



Regional Development or Regional Policies? A Review of 60 Years of Regional Planning and Development in Pre and Post Islamic Revolution Iran

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Abstract. *Since the emergence of planning thought 90 years ago, planning and development in Iran has always been a subject of active debate. Despite this long history, the centralized planning system has never been able to promote development that is consistent with the advantages and disadvantages of the regions, hence the evident imbalance in regional development of the country. This article aims to investigate the obstacles to regional development in Iran before and after the 1979 revolution, using a descriptive-analytic methodology. The results show that the main obstacle in regional development in the country lies in its centralized management and planning system, having led to serious barriers such as a sectoral approach in regional planning and management system, lack of a legal status for regional development, dependence on oil revenues, and lack of data and information resources.*

Keywords. *Regional planning and development, barriers and obstacles, national planning system, Iran.*

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Abstrak. *Sejak kemunculan pemikiran perencanaan 90 tahun yang lalu, perencanaan dan pembangunan di Iran selalu menjadi subjek perdebatan yang aktif. Terlepas dari sejarah yang panjang ini, sistem perencanaan yang sentralistik tidak pernah mampu mempromosikan pembangunan yang konsisten dengan kekuatan dan kelemahan wilayah tersebut, dan juga pengembangan wilayah yang timpang di negara tersebut. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki hambatan dalam pengembangan wilayah di Iran sebelum dan sesudah revolusi 1979, menggunakan metodologi deskriptif-analitik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hambatan utama dalam pengembangan wilayah di negara ini terletak pada sistem manajemen dan perencanaan yang terpusat, yang menyebabkan hambatan serius seperti pendekatan sektoral dalam perencanaan wilayah dan sistem manajemen, kurangnya dasar hukum untuk pengembangan wilayah, ketergantungan pada pendapatan minyak, dan kurangnya sumber daya data dan informasi.*

Kata Kunci. *Perencanaan dan pengembangan wilayah, hambatan dan rintangan, sistem perencanaan nasional, Iran.*

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Introduction

Regional planning is a particular form of regionalism, a distinctive practice that uses regions and regional thinking to achieve specified goals (Soja, 2009). Friedman (1963), in one of the best-known definitions, delineated regional planning as a process of formulating and clarifying social objectives in ordering supra-urban space. This definition refers to a process in which people and regions participate in planning through providing suitable grounds for bottom-up planning in order to adapt macro/national plans with real characteristics (Glasson & Marshal, 2007). Within the past two or three decades, however, the idea of regional planning has been progressively altered when compared with its original foundations and purposes (Galland, 2012). Internationally, regional planning has had ups and downs since WWII, depending on the socio-economic conditions, and has played various roles: sometimes employed for removing inequalities between regions and sometimes for enhancing the competitive power of regions in the globalization process by attracting tourism, investments and elite groups. The biggest challenge in almost all countries around the world has been regional disparities regardless of the level of a country's development; thus, reducing regional disparities is a major concern. For example, in the case of the European Union, Article 158 of the Amsterdam Treaty states that the "community shall aim at reducing disparities between the level of development of various regions and the backwardness of the least favored regions or islands, including rural areas," so that a clear social cohesion objective exists (DuPont, 2007).

In Iran, ever since the emergence of planning thought 90 years ago with the advent of Reza Shah Pahlavi, regional planning and development has always been a major topic. It can be criticized for the medium range of the national development plans and for its lack of positive evolution in nearly half a century (Amirahmadi, 1986; Fouladi, 1996; Shakoori, 2016; Ghaderi et al., 2017). Thus, regional planning in the country has been constantly changing under the influence of the political, economic and social requirements of the country. It has sometimes been used as an investment tool in underdeveloped areas, occasionally to focus investments in regions with great potential when it came to regionalization of sectoral programs, and sometimes comprehensively. This article aims to shed light on the shortages and barriers in regional planning and development in Iran from two perspectives: firstly, evaluating the placement of regional planning and its importance in the 5-year national development plans, using the most important national developmental plans that are related to regional planning, and secondly, reviewing strategic shortages in all aspects of regional development in the country in order to identify the most important factors that have led to unsuccessful regional planning and development.

This paper consists of five parts. The first part explains the research methodology, including the data gathering methods and analysis of regional planning and development. In the second part, the most common regional policies and theories are presented in a literature review, emphasizing regional theories practiced in the developing world and national and regional planning systems in developing countries in order to compare them with those practiced in Iran. The third part of this study illustrates the regional plans and policies before and after the 1979 revolution of Iran up to the present and presents an analysis of their weaknesses and strengths within the national five-year plans. The fourth part evaluates the most significant barriers of regional planning and development in Iran. The final part concludes all of the preceding parts of the article and proposes some reform solutions for regional development in Iran.

Research Methodology

This study intended to investigate the main barriers and constraints to the realization of regional development in Iran using a descriptive-analytical method. In doing so, all regional planning and management documents from Iran from before the 1979 revolution to the present were gathered and reviewed with a descriptive approach. Besides that, research studies and publications about characteristics and weaknesses of regional planning and development in the country were investigated and summarized. A literature review is presented, which consists of two sections: first, the most prevalent regional planning and development theories with emphasis on developing countries practicing regional theory, and second, an analysis of developing countries' national and regional planning characteristics. Evaluation of regional planning before and after the 1979 revolution has been performed within an analytical framework in which failure factors in regional development in Iran were identified and discussed based on the most important driving forces and barriers over 60 years of regional planning development in the country. In order to achieve the intended goals of the present study, the following questions were designed:

1. How has regional planning changed in Iran conceptually and realistically?
2. What is the legal status of regional planning and its function in the national development plans?
3. What are the main strategic constraint factors in regional planning and development in Iran?

