

Polycentric Urban Areas; Cooperation, Competition or Co-competition? (An Overview Analysis)

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

While polycentric development policies are applied to a variety of spatial scales, they are also having special interpretation on a regional scale. Polycentric development on regional scale refers to the development of regional cluster functionality relationships of cities. Issues such as regional competitiveness, regional spatial-functional structure, and cooperation among the cities have been addressed in polycentric urban areas. Polycentric urban regions are composed of clusters of neighboring cities that are separated politically and historically, and do not illustrate a clear hierarchy of economic, political, and demographic order but they are well connected by infrastructures. In all Europe, spatial planners are deploying policies that promote the spatial, economic, and social development of such polycentric urban regions. Since the 1990s, the term of "polycentric" has attracted the attention of planners and policymakers to urban planning once again, not as an urban structure in the region, but rather as a strategic concept. Nevertheless, the planners' perspective on these areas was different. Some believed that cooperation among cities in a polycentric urban region in the form of network logic would place them along the greater monocentric city-regions. In contrast, others emphasized the strengthening of the competitiveness of each city in achieving the functional, economic, and cultural diversity of the polycentric urban region. While cooperative strategies have a stronger theoretical basis, strengthening the competitive position of each city has higher potential as executive strategy.

2. Review of Literature

Planners and decision-makers believe polycentric areas have high potential. However, the literature considers two approaches to confronting and improving the competitive position of these regions: The first assumption is that sets of small and

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medium-sized cities together can create opportunities for regional economic growth. While each city is ignored alone, they can work together to achieve a better position in the list of cities in the international competition. However, the fact is that the polycentric region is not necessarily competitive. It needs to form an integrated urban network, to compete in this region. In fact, the term "network" emphasizes the strong and complex relationships between cities and the cohesion and integrity of the region. In addition, networks have a strong link with economies of scale, efficient size for economic critical mass and synergistic activities. Therefore, it has become part of the standard vocabulary of managers, planners, and decision makers for dealing with polycentric urban regions. In particular, synergy is one of the central goals in many polycentric urban policies. The second approach, although accepting these areas as a coherent urban network takes a different method. This group of policy makers believe that the best way to enhance the competitive strengths of a region as a whole is to concentrate each of the smaller functional cities and towns on their comparative advantages and thereby turn their spatial, economic, and cultural diversity into capital. This means that central economic zones are considered as the main places to create the economy of agglomeration, and the diversity of the region as a key point of international competition.

3. Method

The research is qualitative. Polycentric urban regions have been reviewed and analyzed regarding the various documents and secondary informations.

4. Results and Discussion

The research sought to introduce the concept of "co-competition" as the third way by using the literature of marketing networks and marketing, which can combine the benefits of each strategy of cooperation and competition. In this regard, In this regard, a variety of co-competitive strategies can occur in two forms in polycentric urban areas: horizontal and vertical co-competition. In Horizontal co-competition, cities collaborate in a particular performance or in a collaborative project, while competing in other sections. Vertical co-competition in a polycentric urban region means that a city in the region serves as a provider of some of the other city resources in a particular activity, while continuing to compete in their geography of demand.

5. Conclusion

Polycentric urban regions are products of a historical process that has caused conflicting interests among multiple actors due to overlapping of different layers of space. In some cases, levels of local, regional, national, and sometimes international levels are involved. Therefore, co-competition strategies can be an executive option that also has the theoretical underpinnings of cooperation. But for the implementation of these strategies, two schools of thought were introduced. Pasquinelli (2013) and Guess, De Jong and Mijers (2016), both focusing on the activity-based approach, expanded cooperation in city branding and polycentric urban regions, but they didn't show the logic of the interaction of actors or cities in each of the games and in

different circumstances. Utilizing two schools of thought through game theory can extend our understanding of the contradictions and complexities of the polycentric urban regions of the country on particular topics, especially in the absence of upper level layers of information such as Amol-Babol-Ghaemshahr-Sari (Central part of Mazandaran). So, it is suggested that future studies focus on the decisions of each actors and city and its implementing mechanisms in a particular activity.

Key Words: Competition, Co-Operation, Co-Competitive, Polycentric Urban Areas

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