

RELIABILITY SURVEY OF METROPOLITAN AREAS OF IRAN FOR BEING CHANGED INTO CREATIVE CITIES

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ABSTRACT

While based on the overall development program of the country it is expected that metropolitan areas of Iran to have outstanding transnational roles, their current status do not meet such expectations; although metropolitan areas of Iran enjoy high geographic capabilities and socio-economic potentials for obtaining transnational roles and leading national and regional development. Their prosperity requisites are to be changed into creative cities. This article studies the features of creative cities and their requisites and the end, metropolitan areas of Iran have been discussed on the basis of their own unique geopolitical features for being changed into creative cities.

Keywords: *Metropolitan Area, Creative City, Transnational Role, Iran*

INTRODUCTION

A look at economic, social and cultural development plans in Iran, including the five-year development plans and perspective programs show that independent economic growth and expansion of non-oil exports of the country is one of its most important development policies.

The most important way to achieve this goal is transnational role of metropolitan areas through changing into creative cities.

Most cities of the world, have recognized social and economic benefits from creative economic, and in most of the large and small cities of the world developing the creative economy has become as a strategic priority. Creativity and innovation are the main axis of knowledge based economies and cities are creative places in which creativities grow and become sustainable.

Creativity within itself includes deep knowledge of the situation, experience, creativity, capacity to rewrite the rules, being unconventional, fresh look at the issues, innovative imagery of possible future scenarios and recommendations about possible solutions, discovering common points from among differentiations and differences and having a flexible viewpoint towards the issues. The philosophy of creative city is that the production capacity of such a city is much greater than something that comes from the algebraic sum of the ability of its individuals. Cities are containers of creativity and they have always been the wheels of moving, focusing and leading creative energy of human beings (Florida, 2005)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Courses of Changes in the Appearance and Development of Urbanization

The process of the emergence of the cities and created changes in urbanization is constantly being continued from the time when human beings inhabited in the earliest settlements and then they chose living together in the earliest village- cities of the farming age (pre-industrial cities), (modern) industrial cities and finally postmodern or post-industrial cities. About ten thousand years ago a great change in human being's live was created upon which the foundations of civilization and culture were built. This change has been called "agricultural revolution". One of the most important consequences of agriculture was "sedentarization" because farmers were freed from dependence on hunting and continuous migration for it and instead they were dependent on the land. Permanent residence drew attentions to housing and in gradual processes other in other social facilities. And in this way, the first rural centers were created and then, due to social and economic development they changed into the cities (Nazarian, 2006). From the

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perspective of Anthony Giddens, the growth of the cities has been during the past forty years. At present, the urban population growth is much faster than that of the world population growth so that in 1975 AD, 39% of the world population lived in urban areas; according to UN estimates, in 2000 this figure rose to 50 percent and in 2025 to 63 percent (Sarraf, 2010).

There is no consensus on the definition of the city and in the definitions set forth items such as number of population, type of economic activities, administrative sphere and other cases have been referred to. In terms of economists, city is a place that livelihood of most of its habitants is not based on agriculture. Demographers also consider the population number of an area as a criterion for its being a city. Also, from the global point of view, the population number has also been focused to recognize the city from the village. Sociologists such as Marx and Engels consider the city as the concentration place of population, means of production, capital, requirements and needs, etc.; and division of social work has also been taken place there. Geographers consider the city as an artificial landscape of streets, buildings, machinery and monuments that makes urban life possible (Hall, 1996).

Metropolitan Areas

Using the word “Metropolitan” or “Metropolis” dates back to centuries ago. This word was sometimes used for capital of the empires (such as Rome, Peking, and Constantinople) and in some other times it was used for large urban centers with international business (such as Venice, Hong Kong and Barcelona), however, common and modern use of the concept of metropolis has become commonplace after the industrial revolution and especially since the twentieth century.