Literature Review

Regional planning and development has witnessed three historical periods, as classified by Soja (2009):

1. Regional planning as resource development (1920-50), or old regionalism (Ziafati Bafarasat, 2016), as theorized by planners like Ebenezer Howard and exemplified by the garden city movement. Most theories in this period emphasized urban decentralization, typically in new quasi-socialist towns and garden cities, which would combine the advantages of both the city and the countryside, while hopefully ameliorating the problems of each through some form of common or public ownership. The most innovative and exemplary expression of this first wave of regional planning was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).
2. Regional planning as welfare regionalism (1950-80), or new regionalism (Ziafati Bafarasat, 2016), emerging with welfare states in western countries, in which the theory of uneven regional development played a central role. The most influential work in this period was that of Francois Perroux; firstly, Gunnar Myrdal and he, followed by Albert Hirschmann, developed the Growth Poles Theory in order to remove uneven regional development by defining growth poles with the hope of positive effects spreading to the region. John Friedmann (1972) criticized the theory and argued that regional development is a discontinuous and inventive process that can be divided into two overall systems: central areas and environmental areas. Central areas are considered to be organized systems with high developmental capacities, whereas environmental areas are subsystems with any development determined by, and dependent on, central areas or development hubs (Friedmann, 1972; Clark 2003). The Growth Poles Theory was experimented with widely in developing countries like Iran, where national industrial strategies were affected by large industries. Such industries were established around big cities like Tehran, Isfahan and Tabriz. After more than half a century, the Growth Pole Theory was still very poorly understood by the government and national policymakers, and its use often led to a worsening of regional inequalities.

3. Regional planning as entrepreneurial regionalism (1980-present), or hybrid regionalism (Ziafati Bafarasat, 2016), which coincided with the termination of economic expansion and failure of regional planning in reducing regional inequalities. By the late 1980s, a more entrepreneurial regionalism had consolidated in response to economic recession and the increasing globalization of capital investment; in the early 1990s, it was affected by such domains as territorial wars for jobs, investment, tourism, and global image-making, which led to the rise of neoliberal entrepreneurial planning strategies (Soja, 2009). Generally, over the past three decades, the overall reorientation of regional planning has been evident not only in terms of its changing conception but also with respect to its shifting role. Since the 1980s, the continued movement towards innovation and competitiveness that resulted from the adoption of neoliberal political agendas has caused the objectives of regional planning to be progressively aligned with the pursuit of economic growth (ibid., 536). The genesis of regional planning as a field attracting political interest can be traced back to the 1960s. Today, regional planning in many European countries has been transformed from a tool to a developmental resource and to an approach to the governance of regions in globalization (Gualiani, 2006; Galland, 2012).

Although regional planning thought in Iran started with the establishment of the Economic Council in 1937, it was truly realized through the Growth Poles Theory, which offered an industrialized and urbanization strategy that had been used in numerous other countries in the global souths in those years. However, new regionalism and hybrid regionalism has not been realized in Iran due to various shortcomings and barriers, such as the absence of a decentralized planning and management system, the lack of regional institutionalization and the absence of varied stakeholders participating in the planning process. Therefore, to analyze regional planning and development in the country, regional planning as a source of regional development needs to receive more attention. Over the past decades, the government has tried to decrease regional imbalances and develop regions with potential through investments. Although nation-wide five-year plans and studies such as *Iran's Protein Zoning* (Battelle Consultants) and national spatial strategies (Setiran Consultant Engineers) have been deployed in order to develop regions based on resources, regional development has never been realized and almost all policies and actions have failed to decrease regional disparities in the country. The failure of the Growth Pole Strategy as the main policy for regional development in Iran has led to population concentration in big cities and backwardness of border areas and deprived regions. As a matter of fact, the implementation of growth poles has not worked as had been theoretically expected. Direct effects of this strategy guaranteed the establishment of core and heavy industries. After their establishment, signs of spatial-economic development encouraged through purchasing of goods and services from suppliers and providing goods and services to customers started to emerge, which worked only for major development poles (Tehran and big cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz and Arak) but not for peripheral ones. Having created demand for goods and services required by core industries, indirect effects of this strategy led to the creation of supportive industries, linking them to core industries. Hence it contributed to economic expansion, while centralized planning in the country on the one hand and lack of regional plans that could form downstream industries supportive of heavy industries in supplying raw materials thus shaping secondary growth poles on the other hand, resulted in the failure of regional development and thus the concentration of population, wealth and welfare in mega cities and evacuation of educated people and investment potential from small cities and rural areas.

After more than half a century, centralized planning and management systems in the country are still looking for elimination of regional disparities through regional resources without any effective changes in the planning system and in provincial and local authorities in terms of

preparation and implementation of regional and local plans. In the following sections, factors that contribute to the failure of regional planning and development in achieving regional equality and national development in such a planning system are examined after a comparative review of regional planning systems in developing countries. Next, developing countries' national and regional planning characteristics will be discussed in order to shed some light on Iran's regional development problems and barriers.

