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Mechanisms and Rules Governing the Lock-in of Regional Development in Khuzestan Province of Iran

Hashem Dadashpoor¹, Faramarz Rostami²

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Extended Abstract

The debate on planning and development to achieve it has always been a serious concern of the country. However, in spite of the efforts conducted, regional development has been associated with plenty of locks-in and barriers. The question of this article is why the Khuzestan region faces long-standing problems despite its abundant resources and high development capacity. To answer this question, a model of a productive mechanism has been developed based on an idea, so that if these mechanisms are present and act as expected, then the reasons for the events and the current situation in the region will be explained. This paper has used reproductive logic within the frame of critical realism paradigm. It has a critical look at the subject in addition to the explanation. The explanatory model of this research has a core (the concept of extraction) that has created five other concepts (environmental drainage, economic monopoly; the center's dominance in the same time the delegation of authorities from a political point of view; cultural dependence and social fiction with a zero-sum altogether from the social point of view). They, in aggregate, have formed the basis of regional development and the dominance of this thinking in the planning of the region over the past few decades, the mechanisms and rules that have been governing the lock-in and barriers of regional development. To address this problem, it is necessary to pay attention to integrated planning and change the extractive thinking in regional and national policy-making, planning and management.

Keywords: regional planning, extraction, Critical realism, Productive mechanisms, Khuzestan province

1. Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Arts and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author)

✉ h-dadashpoor@modares.ac.ir

2. PhD Candidate of Urban and Regional Planning, Urban and Regional Planning Department, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran

✉ f.rostami2010@gmail.com



INTRODUCTION

The issue is why the Khuzestan region is plagued by dilemmas such as imbalances in economic, social and physical contexts; severe environmental pollution and degradation; low overall economic efficiency of the province; low employment rates; inadequate utilization of potential local development opportunities. The lack of "provincial development management" authority to coordinate and promote the development of the province faces the challenge of having very high development resources and capacities? In fact, there is a contradiction in the development process of this region and it has increased over the past years and more efforts have been made to develop it based on the definition of different projects in the region. The issue becomes even more important when extractive activities as a tool for socio-economic development (Pellegrini, 2018, 131) dominate regional planning (and development of the country) and the change in it is also faced with many obstacles. Development of this kind is, in fact, a deception through modern narratives, where development can be ignited by the extraction of these resources (Kapuscinski, 1992; Nixon, 2011; Pellegrini, 2018, 138), and the result of such thinking is now visible in the Khuzestan province after almost a century.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to build a model of causal mechanisms based on the idea that regional development planning thinking is based on the concept of extraction based on a layer-by-layer understanding of the existing reality of the region, which in turn creates the underlying mechanisms that lock-in development and is a barrier in the process of development of the region.

METHODOLOGY

This article was conducted in the framework of the critical realism paradigm. The methodology of this research takes a critical look at the subject using the retroductive research strategy. The model constructed to explain the mechanisms and structures is abstract descriptions that rely on evidence-based reasoning in the process of proving their existence, and this evidence is obtained through qualitative data. To answer the question of why, the three layers are identified, understood and explained. The purpose of examining the first layer (empirical domain) is to find an understanding that provides the context for to rebuild the idea.

In fact, there is a need for an idea to discover the mechanisms and productive structures and to build a model of them to explain the existing observed rules. In the second layer (actual domain), by expanding the notions of the idea, we will try to

address some of the events that exist - whether we observe them or not. With the context now provided, we will explore the productive mechanisms in the region and then prove them by entering the third layer (real domain).

RESULT

In general, the idea can be put forward that in Khuzestan, planning (development) thinking has been formed on the basis of 'extraction' in the past few decades. In fact, the overlapping of two themes, one of the complex natures of the region and the other of developmental thinking, has given greater emphasis to planning on the concept of extraction and this emphasis has led to the concept of extracting the province's development from different aspects, reproducing other concepts. These concepts serve as foundations for planning, budgeting, and policymaking that support this idea as real events.

1) *From an environmental perspective - the process of drainage of resources.* The question is how to use the environmental capacity of an area in the long run leading to resource drainage.

2) *From a political perspective - the process of dominating the center on the periphery.* How activities carried out at the level of a region hierarchically defined for the administration of the country will lead to the central government's domination over such areas.

3) *From an economic perspective - the process of monopolization of interests.* The boom in economic production has benefits for the region and the national level, but with the idea of extraction over time creates a monopolistic process of achieving benefits in the region that, in combination with other trends, takes on a lasting and incremental state.

4) *From a social perspective - the process of irresponsibility.* The social relationships and relations governing the region are shaped by the actions and reactions that take place between regional affairs and the trans-regional perspective and, in relation to other relationships in other areas, take on a particular and somewhat stable form.

5) *From a cultural perspective - the process of subordination.* The extractive approach in the region planning and management can alter the local, historical and cultural characteristics of the region and create a special character in the people and authorities of the area that, along with other developments in other areas, will internalize the extractive perspective.



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CONCLUSION

The examination of regional developments in different dimensions led to the explanation of a model of the mechanisms and rules governing the lock-in in the regional development of Khuzestan province. This model is based on the multilayered reality of the region and includes a thinking core that either wants to be developed or confronted or exploited by some factors. Because we are faced with the multidimensional reality under the existing conditions, this core also, in various aspects of the territorial life (environmental, economic, political, cultural and social), creates and supports other structurally productive concepts that support each other mutually.

This cycle produces a space that dominates mechanisms and rules that lock development and impede regional development and is continuously flexibly producing and reproducing itself. Hence, any one-dimensional change or growth in development planning or effort without the intellectual and popular support will enhance this cycle. Therefore, in confronting these causal mechanisms in the region, the core of this model should be targeted and the extractive perspective would be separated from the planning and management perspective. Otherwise, any attempt to deal with its mechanisms will be ineffective and will worsen the situation in the region (the routine work that has been conducted so far).

NOVELTY

This paper attempts to analyze the multi-layered complexities affecting regional planning with the ontology and epistemology of critical realism. Including: 1) interdisciplinary and multidimensional view of events; 2) exploring the underlying layers, mechanisms, and causal structures of observable reality; and 3) A critical approach to events.

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