration of this matter, the
family planning program was once again introduced after the war ended in 1989. Under this program, the government provided some facilities for contraception at the family level. Consequently, the census results in Iran reveal that the population growth rate dropped from 3.3 in 1986 to 1.2 in 2001, which is recognized as one of the highest drops in the rate of population growth in developing countries. Regarding the government’s report in 2011, the population growth rate was 1.1 percent of which more than 71 percent lived in the cities [37]. Although the program was successfully implemented, the government functions failed to control the rural-urban migration as the urbanization rate increased from 68 percent in 2006 to 71 percent in 2011. However, the family planning program terminated in 2013. The census data indicated that a good opportunity had been lost by the relevant authorities to manage the urbanization expansion through equal development between the rural and urban areas and also provide sufficient investment to establish the required urban infrastructure.

City Council Establishment (1999): After the Islamic revolution, all the mentioned organizations and institutions in the Iranian constitution were established in the first few years, although the city and village councils were not established until 1999. Thus, Iran selected more than 200,000 local government positions for the initial experience in the history of the post-revolution era. According to chapter VII of the Iranian constitution, the city council and parliament (Majlis) are known as decision-makers and administrative institutions in Iran [38]. The city councils are elected by public vote every four years in all Iranian cities and have different responsibilities in administrative and supervision processes. In this line, electing mayors is recognized as the initial task of the city council. Establishment of the city councils was considered as a major action in the development of local democratic foundations and various challenges appeared in the urbanization process [39]. Large bodies of literature reveal that the reasons for the challenges in the city council or local government function can be classified into two main categories: (i) the lack of experience in democratic institutions as local governance in Iran’s urbanization [7, 39-40]; and (ii) the inefficiency of the Iranian governance system, which is based on centralization [39, 41]. The urban development control had been neglected due to inefficiencies of the city councils’ actions to manage urban growth. Consequently, the growth of informal settlements and illegal construction had been promoted in the cities and population movement continued.

Despite all the challenges, the influence of the city council on the urbanization process can be seen in every respect. Thus, it can be concluded that the city council provided an opportunity for major transformation in local governance through conducting urbanization growth by the implementation of policies as well as the improvement of consensus building in Iranian cities.

Housing: Housing is known as the basic requirement in almost all societies of the world. Maslow (1970) believes that shelter constitutes one of the highest levels of human need in living. In addition, housing is one of the major fields in the cities because residential buildings are the most popular in cities and, normally, are considered as a major element in the macro and micro economic objectives. In this case, the housing sector contributes a considerable percentage to Iran’s Gross National Product (GNP). Regarding Iran’s Central Bank (CBI) report, the housing industry allocated 4.8 percent of annual GNP from 1961 to 2003 [42].

As explained previously, the industrialization policy intensified the rapid growth of Iranian cities and subsequently, the housing section met the increased demand in accommodating newcomers in the cities [7]. Meanwhile, oil income had also been on the increase based on world competition in 1973, which led to further industrialization and construction in the cities. As an after-effect, it resulted in more job opportunities for unprofessional workers and, once, again the migration of the rural population to cities took place. The migration of workers to cities was happening at the same time as the inadequate housing plans and urban facilities and services. In line with this phenomenon, cities had to brave uncontrolled development and new settlements had to be created around these big cities.

During the 70s, society’s liquidity grew with the increase in oil income. Therefore, the government attempted to channel this liquidity to the housing sector by addressing the housing demands. Afterwards, the government canceled the Act of 1960 (the Prevention of Forcible Entry and Detainer), which resulted the eviction of tenant by owners. However, social convulsiveness happened in the cities and the government was motivated again to execute the Act of 1960. In addition, the Act of the Reduction of Rent was approved by the government in 1975. Thus, housing had transformed from being a basic need to become a political matter in major cities, especially in Tehran. The government attempted to approve the Act of Land Reclamation by promoting reduction in house prices in 1977, which proved to be effective. According to that Act, the government was
permitted to gain ownership of different land and could change the type of land use inside the urban boundary. In fact, this was the last action from the government to solve the problem before the Islamic revolution in 1979; however, this issue was not solved within this period.