In most cases by metropolis it is meant a large urban area with at least one million populations, located on top of the pyramid of hierarchical settlements of a region or a country which qualifies the economic and political centrality in regional or national scale (Hall, 2004). In this paper assuming this definition, it is emphasized that in metropolis, the highest level of political power, providing services, concentration of activities and population density are also seen and such a city enjoys the vast and vital relationships with other population centers in national and global scale.

In terms of numbers, statistics indicate a very rapid rate of increase in metropolitan areas and globally, the number of cities with over one million populations in 1950 which was 75 cities has increased to more than 400 cities in 2008. It is estimated that the number of cities with over one million population to increase and reach to 600 cities in 2025. Among the metropolitan cities with population over one million people 18 cities have had population over than 10 million people in 2005 (UNDESA, 2008). More than anything, the importance of the role of metropolitan cities refers to the process of economic globalization and its driving forces are as follows:

- Knowledge-based economy and the mode of information production that is associated with increase in the share of services in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), occupation and value added during the recent decades of the world; and this has created weightless economy (Giddens, 1994).
- Informative – communicative technology which has provided innovative, inclusive and affordable facilities for decreasing the time and physical distances in electronic transfers; and these have given form to the “borderless economy” (Ohmae, 1990).
- Post-Fordism replacement in organizing the industrial production which includes the components of distributed clusters with centralized management and customer oriented flexibility (Johnston *et al.*, 2000). Global economy is formed by foreign capital injection and its rapid growth has been centralized in the sector for support services. Unlike other kinds of services, these services are not forced to settle in the vicinity of their clients; rather they need to highly specialized suppliers with high power of creativity and innovation.

These suppliers interact and combine with each other and they come together with clustering in excellence metropolitan space. Extensive done studies in the world during the last decades show that those metropolitan areas had been able to be the pioneer of national development of their countries (Sarraf, 2010). It may confidently be said that in all countries of the world, the share of national production of metropolitan areas are far more than that of their populations (Hall, 2004). In Iran for example, according to the statistics of regional accounts the share of non-oil GDP is about 34% of the

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country against the share of population of Tehran province which amounts about 19%, that is, the share nearly double the share of the population of the province (Sarraf, 2010).

The Concept of the Creative City

Richard Florida was the first person who proposed the discussion of creative areas and cities. In 2002, his first book bearing the title of “Creative Class” was published and then in 2005, his second book bearing the title of “Cities and Creative Class” was published to enhance its topic. Also Alan (2007) made use of the literature that Richard Florida had raised and offered some discussion in connection with creative areas and cities. In one sense, creative cities are cities that are able to offer new solutions for their own routine problems. Another sense of creative cities focuses on cultural problems. The third sense of creative cities highlights the capacity and ability of the city to attract creative human capital. In many of literatures about creative city, application of science and information technology (IT) has been focused on. In this paper, the concept of creative city has been studied based on knowledge and awareness of the concept of regional codes. In this relation, “Peter Taylor” mentions a concept called “Geopolitical Code”. These codes are a set of geo-political foundations about the infrastructure of a country’s foreign policies in which the concept of national interest, determination of foreign threats and supports becomes clear towards national interests and in fact, it defines the transnational scope and possibility. This strategy gives meaning to the creativity by using organizational factors such as practical knowledge and regional factors such as relative advantage and human capital and population density. In this sense, and assuming that special civilizations or cultures are more susceptible than other ones in economic development and in their capital senses, this strategy is very similar to civilization thesis (Mommars, 2004). The main feature that is considered in creative areas is combination of various aspects of economy and culture in geographical environments. One of the general characteristics of each creative city is its being an attractive place for work and life of its citizens especially for the younger generation and an attractive place for tourists and flourishing tourism industry, capability in the development of different economic sectors by using technology and proper management and also a center for attracting various firms in emerging economies, clusters and High-Tech centers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First it is necessary to state that, contrary to popular belief, the growth rate and the proportion of the metropolitan areas population (within the law) to the country’s urban population is declining; and among the metropolitans Tehran has had the greatest decline. 8.43 per cent share of the five metropolitan areas of Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz concerning the urban population of the country in 1976 has declined to 29.1 percent in 2011. In the meantime, the share of urban population in Tehran – that was 28.65 percent of the whole share of the country in Iran in 1976 – declined to 15.2 percent in 2010. The share of other four cities at first increased from 15.2 (in 1986) to 15.19 percent (in 1976) and then, in 2010 it declined to 13.9 percent. Figure 1 shows main metropolitan of Iran.



