

Research Paper

The Relationship between Place Identity and Activities of Political Division of Space (Case Study: Kazerun Township)

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Abstract

Place identity indicates different senses, perceptions, and place attachment, as depending on the political system of residents, geographical places make different political activities. Political division of spaces is a process that divides political-spatial units structurally and functionally into homogeneous levels in order for optimally managing of national territories. Amongst the major indices of political division of space is considering place identity, which can negatively or positively affect arousing and quality of people's feelings of space. The research was conducted using a descriptive analytical method for collecting the related data to answer the question: what is the role of place identity and feeling of space in political activities of apace division (regarding Kazerun as a case)? Finding indicated that amongst the causes of uncomfortability in Kazerun is the negligence of political decision makers over identity and spatial components of geographical spaces of this region. This showed the interactional effects of political decisions and changes in geographical spaces.

Keywords: place identity, place sense, political divisions of space, Kazerun

Extended Abstract

Introduction:

Political division of space is a process carried out to divide countries' geographical territories into spatial units. These units should be homogenous in terms of structure and function, and be intended for coordinated development, reducing spatial inequalities, offering geographical fairness and a better supply of services. With the end result being a more efficient management of national territory, such efficiency could only be achieved through the use of professional principles and adherence to all identity, territorial, political, security, cultural and natural aspects. This way, the possibility of rising tensions would be reduced to a minimum, while participation and cooperation within regions will be maximized

Methodology:

The research was conducted using a descriptive analytical method for collecting the related data to answer the question: what is the role of place identity and feeling of space in political activities of apace division (regarding Kazerun as a case)?

Results and discussion:

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Following political decisions to divide certain regions of Kazeroun city, Koohchenar new town was formed the geographical features of the region and the dominant power were changed; subsequently, a number of protests were held in Kazeroun City. These tensions were the result of the loss of two rural districts called Dasht Barem and Anaarestan; meanwhile, these districts had previously filed requests to be added to Kazeroun city. Additionally, the separation of ancient, historical sites from the central region of Kazeroun including Tang Chougoun, the historical city of Bishapour, and Imam Zadeh Seyyed Husain was objected as well. Protesters believed there are spatial, cultural, natural, economic, and identity-related links between these two districts and Kazeroun; therefore, separating them was regarded as disregarding the city's identity. This led to the people to demonstrate their sense of belonging to the city in the form of violent reactions. According to these people, their natural, historical, and religious identities were shaped by Barem Valley, Tang Chougoun, Bishapour, and Imam Zadeh Seyyed Husain. As a result, losing these place and their addition to another territory was interpreted by the residents of Kazeroun as a threat against the holiness and the spirit of the place as well as the historical memories of their ancestors. Consequently, they aggressively opposed the decision. In fact, if professional principles along with all territorial, political, security, cultural, and natural aspects of the region are not taken into account in political divisions, then the result would be failing to achieve the intended philosophy and norm for the region. What is worth pointing out in the role of spatial identity with regards to the tensions taken place in Kazeroun city is the threat of separating candid places through the division program which provoked the residents' senses of attachment and belonging to the city. This led to a number of protests from the residents of Dasht Barem and Anaarestan rural districts on one hand, and also from the residents of Kazeroun city on the other, respectively opposing the separation and the loss of historical and spatial identities of the area. These protests demonstrated the significant role of political decisions on developments in geographical spaces; accordingly, such spatial turmoil in Kazeroun city created pressure on political bodies from the people and academic elites. Ultimately, the decision was suspended and was questioned due to its unprincipled nature.

Conclusion:

Otherwise, division would fail to offer a suitable mechanism in line with maintaining independence and national unity, and increasing cooperation between people; in this case, philosophical goals with respect to political organization of space would be unattainable. During the past decades following the Islamic revolution, one of the main features in policies dominating political divisions of the country's territory has involved developing, separating, and adding political and spatial units. Due to a number of different factors, particularly the geography of the dominant power, this has become one of the most effective measures taken by policymakers and especially, members of parliament, aimed at satisfying the people and achieving legitimacy. This is reflected by the significant increase in requests for divisions close to the time of parliament elections. Considering the flaws of the credit distribution system, the main motivation behind these divisions (developments, separation, and addition) is exclusively to attain more credits and concessions. Therefore, adopting a one-dimensional approach to this problem may bring about sociopolitical consequences and financial costs; a problem which was demonstrated during the occurrence of political divisions in Kazeroun city. As the same approach was employed in Kazeroun, the spatial rights and the identity of the area were overlooked. Meanwhile, those executing the program were willing to pay any price in order to form a new town (Koohchenar) as fast as possible. A decision that resulted in irreversible damages to national security. Only at the peak of tensions the authorities decided to stop continuing with the decision and postpone matters to the future.