Regional Planning from a Global South Perspective

Although developing countries possess many differences in their socio-political and economic contexts, a comparison of their planning and management systems at the national and the regional level could reveal some similarities between those countries and Iran. Therefore, here, national and regional planning systems of developing countries around the world are reviewed in order to attain a more profound understanding of the similarities and differences between those countries and Iran as a case study. Countries have been chosen because of their developing status and proximity to Iran. In Latin America, since the late nineteenth century, the influence of successive waves of positivist thinking has contributed to producing the concept of the 'primate city' as a valid object of historical, sociological and statistical analysis (Almandoz, 2010). According to Almandoz (2010), Latin America's 'planning machinery' had not been shaped until the second half of the 1920s, when urban problems were becoming issues of administrative regulation. Its post-war shift in the discipline of urban planning was characterized by the embrace of the booming field of regional planning by architects and engineers (ibid.). Also, fueled by the massive markets targeted by the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), Brazil and Mexico as pioneering countries in embracing regional planning reached a yearly growth of 6%, which made them look like model economies on the cusp of 'taking off' towards development (Almandoz, 2016).

As Farret (2001) states, development planning in Brazil alternates between different ideologies, resulting in different approaches to the spatial and social organization of the country. The nationalist ideology, which was predominant in three different periods of time (1930-1945, 1955-1960, and 1961-1964) advocates 'national capitalism' as the only alternative for social and economic development. Another ideology, which was predominant over short periods of time (1946-1950, 1955-1960) and from 1964 onwards, focused on a model of dependent development. This culminated in the globalization ideology in 1995, which seeks to integrate the Brazilian economy into the global market (Farret, 2001). Currently, a new concept of regionalization derived from national development planning strategies is being implemented, opening new perspectives for regional and urban planning in Brazil on a more sustainable basis (ibid.).

In general, regional plans for some of the Latin America's capital cities had started or were at least envisaged and sometimes supported by new academic institutions to be integrated into national goals of development by the late 1950s, when a system of centralized *planificación* or *planejamento* was institutionalized. Beyond the capitals, more effective applications of regional planning techniques linked to national goals of development were adopted in the project of a new city like Brasília, which epitomized the highly anticipated take-off of Latin America's giant. However, as contemporary critics pointed out, the conception of the Pilot Plan did not represent Brazil's progress of social, territorial and economic sciences regarding regional planning (Almandoz, 2016).

In Africa, the failure of the Nigerian planning machinery (which has been dominated by economists) to recognize the spatial diversity and complexity of the cultures, peoples and material

resources of the country justifies the need for regional planning and a sound regional development policy and framework for the country. In this country, regional planning has not been really embraced, notwithstanding the fact that such attempts as categorization of cities, creation of administrative units and unconscious establishment of regions (such as river basins, the Niger-Delta among others) have been made. Although most of the country's plan or approaches to regional development were accidental and lacked the basic tenets of regional planning, success has been achieved in some cases nevertheless. The absence of regional development policies in Nigeria has put regional development disparities on the increase (Jelili et al., 2008). Nigeria may be described as having no specific, well-formulated, clear regional development policy or framework. Nevertheless, approaches to regional planning in Nigeria may be discussed under the following headings: National Development Planning, Constitutional Developments and Creation of Administrative Units, and Regional Plans Adoption (ibid.).

In Ghana, spatial planning functions are performed at the national, regional and district levels. Land use and spatial planning authorities at the national level and the Physical Planning Department at the district level constitute the technical planning institutions in Ghana. There are three main acts in the country that support urban and regional planning and development and to connect national plans to regional and local plans: the National Development Planning Commission Act of 1994, the National Development Planning (Systems) Act of 1994, and the Town And Country Planning Ordinance of 1945 (Korah et al., 2017).

Although Egypt's revolution of 1952 presented a major historical change in its political and economic structure, its society, and its institutions (Selim, 2015), as MacNair (1989) argued, regional plans that were prepared by European, American and Japanese consultants had not been realized by the 1990s because they were not included in national programs. This state of affairs in part occurred due to problems similar to those in other developing countries, including the misuse of human and other resources, the perpetuation of early models of administration that are insufficient for later tasks, and the emphasis on technical assistance projects instead of an emphasis on technical assistance processes (Elshahawany et al., 2017). Still many small centers in the country are not well-tied to the nation's largest markets. This situation disables efficient location decisions. Consequently, while the road network is important to Egypt's economy, the country could use further road investment as one of the most important regional development strategies, particularly in its underdeveloped south. Also, Egypt's 2030 vision emphasizes the nation's poor level of transportation services. It underlines its limited infrastructure capacity as well as lack of coordination between transport plans and urban development plans (ibid.).

In Asia, India is the country with the high level magnitude of regional disparities; soon after independence in 1947, India introduced a five-year plan model, which was centralized in nature but failed to eliminate poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and regional inequality to address specific issues (Julfikar et al., 2018). This failure can largely be attributed to the ignorance of local problems in the top-down planning system. Due to these circumstances, the importance of decentralized planning was realized and was given emphasis in order to achieve active participation of the people in the planning process. Yet, there is still a lack of proper implementation of decentralization or bottom-up planning. In the present situation, the top-down planning process prevails throughout the country. However, a bottom-up planning model is the need of the hour (ibid.).