Figure 1: The map of Iran metropolitans position

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Among these metropolitan areas Tehran and Isfahan metropolitans have more or less decreasing growth rates, respectively; until 1986 Mashhad, Tabriz and Shiraz have had increasing growth rates. This behavior is mainly caused by activeness of peripheral urban complex in Tehran and Isfahan metropolitan cities and non-activeness of peripheral urban complex in the other three metropolitan cities in these sections. Unlike Tehran, the other four metropolitan cities were immigrant acceptor until 1986 and after that they have been faced with declining immigration; and again, unlike the public beliefs, Iran's metropolitan areas haven't had such growths to create more uneven distribution of the population. Changes in the number, ratio, and the growth rate of metropolitan areas of Iran between the years 1996 and 2010 have been shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number and rate of population growth at Iran metropolitans during 1996-2011. Source: (Sarraf, 2013)

Metropolitan centers	1996 Population (thous and people)	The share of the metropolitan population (percent)	Compared to the urban population (percent)	Compared to the whole country (percent)	Average annual growth rate (1986 to 1996)	2011 Population (thous and people)	The share of the metropolitan population (percent)	Compared to the urban population (percent)	Compared to the whole country (percent)	Average annual growth rate (1996 to 2011)	Average annual growth rate (1956 to 2011)
Tehran	6758.80	46.00	18.40	11.30	1.10	8154	42	15.20	10.90	1.30	3.10
Mashhad	1887.40	12.90	5.10	3.10	2.60	2749	14.20	5.10	3.70	2.50	4.50
Isfahan	1266	8.60	3.40	1.20	2.50	1756	9	3.30	2.30	2.20	3.60
Tabriz	1191	8.10	3.20	2.00	1.20	1495	7.70	2.80	2.00	1.50	2.40
Shiraz	1053	7.20	2.90	1.80	2.20	1461	7.50	2.70	1.90	2.20	4.00
Karaj	940.90	6.40	2.60	1.60	13.10	1615	8.30	3	2.10	3.70	8.90
Ahvaz	804.90	5.50	2.20	1.30	3.30	1112	5.70	2.10	1.50	2.20	4.10
Qom	777	5.30	2.10	1.30	3.60	1074	5.50	2	1.40	2.20	4.50
Population of the metropolitan areas	14679	100	39.9	24.4	2.80	19416	100	36.2	25.8	1.90	3.50
The urban population of country	36817.80	-----	100	61.30	3.20	53647	-----	100	71.40	2.50	1.40
Total population of country	60055.50	-----	-	100	2.00	75149	-----	-----	100	1.50	2.50

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In terms of enjoying the functions of cities that are considered as global cities, Iran's metropolitan areas haven't been able to have a place to be present in the network of global cities. This can be interpreted as a reason for retardation of planning and urban management systems for which no remedy has been made. Urban management hasn't been recognized as the level independent from the government in Iran (Sarraf, 2013).

Despite some differences among the metropolitan cities of Iran, their space and infrastructure barriers on the way of their changing into creative cities are common and fundamental. These obstacles are due to their historical and political inheritances, their peripheral situation in globalization environment and also the poor accessibility and insufficient linkage of some metropolitan cities such as Isfahan, Shiraz to the main infrastructures such as highways, railways, equipped international airports, advanced electronic networks (with speeds and bandwidths at an international level) and ... which is the link factor of these metropolitan cities with around areas.

