Designing City Development Strategy (CDS) Based on Participatory Visioning in Bojnourd

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Abstract

Today, cities should play an active role in the development of the local economy and improve the quality of life of the citizens are competitive. The experience of developed countries shows the efforts of the economic and social development of the city will be more successful when guided by a strategic process. The visioning as the heart of the CDS and strategic thinking before planning is of great importance in the planning of urban development. The main objectives of the study are to create a platform for residents to discuss the common future of planning in Bojnourd and to achieve a shared vision for the future development of Bojnourd paving the way for planning urban development and implementation plans. The method used in this study is applied based on objective descriptive- analytical based on method and nature. Based on the results of research, in this paper, it attempts to examine the views of different urban groups in Bojnourd with respect to the problems of the city and its capabilities and potentialities and then develop a vision for Bojnourd in 1414 by collaborative and strategic approach and finally create a clear framework by defining alternative scenarios for the future development of the city. In this regard, the residents and various members of urban population in Bojnourd have a fairly good consensus on the capabilities, potential and problems of this city eventually leading to reach a common vision for the future development of Bojnourd.

Keywords: city development strategy, strategic planning, landscape, landscape participatory, Bojnourd

Introduction

Planning for the future of a society can be a difficult, time consuming and expensive task. Authorities and residents of cities are often consumed by routine work rather than pondering on the future of their society. Residents are looking for good schools, respectful jobs, security, clean environment and the likes in the place they live in. In spite of that, without a common vision, societies limit their capabilities to making decisions regarding these subjects. In other words, they are consumed by routine life and they get used to the present conditions. This state resembles that of the driver who drives through the country without any maps. The question that arises here is that aside from the citizens, who has to determine the future of societies. In other words, who should determine and plan the course of actions for the city? Is it the responsibility of the central government or the local government? Who are the decision makers in the affairs of constructing highways, developing the higher education system, expanding heavy or lighter industries, safe guarding gardens and agricultural field and hundreds of other subjects that are capable of having a massive effect on the future of the society and its residents? Should the people themselves participate in the future of their society and be active? Or should another group of special people take over and determine this future for them?
Today in urban societies of our country, there are groups of people as technocrats and omniscient experts who make decisions regarding the affairs of the future of the urban society, without using the great power in that society's citizens. This factor causes the lack of proper understanding about the issues and problems of the city, the potentials and capabilities of the city and consequently, leads to the procurement of a non-realistic development plan for the cities of our country. The goal of the present paper is to create a ground for the residents of a city to think about the future of their city and plan their shared future together. In fact, the present article is a guide for the urban community to reach a common vision of the future and an execution plan that would in turn be a guide for that society to achieve its goals.

**Theoretical definitions and basis**

**City Development Strategy (CDS) program**

City development strategy program is regarded as the latest participatory approach in strategic planning for helping cities and it is incorporated based on goals such as reducing urban poverty, decentralization, increasing the amount of the citizens' real contributions and improving urban living conditions. The most important center that is based on the CDS approach is not to merely design documents as the ultimate goal, but to pay attention and stress the element of execution. The CDS plan presents lines as operation programs to be incorporated in the city and its sphere of influence. The most important factors include urban poverty and ways to decrease it, citizens' living conditions, sustainable urban development, transportation system, urban infrastructures, tourism, compatible industries and technologies, cultural and artistic activities and the likes. City development strategy is a new tool for helping to develop and respond to the global tidal changes and healing urban poverty and expanding local economy.

The goals of CDS are the participation of all the effective parts in the society to reach a long term vision for the city, stabilizing the growth strategy, reaching an agreement on the priorities in official issues and identifying short term operation plans (Urban / Environment Development Unit, 2004).

City development strategy is ultimately a participatory decision making for cities that face the crisis of urbanism poverty, increasing competition and putting pressure on environmental and economic stability. This plan provides a framework for economic growth, stability and equality by incorporating a series of actions and strategies.

**Visioning**

Visioning in strategic evaluation, especially in urban planning where changes take place rapidly in the city, is regarded as the first step. Its goal is to picture the city's desired future (M. Hodgkinson, 2002). Visioning is a process that shows what the society wants to achieve in the future and also, plans regarding how to reach that future. In the process of public involvement, societies identify their main intents and values and their vision of their future and by transferring it into a manageable and operational system, they adjust the general purpose of the society and its operation plan (Stephen, 2000).