However, the pre-revolutionary urbanization revealed that cities were developed in terms of the outgoing approach. Thus, the urban structure attempted to be established by effective elements from the outside. In this line, the urban management obtained financial recourse thought patterns and required data from central government [7]. At the same time, the experience of developed countries revealed that the cities were managed based on the introversion approach in European countries. Hence, urban management is held responsible for the people in developed countries [19]. Therefore, urban management was acknowledged to be representative of the government rather than being representative of the people. Moreover, the oil income, as the main urban financial resource, caused the urban management to rely on the central government. Thus, urban residents became opposed to the urban management.

From another angle, inadequate housing supply against increased demand for housing led workers to settle in slums and informal settlements surrounding the major cities. Thus, several informal settlements were raised inside or surrounding the major cities during the 70s. Initially, the residents of these areas provided for their need for urban services, such as electric power, running water and health services, in unofficial ways, because the urban management did not recognize these areas as part of the city. After a few years, they insisted that the urban authorities must supply urban infrastructure for the areas. An overview of the informal settlements reveals that the residents in the informal settlements sought a new identity for themselves based on the new inhabited areas. Through social linkages and the need to achieve a new identity, they attempted to create urban elements within the informal settlements. Consequently, these actions increased the number of people who migrated into these settlements and transferred these areas to a city region [15].

After the Islamic revolution, Iran’s constitution emphasized the right to acquiring adequate housing for households. The government employed various functions, such as the establishment of institutions and enacted laws to build adequate housing during the 1979 to 1986 period. Therefore, nearly 2.3 million house units were built between 1976 and 1986, whereas the total existing houses were 2.37 million units in 1976 [43]. In fact, the houses built exceeded the number of people who migrated to cities after the Islamic revolution when the built housing rate was 4.5 per cent, as the households grew just 4.0 percent annually [44]. However, the implementation of government policies’ caused defects in the city skeletons, such as the physical expansion of cities, massive migration to urban areas and the change in the population density, the establishment of different informal settlements, unprofessional subdivisions and land speculation [7]. Meanwhile, agriculture and infrastructure reserve lands which were located outside the city boundaries were transferred to clients for housing purposes [45]. Since 1985, the reduction in municipality budgets had led them to change the enacted plans, such as land use, density and city boundary, to earn money [46]. Although municipalities earned economic profit from the housing sector boom, the cities expanded horizontally and the building density increased.

Indeed, for the next five years, planning for housing was one of the main subjects in the national economic, social and cultural development plans that the government revealed policies and targets for [47]. However, although the government implemented various executive schemes, such as the Meher Housing Scheme, Housing with Hi-technology Scheme, Multitude Building and renewal of urban residential districts [48], in an attempt to improve the quality and efficiency of urban development, as well as residential buildings in Iran, the consequences show that the goals were not successfully achieved and the waves of urbanization continued unplanned [49].

Overview of Demographic Changes: As highlighted in the previous section, several events caused the increase in urban population and urban expansion in Iran. This research examines the impact of the mentioned events on the urbanization process based on the demographic changes. Although several sources are employed in the current research to analyze the demographic changes in Iran, the public census reports are the primary source. The first public census was executed in 1956 in Iran, following which the public census, as an obligatory instrument, has been performed every ten years until now. In this respect, the first general population and housing census (1956) revealed that 31.4 percent of the Iranian people inhabited the 199 cities, where among them, 41.6 percent resided in five major Iranian cities-Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz. This result shows the impact of industrialization and modernization policies, which led to
the facilities and infrastructure being established in major cities after the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925 [4]. Furthermore, Tehran, as the capital city of Iran, demonstrated the highest growth rate of urban population (25.4%) among these cities. The census shows that this growth rate is the highest urban population growth rate in Iran until now. The industrialization policy was implemented through the establishment of industries during the 50’s. Regarding the 1966 census, the population distribution ratio increased from 31.4 percent to 38 per cent (Table 1).