In this section we survey the capability assessment of Iran's metropolitan cities on the way of their changing into creative cities regarding the capacities and geopolitical codes. Since because of their enjoyments of the most diverse functions in their own activity spaces, metropolitan cities of Iran can play this role in broader and beyond territorial environment, it is clear that without understanding the importance of metropolitan areas in promoting the transnational role of Iran and without support and attunement of macro policies of the country in order to strengthen the transnational role of metropolitans on the way of their changing into creative cities, one cannot expect a miracle to happen (Sarraf, 2013).

Tehran Metropolitan

The presence of large companies in Tehran and other metropolitan areas outside the country such as the presence of automobile manufacturing, construction contractors and industrial services companies, is for the purpose of performing transnational practices, especially by the Metropolitan Tehran. Availability of monetary-banking transnational institutions and their potentials are considered as other activities that have been effective in obtaining transnational functions of the country's metropolitans and have helped a lot to strengthen the necessary monetary flows between these metropolitans and other foreign countries.

Another positive factor refers to the specific importance of capital (metropolis) functions, political-cultural institutions and the centrality of its dominant socio-cultural products. The third factor in the acceptance of the obligations of transnational metropolis of Tehran, the role of geographical and political situation in the Middle East and Central Asia as the main spatial features of the city is emphasized – for example, its potential to be changed into axial association (HUB) of international air traffic. Currently, 70 percent of all international flights to Iran take place using the international airports of Tehran. Of course, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz metropolitans can also play potential roles as HUBs of international air traffic especially in the sphere of their own influence outside the borders of the country (Sarraf, 2013). Therefore, should benefit from its own geopolitical, cultural and scientific and business capabilities for being changed into a creative city.

Mashhad Metropolitan

Another supportive factor for accepting the transnational obligations of metropolitan areas of the country is the presence of cultural commonalities between Iran and neighboring countries and this is one of the important elements of competitive and relative advantages and can be considered in national policy makings. This feature can cause Mashhad ties with Middle Asian countries, Afghanistan, and also about 250 million Shias in the world. Metropolitan area of Mashhad, has the best situation for being in relationship with neighboring countries of Iran in the north east of the country and in this regard if it wills there is no rival for it because, due to the long distance of metropolises of the country with northeastern boundaries, Mashhad metropolis, besides the common historical and cultural advantages with target markets across the borders, also in regard with savings in transportation and communication costs enjoys some other unmatched advantages. Prominent capabilities and features such as political-administrative center of Khorasan province, pilgrimage and tourism hub in national and international levels, The second largest metropolitan area in the country, dominant role and function from administrative political, service, social, economic and cultural points of view in northeastern of Iran, a special place for cross-border

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communications especially with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, being located in the course of Silk Road and transit route of central Asia to the Persian Gulf, have given specific geopolitical and geostrategic importance to this urban area.

Therefore, these properties in the metropolitan area of Mashhad, have given an opportunity to extend its area of influence, beyond the national borders. In addition, in recent years especially due to the strengthening of communicative axis of Serakhs- Marv, transit corridor of North-South and communicative axis of Torbat-e-Jam – Harat, a new possibility has been provided to develop economic and cultural relations with Central Asia and Afghanistan that can play a more effective role in the socioeconomic development of Mashhad metropolitan area (Sarraf, 2013).