**Participatory visioning (community visioning)**

It is a concept to define a new method for extracting the information of the beneficiaries to reach a shared plan.

Community visioning is a dynamic method for the people to state the goals, understanding and image of the future of their society to reach a unified vision (R. Shipley & R. Newkirk, 1999).

**Research method**

In this study, the used method is the practical research method based on the goal and the study method is descriptive-analytic and survey based on the method and nature. The approach of
the present paper is strategic. To collect information in this study, the library and document methods, the direct observation and field and survey methods such as interviewing people, experts and urban elites and also designing questionnaires.

The local range of this study includes the city of Bojnourd. The statistical subjects include citizens, local urban officials, urban executives and experts of the city of Bojnourd. To assess the sample mass of the citizens the Cochran formula was utilized with a significance level in the amount of 95 percent (Hafeznia, 2007). Therefore, 317 subjects from the citizens were selected using random sampling to distribute the questionnaires. Also, to choose urban officials and experts, the non-probability sampling method was used.

After distributing the questionnaires among the citizens using random sampling and among the municipal officials and experts using consecutive sampling, the questionnaires were collected. The authorities' questionnaire was designed a completely open form and was distributed in the city's important offices like the municipality, city council, governor's office, the environment organization, the organization of the city's parks and greenery, the organization of the cultural heritage and the office of Islamic culture and guidance.

In the end, after collecting the distributed questionnaires among the different urban groups and assessing the opinions of the focus groups and city experts and putting them into the SPSS software, a vision of the city of Bojnourd in the year 2035 was designed with the help of the citizens and the city's experts and authorities. It should be mentioned that in the process of creating this vision of the city of Bojnourd, the Ames method was utilized. Accordingly, the present state of the city of Bojnourd and its issues and problems were discussed and the problems were prioritized (movement process). Table 1 shows the details related to the research's statistical subjects.

Table 1: Specifications related to the research's statistical subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Effective sample size</th>
<th>Sampling</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>50&lt;</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>305 person</td>
<td>Citizenry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>317 person</td>
<td>Random</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or less</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td></td>
<td>62 person</td>
<td>Elite and discussion groups</td>
<td>The City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21-3-</td>
<td></td>
<td>62 person</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 person</td>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Authors)
Introducing the studied area

The studied case is the city of Bojnourd, located in north east Iran, the center of Norht Khorasan province with an area of 36 square kilometers. According to the 2011 census, its population is 199791 people. This city is regarded as the north western gate of the Khorasan province and is surrounded by Turkmenistan from the north, with the cities of Shirvan, Qouchan, Esfarayen and Sabzevar from the north east to the south east and by the provinces of Mazandaran and Semnan from the northwest to the south west. In general, Bojnourd is considered a mountain city and is located in the south of Kapedaq Mountains, the east of Aladaq Mountains and north of the Alborz Mountains. Also in the south west of Bojnourd, the Golidaqi Mountains, which are mostly covered with cold trees and forest meadow, are located. Dispersed forests located in the western margins of Aladaq with an approximate length of 70 kilometers are its most famous forests that are expanded beneath these heights, fertile plains of Bojnourd, Garmkhan, Shaqan and Mane.

Creating a conceptual framework to state the vision of the city of Bojnourd

Visioning has two basic and vital bases that are the dependence of visioning on the complete assessment of the state and the quality of participation. According to this theory, the general basics of the conceptual framework are proposed according to the following table to frame the statement of the vision of the city of Bojnourd:

Table 2: Statement framework for the vision of the city of Bojnourd based on Golkar's proposed model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-Applying the framework of the Bojnourd</th>
<th>The vision statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-A city with historical and natural attractions City (service-tourism)</td>
<td>Implication meaning Anchor points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Economic base headquarters premium services of agriculture in the north of East Iran</td>
<td>A clear meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Log-tech agriculture</td>
<td>Socio-cultural morphology Identity Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-A good place for tourism-recreation-tourist services with the regional (land use plan)</td>
<td>Economic morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Grid access network and its compliance with the topography (new comprehensive plan)</td>
<td>Physical morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Physical development of North Bojnourd (detailed design)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Modulator overflow crowd at a local scale (landscape 20 years old).</td>
<td>Local station Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Providing superior service economy on a local scale (outlook 20-year-old North Khorasan Province)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Tourist destination on a national, regional (city development document Bojnourd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing the issues and problems of the city of Bojnourd in the view of the citizens

Citizens

According to the results from the questionnaires, the lack of an efficient urban management, shortage of proper office facilities and buildings and urban infrastructure, lack of a ring road and traffic and urban transportation issues, shortage in proper public places and halls and spaces for sports and entertainment and the low amount of capitation of green space per person with regard to the industrial sewage that is left in the city because of its physical shape (shape of a bowl) are among the main problems in the city of Bojnourd. Added to that, the lack of citizens' participation in
urban affairs, the high costs of urban services and lack of designed plans and programs for the future development of the city are among the problems that the citizens have pointed out.

![Figure 1: Main issues and problems in the city of Bojnourd in the view of the citizens](image)

In the question where the citizens were asked about the problems that should be in priorities of the city officials, they chose efficient urban management as their first priority. Therefore, it seems that the citizens of Bojnourd are not very satisfied with their urban management and want an improvement in its state for the future development of the city.

**Elites and focus groups**

In the view of the elites and focus groups, the lack of proper public and cultural spaces in the city, like auditoriums and public libraries, and also the low amount of the capitation for green space per person in the city, are by far the most basic issues of the city of Bojnourd. Shortage in the urban facilities and infrastructure, immethodical immigration from the villages to the city and the lack of an efficient urban management are among the other problems of the city of Bojnourd. Added to that, the issues of urban transportation and the lack of the citizens' participation in urban affairs are the next subjects.

But in prioritizing the city issues and problems by the experts, the lack of an efficient urban management is the first priority. Therefore, in the subject of the lack of an efficient urban management, the city elites and the citizens are in complete agreement that the city of Bojnourd suffers from the lack of a proper government and accordingly, must be in the priority of the authorities. The issues of urban transportation and the lack of proper public spaces is the second priority of the experts. In the end, the lack of the citizens' participation is the third priority with 16 percent (figure 2).
Municipal officials and executives

With regard to the fact that the questionnaires of the municipal officials and executives were open, each of the workers in the different offices of the city has looked upon the questions from his or her office's point of view. For instance, the authorities of the environment organization of the city of Bojnourd have prioritized water and soil sources and the non-standard methods of garbage disposal and the locating among the main problems of the city to be in the attention of the authorities. The office of Islamic culture and guidance has evaluated cultural issues as the first priority in the problems of the city. In spite of these, if we wanted to grade the issues and problems of the city of Bojnourd in the view of the city authorities, most of them believe that the shortages in the infrastructures of transportation in air, rail way, road sections and the lack of a ring road and consequently, too much traffic in the city and also the shortage in the capitation for greenery per person, with regard to the geographical shape of the city of Bojnourd that prevents the sewage and pollution from leaving the city (being surrounded by mountains) are among the most important and basic problems that should be considered priorities. The issue of getting government budgets to expand investment and also the lack of attracting investment from the private sector are the second priority that should be thought of to resolve these issues. The lack of a long term program for urban development, lack of enough arid lands that are appropriate for the city to expand, lack of coordination between different city organizations and offices and the lack of the utilization of experts in related organizations and institutions are also among the problems that should be accordingly put into priority.

In the end of the first stage of visioning and analyzing the views of different city groups with regard to the issues and problems of the city, traffic problems and transportation infrastructure are among the most important problems that the three groups agree on. The lack of greenery capitation with regard to the geographical shape of the city of Bojnourd and the fact that the pollution stays in the city because of its concave shape and it being surrounded by heights is among the problems that are agreed upon by the three groups. In some cases, the three groups have great disagreements, especially in the issue of inefficient urban management, which of course seems only natural. Figure 3 shows the resulted consensus on the issue by the three groups. After observing the current state of affairs and analyzing the issues and problems of the city of Bojnourd and also prioritizing its most important problems in the views of different city groups, the next stage, visioning, is to analyze...
the state that the city of Bojnourd wants to reach in the future. In this stage, a participatory vision for the city of Bojnourd is devised using different views from different groups of the city.