The decennial census during the period of 1966 through 1976 demonstrated that the population of Iran grew from 25.7 to 33.7 million. This indicates a 2.7% annual growth rate during this period. Subsequently, the urban population rose from 9.7 million (38%) in 1966 to 15.8 million (47%) in 1976. There are three major reasons for the high population growth rate in this period: 1-Reduction in mortality resulting from the improvement in the level of public health in Iran, 2-Increase in the level of welfare in cities through the improvement of Iran’s economic conditions, 3-Traditional beliefs and lack of awareness in families concerning family planning. Furthermore, the urban population growth rate resulted from the increase in job opportunities for unprofessional workers and, once again, the migration of the rural population to cities. This happened because of the implementation of the Land Reform policy in 1962 and the concentration on public health in the cities by the government. According to Table 1, most of the rapid urban population growth occurred due to the industrial development, as mentioned above. Meanwhile, the censuses indicate that although the urban population had increased, since 1956, the urban population growth rate has shown some reduction in big cities in Iran (Table 2). Therefore, one possible explanation is that rural populations preferred to migrate to cities and, consequently, contributed to the development of the middle-sized cities in Iran.

However, the urban population also grew before the Islamic revolution due to the industrialization policies in major cities. Consequently, people resided in the city surroundings and, subsequently, various satellite settlements were informally established. The war began when Iraq invaded the south, south-west and west of Iran. Accordingly, the redistribution of the people happened in specific Iranian provinces. This compulsory migration mainly involved the central and east and north-east parts of Iran. Generally, the government had encouraged the immigrants to reside in major cities, such as Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz and Isfahan due to the specific conditions of war [15, 50].

Finally, when the conflict ended in 1988, some of the people did not go back to their hometowns. The government encouraged them to return by offering appropriate facilities, but a large number of the people preferred to continue living around the major cities and conduct their lives within informal settlements [7]. Consequently, major cities prospered rapidly after the war. For instance, the population of the provinces of Tehran grew from 8.7 to 10.3 million between the 1986 and 1991 censuses [24-25]. Thus, major cities were unable to act responsibly towards the people’s needs due to the lack of efficient urban infrastructure and facilities.

Various functions were implemented to reduce the growth of the urban population over three decades, but the growth continued. In relation to this, the public censuses indicated, that, on average, from 1986 to 2006, the urban population increased 7 percent per year (Table 1). For instance, the government established the foundation of ‘Jihad-e-Sazandegi’ and ‘Housing Foundation’ for the development of rural areas to achieve equality of growth and a reduction in the migration to cities [4].

Meanwhile, Iran’s population grew 3.9 percent yearly from 1976 to 1986 (Table 1). This event caused Iran to experience the greatest population growth rate in the last

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<tr>
<td>Tehran</td>
<td>1,512,082</td>
<td>6,042,584</td>
<td>6,758,845</td>
<td>7,975,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashhad</td>
<td>241,989</td>
<td>1,463,508</td>
<td>1,887,205</td>
<td>2,868,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isfahan</td>
<td>254,708</td>
<td>986,753</td>
<td>1,266,072</td>
<td>1,986,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabriz</td>
<td>289,996</td>
<td>971,482</td>
<td>1,191,043</td>
<td>1,579,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiraz</td>
<td>170,659</td>
<td>848,289</td>
<td>1,053,025</td>
<td>1,711,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,953,563</td>
<td>26,844,561</td>
<td>36,818,000</td>
<td>70391065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [20-25]
century. In addition, the lack of planning caused a
deficiency in the facilities and resources were revealed in
different themes, such as jobs, housing, high education
and social welfare and migration to urban areas were
intensified by people who sought appropriate jobs as
unskilled workers. Therefore, the government began to
promote and encourage family planning. Consequently,
the population growth rate reduced to 1.96 percent yearly
(from 1986 to 1996). The latest public censuses reveal that
the population growth rate fell to 1.16 percent yearly
between1996 and2006 (Table 1). The efforts achieved
considerable results, which were more than the
determined rate in the social-economic development plan.
However, the urban population and their distribution are
recognized as one of the major problems in the
sustainable development of Iran.