In China, since its economic reforms began in 1978, rural urban migration has accelerated urban growth and the consequential need for regional planning. Regional development engines are politically vital for China's government. This is particularly vital for China as a developing

country where policy plays an important part in promoting regional development (Lu et al., 2013). Planning in China had long been synonymous with the Soviet style of economic planning. Since the Communist Party came to power in 1949, regional planning in China has been characterized by intermittent efforts to define and redefine its concept and scope to meet different political and economic needs. The changing nature and emphasis of regional planning very much reflects the interaction between the development process and the wider socioeconomic circumstances at different time periods. There is no official definition of what constitutes a region in China. The entire country is divided into different regions under the national five-year plan but the division has varied over time (Wong, 2015). The current wave of regional plans tends to use the word 'region' loosely to cover all sorts of spatial configurations that are beyond civil plans to address issues that cross administrative boundaries. More importantly, different forms of regional plans are disguised under different labels, such as territorial plans, urban system plans, urban cluster/ring plans, and metropolitan plans; they can all be categorized as hybrid 'regional plans' (ibid.).

In Turkey, which as a neighboring country is most similar to Iran, planning has two extreme traditions. On a national scale, sectoral development plans and strategies focus on economic and social targets but do not include spatial inputs so much. Local development plans, on the other hand, focus entirely on spatial development in urban areas. There are various kinds of plans in between these two planning types at the regional and the provincial level (Öğdül, 2010). As Öğdül (2010) argued, regional plans in Turkey are being prepared without a spatial strategy at the superior level. Thus, each regional plan adopts its own development strategy, usually disregarding the dynamics of the neighboring regions. According to Öğdül, this partial approach is not successful against the long-term problems of the country, such as regional disparities, neglected rural areas, and concentration of economic activities in certain regions. Recently, as Sezgin (2018) argued, key concepts of a new regionalism, including knowledge-based economies, specialization, networked cities, and innovation, have been incorporated in regional policy documents. At the same time, Turkey comes from a strong traditional central government that controls local and regional developments. At first sight, the new regionalism and the strong central state do not fit in the same frame (Sezgin, 2018). Since the 1960s, regional development and regional planning have always had a significant place, although from time to time their emphasis and degree of importance have shown variation. Nonetheless, due to various reasons, such as jurisdictional disagreements, difficulty of application, etc., these approaches have been ineffectual in solving the problems on a regional basis (Kilic, 2009). According to Sezgin (2018), regional policies in Turkey also provide a counter-argument for the decline of the nation-state thesis, exactly like in Iran as a country in which various ethnic groups have lived under a political central power for thousands of years.

Table 1 summarizes the regional planning and development characteristics of Iran in comparison with the other countries. Based on Table 1, it can be concluded that most of the problems and constraints of the compared countries are similar. However, there are significant differences in the national and regional planning systems of these countries: in some countries, such as Brazil, Turkey and Argentina (Elinbaum, 2018), the regional level of planning is well-developed and has a formal and legal status that is not present in Iran. Another important difference is the existence of regional organizations in countries such as China, Turkey, Argentina and Brazil that have been able to create organizations responsible for the preparation and implementation of regional initiatives at the regional level. Such institutions have never been formed in Iran due to a lack of integrated regional and metropolitan management.

Table 1. Comparison of developing countries in terms of their planning systems and barriers in regional planning and development.

Regions	Countries	National and regional planning systems	Shortcomings and barriers in regional planning and development
Latin America	Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spatial planning as the main national development strategy - Federal, state and municipal government levels of planning - Prime cities like Brasília as a substitute for regional planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disconnected regional plans on a national development planning scale - Regional disparities
	Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent planning system at provincial and municipal level - National strategic plans at the national level - Government responsible for managing the funding of all planning levels - Several municipal plans (micro regions) at a regional planning level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social, economic and spatial disparities at all levels
Africa	Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top-down and centralized planning system - National development planning - Adoption of regional plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of a well-formulated regional development policy - Accidental approaches to regional plans - Regional disparities
	Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top-down and centralized planning system - Five-year national plans - Regional planning as an economic development tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor level of national transportation services as a main barrier to regional development - Regional disparities - Absence of regional levels
	Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spatial planning as the main national development strategy - Top-down and centralized planning system - National development planning system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No placement for regional levels in practice - Regional disparities - Sectoral plans at all national to local levels
Asia	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top-down and centralized planning system - Five-year national plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional disparities - Absence of regional levels
	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hybrid regional plans - Five-year national plans - Regional planning as an economic development tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional disparities - Ambiguity and changes in the concept of region
Neighboring country with similar	Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top-down and centralized planning system - Five-year national plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional disparities

Regions	Countries	National and regional planning systems	Shortcomings and barriers in regional planning and development
socio-political system		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan municipalities as regional units - State planning organization responsible for regional planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong traditional central government that controls local and regional developments - Regional plans being prepared without a spatial strategy at a superior level - Jurisdictional disagreements and difficulty in application of regional plans - Ineffective in solving regional inequalities - Lack of regional organizations - Ambiguity and changes in the concept of region
	Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Top-down and centralized planning system - Five-year national plans - Budget and Plan Organization responsible for regional planning at a provincial scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a legal status for regional planning - Regional disparities - Ambiguity and changes in the concept of region - Strong traditional central government that controls local and regional development - Lack of regional organizations

Regional Planning in Iran: Before the Islamic Revolution (1978)

Attention to regional planning in Iran came up almost simultaneously with the start of regional planning in France, with the same goals as the primary objectives. The first step in this regard was the establishment of the Economic Council in 1937 (Center for Studies and Urban Planning 2002). One of the tasks of this council was “to design economic road maps and provide a way to implement them” (Tofiq, 2006).