Figure 3: Prioritizing the problems of the city of Bojnourd from different perspectives

According to the results from analyzing the questionnaires, more than 50 percent of the citizens of the city of Bojnourd have stated that the most appropriate activity for Bojnourd in the future are industrial and tourist activities. Commerce industry, services and exports of agricultural products are in turn, the second, third and fourth priorities.

Figure 4: Vision of Bojnourd in the next 20 years in the view of the citizens
In another question, the citizens were asked what type of a city they wanted Bojnourd to be in the next 20 years. More than 28 percent of the citizens stated that they wanted Bojnourd to turn into an academic hub and become one of the important scientific centers of the country. Another 28 percent said that they wanted Bojnourd to become a city with tourist, historical and natural attractions for national and international tourists. And 18 percent stated that they liked Bojnourd to turn into a city with a dynamic and active economy and the community to become affluent and without unemployment (Figure 3).

![Figure 5: Bojnourd's indicator of development until the year 2035 in the view of the citizens](image)

In another question, by stating the most important development indicator of the city of Bojnourd until the year 2035, more than 26 percent of the citizens have stated that improving the economic status and increasing the people's pay as the first indicator. 22 percent have put the expansion of higher education centers and universities and another 22 percent the safe guarding of the city's cultural and historical identity as the city's development indicator (Figure 6).

In another question, more than 50 percent of the city elites have stated tourist activities as the most appropriate for the city in the future. 22 percent have put the expansion of higher education centers and universities and another 22 percent the safe guarding of the city's cultural and historical identity as the city's development indicator. 25 percent of the elites chose commerce industry and the export of agricultural products and 12 percent selected the expansion of handicrafts as the most important activities for the city of Bojnourd.

In answer to the question of what the urban elites wanted the city of Bojnourd to look like in the next 20 years, more than 35 percent stated that they wanted Bojnourd to become an academic hub and a scientific center in the region. 19 percent said that they wanted Bojnourd to be a city with a high level of urbanism culture. 12 percent said that they wanted Bojnourd to turn into a city with a dynamic and active economy and a community that is affluent and with no unemployment (Figure 6).
Therefore, turning Bojnourd into the region's scientific hub is the common wish of the city's citizens and elites. The most important reason for this wish is Bojnourd's history in sciences and knowledge.
In a question, 33 percent of the urban elites have stated that the expansion of higher education centers and universities in the city and increasing people's pay and improving the states of the city's economy as the most important indicators of urban development (figure 7). Therefore, it is observed that with regard to the development indicators of the city of Bojnourd in the next 20 years, we have reached 6 indicators that are frequently stated by municipal officials. Table 3 indicates these visions in order of their importance in the view of the officials.

Table 3: Indicators of development and the vision of the city of Bojnourd in the next 20 years in the view of municipal officials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development indicators and the vision of the city of Bojnourd in the next 20 years</th>
<th>Significance grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourist activities and expanding tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning Bojnourd into the scientific center of the area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding agricultural activities and its related industries</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A modern city with a rich culture and with the values of an Iranian-Islamic city</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A thriving developed city with people who are interested in their destiny and a city free of poverty and unemployment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning Bojnourd into an intelligent city with electronic management</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the consensus comparison between the views of the three groups of the city (citizens, elites and officials), it is observed that turning Bojnourd into an academic hub and the scientific center of the region is a vision that the three groups agree on. Expanding tourist activities and tourism is the second vision that the three groups agree upon and consider a desired vision for the city. Expanding agricultural activities and its related industries is the third vision with a complete agreement by the three groups. By combining the proposed visions of the different city groups with the issues and problems that were referred to in the first stage and by putting them together, a participatory vision is reached that all the city's citizens agree on. Therefore, the common vision of the city of Bojnourd for the year 2035 according to the opinions of the city's residents is devised as follows:

Bojnourd in the year 2035 is a tourist and historical city, a scientific center in the area by reviving the cultural identity of the city, with a dynamic and active economy with an efficient management and with the collaboration of the citizens in urban affairs, and with a rich and high technology in agriculture and its related industries in the north east region of the country and with an expansive and efficient connection network.