The demographic changes in Iran’s history indicate
that Iran, as a developing country, has faced rapid growth
in urbanization in the last 40 years, during which time the
urban population grew from 31.4 percent in 1956 to 68.6
percent in 2006 [20]. Regarding the published report, the
current population of Iran is estimated to be more than 75
million, of which more than 50 million persons live in
urban areas. Although the rate of urbanization growth has
changed considerably during these years, the expansion
of urbanization has continued (Table 1).

This may have happened because effective factors
have influenced the urbanization process and rural-urban
migration, especially inappropriate policies for housing
over the past five decades. Furthermore, imbalanced
regional development and unequal investment in cities
intensified the jobless and shortage of housing in
different parts of Iran and , subsequently, the population
migrated to find suitable occupancy in major cities. Thus,
it intensified the disproportionate distribution of national
income in different regions [15]. However, this research
concentrates on housing matters in the following section
as the major role in the macro-economic index, the making
of the social cohesion and prevention of informal
settlements and unplanned urbanization.

CONCLUSION

The current study concentrated on the urbanization
process in Iran as a country in Southwest Asia due to its
strategic position in the Middle-East, Strait of Hormuz and
extensive mineral and energy resources, such as oil,
natural gas and copper. The review of the urbanization
evolution indicates several elements that have intensified
urbanization and the urban population growth rate in Iran.

These can be presented in eight major policies and
events: industrialization, land reform, Islamic revolution,
war with Iraq, reconstruction period, family planning
program, city council establishment and housing
strategies. Due to the inadequate infrastructure in the
industries and the need for efforts toward industrialization
during the Pahlavi dynasty, Iranian cities have been
emphasized as the engine of growth, as well as Iran’s
economic system, which depends on crude oil income.

Although following this policy has created some chances
to establish major industry surrounding major cities,
various potential opportunities have been missed in the
growth process, such as agriculture due to the
unbalanced regional development.

The industrialization process and other policies, such
as land reform, encouraged people to migrate from the
rural areas to major cities during this period. Major urban
issues were born through this social movement in
housing, urban infrastructure and weakness of the
traditional agriculture process. Unsuitable functions
caused uncontrolled urban growth and the birth of several
informal settlements inside and surrounding the cities.
Although the Islamic revolution created different changes
in the social, economic and administrative structure, Iraq’s
attack caused to stagnating broad functions and
processes during the installation of a new governance
process. This resulted in mass population migration to the
central, north and northeast of Iran and , subsequently,
various informal settlements being founded in the
mentioned regions. The war with Iraq challenged the
limitations of budget resources and intensified the control
of urban growth in Iran. Consequently, the number of
cities and rate of population growth increased
considerably and , subsequently, the government
applied reconstruction policies when the war ended in
1988. The family planning program was successfully
applied and the population growth rate reduced from
3.2 percent to 1.1 percent over ten years. In contrast, some
policies intensified the uncontrolled urban development.
Thus, the population growth rate of Iran reduced while
the urban population increased over the previous ten
years.

Finally, it can be concluded that the process of Iran’s
urban development can be organized for optimum
efficiency if all the levels of planning are accommodated
within the strategy for urbanization control. It should be
noted that Iranian society has specific situations in terms
of the social, cultural and economic conditions. Thus, it is
feasible that the urban development process is managed
based on certain policies whereas other effective elements
are also adapted based on this strategy. This matter refers to the special conditions in the administrative, legal and social characteristics of Iran which can be considered by policy makers and authorities to create an appropriate governance mechanism.

REFERENCES