The idea of regional planning in Iran was introduced in 1948 at the beginning of the first national development plan (Ebtehaj, 1991). The first important action in the field of regional planning was the establishment of the Moghan Plain Development Organization in the province of Ardebil in 1953 during implementation of the first development plan of the country (1948-1954) (Tofiq, 2006). Regional planning was proposed as a tool for the development of underdeveloped regions in the second plan (1955-1962), and in doing so, the Khoozestan Development Organization was formed by some financial, administrative and executive authorities because of Khuzestan’s rich water supply (Vahidi, 1991). This organization’s mission was to contribute to the development of this backward region through investment (Hosseinzadehdalir, 2001). The third plan (1963-1967) can be regarded as a shift from the listing of projects to a more comprehensive approach of regional planning in order to prepare and implement a variety of master plans so that agricultural and industrial poles could be established in specified locations and backward areas, particularly rural ones (Plan and Budget Organization, 1983).

Regional planning did not possess legal status in Iran until the introduction of the third plan, when regional decisions were made by the government cabinet, during which time regional planning was foreseen and enforced within the scope of the power derived from development planning laws. Regional planning gained an independent place in the planning scheme for the first time,

with the new goal being decentralization of capital and planning, and execution of sub-roads, schools, clinics, social affairs of cities and villages. Irrigation and agriculture were possible without the need for capital allocation (Sarrafı 1998; Shakoori, 2016). A number of effective actions were performed in order to administrate and manage decentralization along with the fourth plan when provincial authorities found fairly decent powers (Center for Urbanism Research 2002).

The fifth development plan before the revolution (1973-1978) is a milestone in Iran's planning history. During this period, in addition to a significant increase in civil credits due to rising oil prices, structural changes also occurred in the planning mechanism (Hajyousefi, 1999). In general, the fifth plan was a move towards establishing a decentralized development system, providing more involvement of authorities and local inhabitants in the planning and implementation of development plans and giving much higher priority to regional development goals (ibid.; Richardson, 1975). In 1974, the Plan and Budget Organization signed a contract to develop a spatial plan for Iran. Accordingly, the necessity to give attention to regional equilibrium and the necessity of using spatial planning and giving attention to regional policies was one of the factors that led to the establishment of a spatial planning center in the Plan and Budget Organization in 1974.

The pre-revolutionary development plans did not succeed in creating regional equilibrium and intensified inequalities and spatial polarization (Sarrafı, 1998). According to World Bank studies in 1976, among the 17 countries selected from the north and south, Brazil and Iran had the largest regional disparity in terms of GDP per capita (GRP). Also, the difference between urban and rural inhabitants' income increased from 5.5 times in 1969 to 8 times in 1976 (ibid.). As Richardson (1975) concluded, regional planning is not very well-developed in Iran, in spite of the fact that ad-hoc regional projects and surveys have been undertaken intermittently since 1953 (during the period of the first plan, 1948-1955). However, a rudimentary set of regional policy instruments was developed during the period of the fourth plan: controls on the establishment of new factories within 120 kilometers of Tehran, tax exemptions and other minor incentives to relocate firms, and establishment of industrial estates near larger cities (based on the growth pole theory). According to various critics (e.g. Pesaran, 1982; Hajyousefi, 1999; Fadaee, 2011; Farmanesh, 2009; Shakoori, 2006), regional planning before the revolution failed to address the issue of regional inequalities.

Regional Planning: After the Islamic Revolution (1979)

The first attempt to formulate long-term planning after the revolution was the establishment of the Council of Revolutionary Initiatives in early 1980, which dedicated part of its report to economic, social and physical distribution (Sarrafı, 1998). During this period, the first regional plan was prepared by a group of experts from the Budget and Plan Organization to explore the facilities for the development of the watershed in West Hamoun Jazmourian (Tofiq, 2006). In 1981, the idea of spatial planning re-emerged, resulting in basic spatial plans and development of the spatial image of the country in a twenty-year plan (Vahidi, 1992; Sarrafı, 1998). In 1989, the first economic, social and cultural development plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1989-1993) was approved by the Islamic consultative parliament. In the first plan, regional planning was more privileged than in the previous ones (Vahidi, 1992; Sarrafı, 1998).

In the second development plan (1994-1999) and in the subcategory of its major objectives for the realization of social justice, optimal sharing of resources and public facilities for the promotion of the provinces below the average national quota as well as deprived areas were taken into consideration (Plan and Budget Organization, 1994).

The third development plan (2000-2004) can be considered one of the most comprehensive plans in aiming to provide an appropriate platform for regional planning in Iran. During the implementation of this plan, the issue of the administrative-political decentralization, reduction of state ownership and delegation of power to regions (provinces) was raised more seriously than ever before.

In the fourth plan (2005-2009), a separate chapter entitled *Spatial Planning and Regional Equilibrium* was included, in which the government was required to conduct spatial planning studies. It also allowed the government to regionalize the plan in order to implement inter-provincial development, establish coordinating institutions and assign their duties at the supra-provincial level.

In the fifth plan (2010-2014), a chapter called *Regional Development* was included. It stipulated that the Spatial Planning Council be formed in order to monitor preparation and implementation of plans for integrated planning and management of territorial developments and regional development plans. In order to achieve the goal of reducing regional imbalances, the government was forced to address the problems of deploying large companies and provide opportunities for their establishment in capable regions.