But regarding the indicators of city development in Bojnourd until the year 2035, expanding higher education centers and universities in the city of Bojnourd are the most important indicators that the three groups agreed upon. Improving the economic state and increasing people's pay is the second indicator that the three groups pointed out and demanded their expansion. This wish is more urgent especially among the citizens and municipal official rather than the elite and focus groups. Therefore, if we wanted to define scenarios based on the opinions of the different city groups and the devised vision, there are three important basic scenarios. Figure 8 shows these three scenarios.

Together with these three defined scenarios in the figure, two or three other side scenarios should be mentioned that in a way can be combined with the scenario above. For instance, the scenario of improving the economic state and increasing the people's pay and reducing unemployment is a subject that can be looked for in all the three scenarios above. In other words, definition of action plans for the scenarios above should be designed in a way that causes the creation of working positions and reduction of unemployment, improving the economic states and
increasing people's pay; because this matter is the wish of all the groups of the city. In fact, creating employment and improving the economic conditions are two of the most basic missions that all the three scenarios above should work to accomplish.

Figure 8: The vision of Bojnourd

The second side scenario is that the city of Bojnourd becomes a city with a developed urban culture on which the urban elites and municipal officials put special stress. It needs to be mentioned that this scenario can be somehow found in the first scenario. By turning Bojnourd into an academic hub with the culture that the university and students bring, can cause the improvement of culture in this city. And finally, the third side scenario, is keeping the city's historical and cultural identity, which can also be found in the second scenario by expanding tourism activities. To expand tourism and attract tourists in this city, with regard to the fact that one of the city's tourist attractions is the city's historical sites, these places need to be safely guarded and introduced as the city's tourist attractions.

Conclusion

One of the main challenges in providing the document for the methodology of the urban development in countries that do not have great non-governmental facilities, is providing the organized collaboration of people from different social sectors in the visioning process. Proper laws, education, advertisement, NGOs, democratic growth, attention to the civil community, etc. are among the necessities to reach collaboration in devising the document for urban development. Therefore, it was tried in this paper to devise the vision for the city of Bojnourd in the year 2035 in a participatory fashion and in the framework of strategic approach by analyzing the opinions of different groups of the city of Bojnourd regarding the city's issues and problems, capabilities and potentials to turn the process of the city's future development in the form of a real precise framework by defining the main and alternative scenarios.

A vision is a mental journey from the known to the unknown. Visioning is a process about the future of an image a community wants and then plans to reach them. In fact, a vision is like a lighthouse that indicates the way rather than the range and span and points out the direction rather
than the place. Visioning should be regarded as a civil process whose core is the participation of the citizens.

![Figure 9](image)

**Figure 9: Defining the main scenarios for the future development of the city of Bojnourd**

With regard to this very basis, the views of three different city groups (citizens, elites and municipal officials) in the first stage were analyzed and the current state of the city of Bojnourd, its capabilities, issues and problems were evaluated and discussed in this paper. In this stage, the lack of a devised and long term plan for the city's future development and traffic issues were among the problems that the three above mentioned groups agreed upon. Inefficient urban management was also among the most important problems that the citizens and urban elites had complete agreement on and demanded its improvement. The municipal official did not point this out, which seems perfectly normal. In the next stage of the visioning process, the state, which the city of Bojnourd should reach in the next 20 years and also the development indicators were analyzed by posing some questions. In the end, the vision for the city of Bojnourd in the year 2035 was devised by combining the opinions and wishes of the groups of the city and comparing them. After planning the vision, the most important and basic scenarios (three scenarios) for the future of the city were defined. It should be mentioned that creating the statement of the vision and devising a participatory vision are only the first steps, but they are also important in the greater process of developing the community. The very important next step is to create action plans for the defined scenarios. This, in turn is a very important stage in strategic planning. By operating the city's common visions, the daily development of the city of Bojnourd to elevate the current issues can be reached.

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