Studying the position of neighboring countries of Mashhad such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan shows that these countries with a population of around 250 million people are in good condition for development of relations with Iran so that Mashhad metropolitan area can be a “key node” for these relationships; specifically, the metropolis of Mashhad is the largest population pole among the metropolises of Central Asia as well and that, due to the modernization of its functions it can be considered as the dominant “HUB” the provider of superior services and product offerings in this area. In the meantime, the only rival of Mashhad in terms of population is Tashkent capital of Uzbekistan with a population of 2 million people that is located at a low economic development level. The most important factors to support the development of these relations are the dominance of the majority of Muslims in these countries and their common cultural interests, long-standing relationships of Khorasan (the Great Khorasan) with these countries, economic conditions in these countries and their service and import needs and specifically, the geographical location of Mashhad that lies ahead of Central Asia to the Persian Gulf. Moreover, in this context the increasing interests and relationships of the people of countries located in the south of Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf should be referred to -countries that pay special attention to this area both in terms of tourism and culture. Therefore, Mashhad should also benefit from its geopolitical, cultural and tourist acceptor abilities for the purpose of changing into a creative city.

Isfahan Metropolitan

Metropolis of Isfahan in Central area of Iran, has been one of the big and famous cities of Iran in all historical periods and in modern times (together with Tabriz) gained worldwide fame before every other city in Iran. Functional area of Isfahan metropolitan can be found in Islamic and Middle Eastern countries in addition to neighboring countries, and by promoting some reinforcing and complementary functions, improve its role, particularly in the field of cultural and tourism centrality, to international operations. Potential to attract tourists in this metropolis is very high, but capacity of absorption of tourists in all of metropolis cities of the country doesn't even amount to one million foreign tourists. This is while according to the report from “global tourism” Istanbul metropolitan area surpassed the cities of Rome and Milan in 2011 and with 30% growth in tourist, hosted nearly 10 million visitors and has had revenues amounting 10 billion \$ to Turkey's economy (Ebrahimi, 2011). Current rules and regulations prevailing in the country, management systems, investment and tourism services, the level of demand and response to the needs of tourism is still dominated by traditional and somehow anti-tourist look. Other metropolises particularly Mashhad and Shiraz also enjoy such capability. Therefore, Isfahan should seek for benefit from its own geopolitical, cultural capabilities as well as handicrafts, tourism and commercial ones.

Tabriz Metropolitan

In the Northwest of the country, Tabriz metropolis can use its own traditional hinterland and enter into economic interactions with Turkey and countries of southern Caucasian area including Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Although it should be reminded that considering the current complex circumstances and America's increasing and widespread presence in Caucasus region, one should not expect high performance and role-playing for this city; because as it was mentioned Iran and America have not common geopolitical in this region. Additionally, this city in search for further role and spreading its own transnational function has been able to have appropriate economic influence in northern

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Iraq and find a market for its products. Although, as it was mentioned in terms of the flow of people, its ties are mostly with Turkey and Caucasus countries.

Due to the developments in Iraq and the formation of Kurd self-government in it, this city has also entered into relatively good economic and cultural interactions with both Baghdad and the northern Iraqi Kurdish cities and as we know because of Iran's religious and cultural solidarity - especially in the southern half and northern Iraq - wonderful opportunities have come into existence for Iran in light of recent developments in the country; and this requires more wisdom and foresight for greater commercial interaction.

Shiraz Metropolitan

Proximity of Shiraz metropolitan area to the Persian Gulf Coastal States which are the greatest commercial and financial centers of the area has awarded Shiraz a special status. In particular, the presence of large numbers of Persians in the southern area of the Persian Gulf is the cause for relationships, transfer and their capital flows to this area. In addition, availability of special economic zone, electronics and telecommunications lead to the formation of transnational flows of industrial productions. Also, one of the world's goriest tourism attractions is located in this province that together with pleasant weather – and compared with Arabic countries in the region – enjoys wide range of facilities in terms of foreign tourist attraction. Presence of this functional system in the metropolitan area of Shiraz and its continuing influence area, that is, Fars province, have created the best potential for effective functional area in Persian Gulf region so that, Shirazian's strong ties with the Persian Gulf countries (especially Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait) is primarily the best opportunity for spreading the functional area to the countries around, and in the second place, covering the Middle East and South Asia. Due to the widespread presence of traders and Shirazian/Persian citizens in Persian Gulf countries, the link between the metropolitan areas of Shiraz with the aforementioned countries has become more possible.