In the sixth plan (2015-2019), the chapter, now entitled *Regional Balance, Rural Development, and Empowerment of Vulnerable Populations*, was rewritten with slight changes. The government was also obliged by the plan to prepare and execute spatial planning at the national level. Regional planning was neglected in some ways in the sixth plan and the preparation and implementation of spatial planning is mentioned only very generally.

A general overview of the post-revolutionary 5-year development plans suggests that they have not been able to achieve the goal of social justice in urban and regional development and the problems and obstacles to regional equilibrium development remain strong. The total investment distribution of the four development plans (1991-2009) shows that Tehran received more than 40% of the total investment, while provinces like East Azarbayegan, Khorassan Razavi and Isfahan, as the provinces with the highest amount of investment after Tehran, received 8%, 6.7% and 6.3%, respectively. The provinces of Kohkilouye and Boyrahmad, Sistan and Baloochestan and Ilam are the poorest provinces in the country and had the lowest share with 0.9%, 0.7%, and 0.5% respectively (Statistical Center of Iran, 2014).

In Tables 2 and 3, the strengths and weaknesses of the 5-year development plans regarding regional planning and development in pre and after revolution Iran are summarized.

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of development plans regarding regional planning and development (before the revolution).

Periods	Plans	Strengths	Weaknesses
	First Development Plan (1949-1956)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation of Moghan Plain Development Plan - Preparation of the Budget and Plan Organization - Beginning to think about regional planning in the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a legal status for regional planning - Lack of attention to urban development in regional planning - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes

Periods	Plans	Strengths	Weaknesses
Pre-revolution	Second Development Plan (1957-1963)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tool for the development of backward but capable regions - Creation of positive changes in the Budget and Plan Organization; assignment of the head of the organization as the minister's advisor and a vice premier in the Budget and Plan Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delegating every task to relevant ministries; parallel activities and disruptions in coordination - Lack of a legal status for regional planning - Lack of attention to urban development in regional planning - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Third Development Plan (1964-1968)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formation of the Qazvin, Jiroft, Kohgiluyeh, Mahidshat and Zahab Plain Development Organization - More attention for regionalization of national plans - Attention for the opinions of the governors in provinces and equipping them with experts from the Budget and Plan Organization - Establishment of technical bureaus in provincial centers by the Budget and Plan Organization - Regional planning finding an independent status in Article 17 of the Development Plan Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provincial agencies suffering from lack of decision-making power - Lack of a legal status for regional planning - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Fourth Development Plan (1970-1974)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant administrative changes at the district level - Approval of the Urban and Provincial Councils Act in 1971 as a strategic step toward decentralization - Inclusion of an independent chapter called <i>Regional Development</i> envisaged - Establishing an office in the Budget and Plan Organization to track and coordinate the activities of regions - Introduction of the concept of regionalization of sectoral plans into the regional planning process for the first time - Commencement of studies on all eleven regions (by Battelle Consultants) together with the description of the approaches used - Establishment of regional planning offices in the provinces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confronting the centralists in the capital by forming similar organizations in other provinces - Inconsistencies between Battelle Studies and the sectoral plans, leading to abandonment of the \$2-million plan - Lack of a legal status for regional planning - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Fifth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant increase in construction budgets due to rising oil prices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a legal status for regional planning

Periods	Plans	Strengths	Weaknesses
	Plan (1975-1979)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structural changes in the planning mechanism - Taking large-scale actions to support regional projects, including provision of financial resources and manpower and establishment of regional training and research centers in provinces - Establishment of the Spatial Planning Management Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
Overall Results	<i>The pre-revolutionary development plans did not succeed in establishing regional equilibrium and led to intensification of inequalities and polarization of space due to the establishment of growth poles in large cities.*</i>		

* Concluded by the author based on various sources

Table 3. Strengths and weaknesses of development plans regarding regional planning and development (after the revolution).

Periods	Plans	Strengths	Weaknesses
After-revolution	First Economic, Social, Political, Cultural and National Development Plan (1989-1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of separate chapters dedicated to regional planning - Provision of suitable platforms for regional planning through politico-administrative decentralization, reduction of state ownership and delegation of power to provinces, and transfer of executive duties to provincial and country units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incompatibility of provincial planning documents with sectoral and macro plans due to inconsistencies - Lack of legal infrastructures for regional planning - Failure to implement the results of national spatial planning studies - Inability to decentralize the central planning and management system - Failure in delegating authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	The second economic, social, political, cultural and national development plan (1994-1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasis on the realization of social justice and policies for optimal sharing of resources and public facilities for the promotion of provinces and regions below the average national level - Attention for deprived regions and removal of regional imbalances in the national spatial plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of sectoral perspectives and regional policies rather than regional planning - Lack of legal infrastructures for regional planning - Failure to implement the results of land survey studies - Inability to decentralize the central planning and management - Failure to delegate authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Third Economic, Social, Political, Cultural and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of suitable platforms for regional planning through administrative and political decentralization, reduction of state ownership and delegation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dominance of sectoral perspectives and regional policies rather than regional planning - Lack of a legal status for regional planning

