

Explanation on Conversion of Rural Areas into Town as a Challenge in National Scale and Formation of Khamshahr

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Many plans and programs have been outlined to solve problems including rapid increase of urbanization, unbalanced distribution of population, a plenty of urban problems, increase of unemployment, underdevelopment of rural points, immigration and specially migration of active population toward metropolitan areas. These are rampant issues throughout Iran like many other developing countries. One of the most important applications to solve these issues may be promotion of rural settlements into towns with the objective of decreasing population streams toward big cities like Tehran, Mashhad and etc. Conversion and promotion of the villages into towns is one the most acceptable strategies for decreasing zonal inequalities in most of developing countries. Rural town- making is shown to be a multi- faceted process in which the municipal state carries out a protracted social reform of its local population (Knight, 1994: 249). This strategy in Iran is based on the strategy or theory of UFRD or urban function in rural development. In this theory, transition of the village into town has introduced a way for development. Based on this strategy, promotion of villages which has the necessary capacity to be converted into towns is the basic solution for rural development.

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Exploring the urban hierarchy of Iran in different population and housing census data, it reveals a new phenomenon that the author has called this phenomenon, “Kham-Shahr” or “Crude-Town”. This means the new town formed without having the minimum of population defined as a town in Iranian administrative categories or new towns which have less than 5000 people as inhabitants. These settlements which lack many urban facilities, services and equipment, nowadays formed more than one third of Iranian cities. Changes in criteria for transition of villages into town in last decades led to massive changes in pattern of settlement system in Iran (Rezvani et al., 2009).

Methodology

The present paper has studied controversial process of transition of village into towns. The methodology of this research is descriptive – analytic using data of official census in 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985, 1995, 2005 and 2010. The scale of the study is in two levels: national and provincial levels. In addition to this, it has been tried to explore the main forces and causes of using this strategy by the State.

Results

The results show that in all periods of census we have the phenomenon of Kham-Shahr (towns less than 5000 inhabitants) but in three last censuses, the number of these Kham Shahr has increased to more than 370 towns out of 1139 cities of Iran in 2010. All of provinces have this kind of settlements. The number of cities in Iran has increased from 199 to 1139 cities from 1955 to 2010. But only 26 cities out of them are new planned towns around the metropolitan areas like Pardis, Hashtgerd and Parand in Tehran and Golbahar and Binaloud in Mashhad. This means that rest of them (914 towns) has been created because of strategy of promotion and transition of rural points into towns. But from this number, many of them have been converted into towns without qualifying the criteria of population. Therefore, at the moment there are many small settlements where are a part of urban system. Some of them (33 towns) even have less than 1000 people. The smallest town of Iran is Sumar in Kermanshah province with only 20 people and Chenare in Kurdistan province with

184 people. This challenging phenomenon has pros and cons. It is going to say that in literature review, some people agree with this strategy and believe that it has many advantages and on the other side some scholars disagree.

Conclusion

The controversial phenomenon of very small new-formed towns has been an issue with Iranian urban system in all periods. But for answering to the question of what are the main reasons of transition of these small villages to town, we has studied the correlation between number of small new towns and other variables like distance from capital city (Tehran), distance from center of province, and the time of formation of the province. The concluded results show the meaningful correlation and relation with all three variables. This means that the main forces of strategy and policy of transition of village to town in Iran has three different reasons: administrative- managerial reason, political and defensive reason and specially development of isolated parts and settlements. Among the three causes, the last one, economic development and growth is the most important reason of the transition. So, in the last years, among all urban levels, small new formed towns (or Kham Shahr) and rurban settlements have more than 70 percent of all Iranian cities.

Keywords: Khamshahr, Rural development, Small city, Urban system, Urbanism.

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