Karaj Metropolitan

Currently, this metropolis is considered the fourth populous city in Iran. Karaj is one of the greatest tourist acceptor cities of Iran and compared with other great cities of Iran it is a younger city. With annual population growth amounting 14.3% this city has the highest population growth.

Karaj has many production and industrial units that have been centered in different regions of the city and/or mainly in industrial towns. For example, the two industrial town of Simindasht and Baharestan total has more than 470 active production units and more than 950 other ones have been located in different regions of the city and its suburbs. From a long time ago, Karaj metropolis has been very important interactive bridge and narrow passageway between Tehran-Qazvin and the cities of Mazandaran province. Also, during the three past decades and due to creating the network of new roads and building highways branched from it this city has gained more importance on the interactive roads of Tehran to European countries. Payam international airport of Karaj is a postal airport and an economic organization with special potentials. The organization has international airport – postal HUB and it is considered as the only special economic zone in Alborz province and center of the country that has been located in the course of interactive highway of 9 provinces of country and after changing into a creative city it will be able to play a valuable transnational role in country.

Ahvaz Metropolitan

The presence of large industrial plants, administrative and industrial installations and National Iranian Drilling Company has changed Ahvaz into one of the most important industrial centers of Iran; and this has caused many people immigrate to Ahvaz. Current Ahvaz, an important transit center the links other parts of country to the major ports of Abadan, Khorramshahr, Bandar Imam Khomeini and Mahshar by ground, rail and air routes. Also, because of the availability of terminals and border markets of Shalamcheh and Chazzabeh near Ahvaz, this city directly is affected by the transport of goods and passengers and Iranian and Iraqi tourism and pilgrimage travelers. Transnational ties between Ahvaz and neighboring Arabic countries, especially in southern Iraq and countries of southern coast of Persian Gulf are also notable and are considered among its undeniable advantages.

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Qom Metropolitan

The holy city of Qom enjoys a distinctive and prominent position in the Islamic world because the heavenly and holy shrine of family members of Hazrat-e-Masumeh (S) and the Holy Mosque of Jamkaran on the one hand and seminary, database for dissemination of education and inmate sciences and also the greatest scientific center of shia world on the other hand, have been located in this city; and in the aftermath of these the presence of grand Ayatollahs have added to its features.

Because of security problems in Iraq and Syria, many pilgrims from neighboring countries, especially Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait come to Iran and especially to Qom and Mashhad, this city can take a creative role for itself and hascross-regional performance by strengthening its potential in the context of pilgrim and tourist acceptance and also Shiite religious student recruitment around the world.

Conclusion

Creative and innovative city is a new concept that has been emphasized by geographers in the field of urban studies and by economists and sociologists in achieving the knowledge-based society. In this regard, the city as a place for formation of creativity, knowledge, creative and innovative industries and knowledge-based economy has been considered in a combined approach. If we accept that the basis of all of the above cases is the presence of creative and innovative human capital, then urban environments should have the conditions that they can attract and retain these assets. This issue is associated with numerous variables as following: paying attention to the principle of being knowledge-oriented, and Scholarly attention to the concept of geopolitical codes. The concept of creative city in this paper has been studied based on this principle, that is, being knowledge-oriented with emphasis on the concept of regional advantages.

In summery it can be said that due to changing into creative cities Iran's metropolises will be able to play an important functional role in conjunction with the nations of Southeast Asia and the Middle East in the eastern-western and northern-southern parts. In particular, metropolises of Tehran and Isfahan in central of Iran, can be two creative, commercial and cultural international metropolises to meet the diverse transnational functions. Hence it is necessary that the metropolitan areas of the country make the ground ready for harmonious, theoretical and practical study for creative role playing of these metropolises in the area and neighborhood countries.

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