Periods	Plans	Strengths	Weaknesses
	National Development Plan (1999-2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> power to provinces, and transfer of executive duties to provincial and country units - Emphasizing the decentralized implementation of planning and budgeting in provinces - Formation of the Provincial Planning and Development Council and the City Planning Committee - Establishment of a specific provincial treasury in order to organize a decentralized provincial income management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to implement the results of national spatial planning studies - Inability to decentralize central planning and management - Failure to delegate authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Fourth Economic, Social, Political, Cultural and National Development Plan (2004-2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of separate chapters dedicated to spatial planning in the plan - Zoning of the country in order to foster inter-provincial development - Establishment of coordinating institutions, and assignment of their duties at the supra-provincial level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to implement the results of land survey studies - Inability to decentralize the central planning and management system - Failure to delegate authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Fifth Economic, Social, Political, Cultural and National Development Plan (2009-2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of an independent chapter called <i>Regional Development</i> - Projection of a spatial planning council that could monitor the preparation and implementation of plans for integrated planning and management of territorial development and regional development plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure to implement the results of land survey studies - Inability to decentralize central planning and management - Failure to delegate authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
	Sixth Economic, Social, Political, Cultural and National Development Plan (2014-2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of an independent chapter entitled <i>Regional Balance, Rural Development, and Empowerment of Vulnerable Populations</i> - Government necessitating the preparation and execution of the spatial planning on a national scale in the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglecting regional planning - Failure to implement the results of land survey studies - Inability to decentralize the central planning and management - Failure to delegate authority to provinces - Lack of institutional and administrative establishments for regional development processes
Overall Results	<p><i>Although these plans were in line with the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and achievement of a fair distribution of facilities and opportunities in the country, especially in deprived regions, they have not really succeeded in reaching these goals and regionally unbalanced development has remained strong.*</i></p>		

*Concluded by the author based on various sources

Discussion

Barriers of Regional Planning and Development in Iran

Conceptual challenges in defining region and regional planning

The conceptual and semantic challenges concerning the definition of objectives and regional planning's place in Iran have led to confusion and trial-and-error activities in this field, part of which is related to the nature of this level of planning and management (Sheikhi, 2001). Due to the predominance of an architectural attitude that considers regional planning as part of architecture at the regional level, the regional planning process has failed to identify actual needs and priorities at various regional levels and this has led to ambiguity and agitation in the description of the services provided by the regional plans and the formulation of their objectives. In addition, the concept of region and its geographical boundaries has remained ambiguous in development plans.

Administrative and political concentration in the country's planning and management system

Regional planning results of the past suggest that regional planning has always been influenced by macro and sectoral plans due to the existence of a centralized planning system and dominance of macroeconomic planning and sectoral planning (Vahidi, 1991). In such a concentrated system, as Fouladi (1996) argued, regionalization of national plans allows only limited choices for regional planners, because the main decisions are already taken by the national planners, while regional planners would take part in the process under several constraints.

Domination of the sectoral approach in planning and management

Developing sectoral plans with a view to economic growth in the preparation of all mid-term development plans of the country over the past 60 years has been a major obstacle to the presence of regional planning in the planning process (Alami, 1999; Ghaderi et al., 2017). For this reason, development plans were prepared irrespective of capabilities, capacities and limitations of the country's regions and therefore these plans could not include development and growth for the country (Ministry of Interior, 2001). As Richardson (1975) concluded, Iran did not (Richardson, 1975) and still does not have a coherent and consistent regional planning system. Instead, the individual ministries and departments (such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, and the Budget and Plan Organization) pursue separate policies that have locational side effects, without giving sufficient consideration to the regional dimension in their decisions and without coordinating their spatial strategies to see whether they are mutually compatible.

Ambiguity in the legal place of regional planning in national laws

Regional planning in Iran has no legal place. It does not have a proper relationship with national planning (mainly due to its sectoral perspective), nor does local planning (primarily because of physical views) (Sarraf, 1998; Mirmiran, 1992). Although a chapter or a section was dedicated to regional planning in all 5-year national developmental plans, there has been no sign of realization of such schemes on the ground.

Lack of regional management and planning institutions

The main reason for the failure or delay in realization of regional plans and programs is the lack of a regional management system and the lack of a clear definition for specific institutions and organizations to monitor and control the regional development process (Sheikhi, 2001). This is despite the fact that the plans are typically inter-sectoral and inter-institutional, and their implementation in a particular sector is often problematic; as a result, they do not have a significant impact on the region. Regional planning cannot be efficient without defining appropriate managerial and organizational levels.

Dependence of the national economy on oil revenues

The dependence of most of the country's national income on oil and its subsidiary products has increased the vulnerability of the country's planning system (Ghaderi et al., 2017). Therefore, implementation and realization of many economic and social development plans, both before and after the revolution, were influenced by the volatility of oil prices in global markets (Habibi, 1999; Hashemi, 2010; Beheshti, 1999).

Absence of planning culture and planning acknowledgement by regional and national managers

Absence of planning culture in the country's planning system can be seen as another obstacle to the realization of regional development. In the administrative structure of the country, the planning culture has not been able to truly reveal itself in the network of government agents in the scientific and technical sense (Chamran, 2017). Rakodi (2001) believes that in countries like Iran, planning should be neglected because politics is a priority and, in most cases, plans are bound to political demands of managers. He also argued that legitimacy is needed in order to raise revenue, regulate human activity and achieve political objectives (Rakodi, 2001), and that this is a basic aspect of regional management (Bauer et al 2007).

Lack of a comprehensive regional database for analysis and planning

The current statistical system in the country is decentralized. This means that the country's executive agencies produce statistics to meet their own statistical needs, whereas the provision of basic statistics and statistical information is conducted centrally (Navabpoor, 1998). Supervision of statistical production procedures, which can guarantee their creditability, has never been performed systematically so far because of the law's silence in this regard.

Shortage of expert staff and comprehensive participation of various scientific fields in the regional planning process

In Iran, due to the lack of educational and research institutions in regional planning and serious shortages of specialists in this field, the methods and practices used are traditional. Besides that, regional planners disregard the need for people's participation in preparing national plans. Furthermore, the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran and articles 3, 6, 7, 10 and 106 of the constitution, which emphasize people's participation in their political, economic and cultural councils like the Islamic Consultative Assembly, province councils, city councils and village councils, etc., account for the fundamentals of decision-making and management of affairs in the country (Lalehpour, 2016).

As Ghaderi et al. (2017) concluded, the current policies and the continuation of existing plans in Iran increase imbalances and disorder not only within regions but throughout the whole country.

Despite the wide range of investments and financial injections made by the government thus far, complete removal of the imbalances has been impossible primarily because existing agencies in the regions have been unable to manage the developmental mechanisms necessary to resolve the complex issues that currently exist there.

According to Clark (1981), the unsuccessful urban management and planning system in Iran is the result of the official and political structure, contradiction between objectives and policies, and lack of priority for urban problems. These unsuccessful systems have lasted up to now. The most important feature of such systems is independent and separate decision-making. The top-down planning process that remains unaware of capabilities, bottlenecks, goals and priorities in the development of regions based on external, nonrenewable and volatile sources of revenue, indicating that serious structural weaknesses have adversely affected the efficiency of the management as well as the planning system and the regional planning and development processes on a national scale. Moreover, the gap in the scale between the national plans and the provincial plans is too large for effective coordination unless a link is made via development of a national, regional, and provincial system. In absence of such a system, the hope that bottom-up planning may have a major influence on the spatial allocation of resources will not be realized (Richardson, 1975).

In addition to centralization and absence of a regional scale, domination of sectoral planning and an executive system as a contributing factor to the centralized planning system are other major obstacles in this regard. Each local institution having a vertical relationship with the ministry or relevant organizations in the center only seeks to implement its planned goals and priorities with little coordination with other horizontal institutions in other cities and the country in general. This procedure, lacking an efficient horizontal interaction with other regional institutions and organizations, in many cases results in interference, parallelization and multi-tasking. Furthermore, regional plans still face legal ambiguity and different executive and planning organizations do not consider themselves obliged to follow those plans. Regional development plans do not often have a place in the development of mid- and long-term national development plans or budget allocations to different sectors. Hence, the impossibility of linking and ineffective adaptation of sectoral planning and regional developments are considered key obstacles to the formation of an integrated, coordinated and aligned regional planning system in Iran. The national and regional planning and development system, due to its sectoral and micro nature, which is fragmentary in relation to the spatial reality of the regions, will always face serious challenges.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Iran's regional planning system has been considerably improved during the implementation of development plans, it does not amount to any sort of national policy for regional planning or tackling the county's regional development problems. Nor has it had the necessary impact on regionalization. In fact, regional planning still has not become a serious part of the country's planning system (Shakoori, 2016). What has happened in all of the mid-range national plans during the past 60 years has in reality been the genesis of regional policies instead of regional planning and development.

Drawing upon Soja's (2009) study, regional planning and development in national development plans has witnessed three periods:

- a) Regional planning as resource development in the first, second and third plans before the revolution;

- b) Welfare regionalism and uneven regional development theory in the fourth and fifth plans before the revolution and in the first to fifth plans after the revolution;
- c) Entrepreneurship regionalism in the current sixth plan.

However, regionalization of welfare and entrepreneurship has never gone beyond the documents and what has been practiced is regional planning as a resource development strategy along with the Growth Pole Theory. Also, regional planning has never achieved a formal and legal place in the country. A review of the regional planning process in Iran over the past sixty years and the root causes of its failure to balance regional development demonstrates obstacles and issues that are primarily a result of the characteristics of the country's planning system, both before and after the revolution. Several factors can be identified that contributed to this failure:

The centralized administrative and political structure and the resulting economic concentration system have caused imbalances between different regions of the country. Also, the lack of a legal status for regional planning, the lack of public participation through local authorities in the formulation and implementation of programs, the weaknesses of the planning culture at managerial levels, the dependence on oil revenues, the lack of data sources and information from regions, and the weaknesses in terms of specialized staff in regional planning are among the most important obstacles to regional development in Iran.

In order to take measures towards improving regional development in Iran, the following issues need to be addressed:

First, there should be a radical change in the country's system of public administration, meaning the creation of efficient regional planning for a balanced development in which the entire politico-administrative and socioeconomic structures are reorganized (Shakoori, 2016). Also, there should be a move away from an oil- and state-based economy, which has historically been the main cause of the formation and continuation of the country's centrally- and sectorally-based politico-administrative structures, towards a more multi-resource-based one with a strong private sector. A complementary reform in the old budgetary system is needed to conform with the socio-economic needs and goals of the people/regions. The following strategies can also be implemented as a catalyst for regional development:

1. Balancing the centralized administrative and managerial system in the country;
2. Developing a mechanism to strengthen a participatory regional planning system;
3. Reviving regional development organizations; and
4. Performing a thorough review of how to develop a more a comprehensive regional planning and management law.

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