Evaluation of the Effect of Promoting Villages to Towns in the Development of Mountain Regions from the Local Residents’ Viewpoint
(Case Study: Dailaman District, Siahkal Township)

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Extended Abstract
Introduction
Urbanization in developing countries has caused many problems, such as increase in urbanization, lack of housing and employment, migration and stagnation of villages, and promoting villages to towns is one of the main policies to reduce these problems. Development of small and intermediate urban centers has, for the past several years, been canvassed by many scholars and international aid agencies as an appropriate middle course which combines the advantages of urban as well as rural development, without the shortcomings of excessive metropolitan growth or of the wide dispersal of limited resources in scattered rural villages too small to support basic services. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, there has been a re-thinking of the nature and the impact of rural-urban linkages, with much emphasis placed upon the mutual dependency of rural and urban areas, and the critical role of town and city networks in the process of regional and local economic development. While some of the regional development literature tend to assume that small towns can be an almost ‘magic bullet’, their roles and functions need to be understood within the wider context of national, regional and international urban systems and policies. In Iran during the late half a century, one of the effects of urbanization on urban and population structure is the increase in the number of towns through promoting villages to towns, because there is a positive prospect about the role of promoting villages to towns in regional and local development.

Methodology
This research, based on the studies on Dailaman district, is going to assess the promotion of villages to towns in mountain regions from dimensions like economic prosperity, improvement of social and cultural indicators and promoting physical and environmental conditions. The type of the research is applied research and its method is descriptive-analytical. The sample (n=485) was selected by stratified random sampling technique from statistical society (N=3650); the sample consists of 192 heads of households from Dailaman town and 293 heads of households from its hinterland. Required information was collected through library studies, direct observations and questionnaires. The main tool for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire that had been produced

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according to research objectives. For analyzing the data, statistical methods such as Mean, Mann-Whitney Test and One-Sample T Test have been used.

Results
To achieve the purpose, three dimensions and 82 indicators were used such that 24 indicators were used to assess economical dimensions, 34 indicators to assess social-cultural dimensions and 24 indicators to assess physical-environmental dimensions. The Results of the research indicate that there is a meaningful difference between the views of the two groups about the functions of promoting villages to towns in regional development, and the promotion of villages to towns hasn't succeeded in economic prosperity, improvement of social-cultural indicators and promoting physical-environmental conditions in the region.

Conclusion
In the case study, three important functions that a town can execute in its region have been assessed. The results of this research show that the promotion of villages to towns in regional development hasn't been successful. Most of the researches that have been done about the functions of small towns in the development of mountain regions concluded that these towns haven't been successful in obtaining their objectives; for example researches of Bajracharya in Nepal (1995) and Saraee and Eskandari Sani in Iran (2007). The results of these researches confirm the viewpoints of Hinderink and Titus (2002), Satterthwaite and Tacoli (2003) and Tacoli (2006) who believe the positive functions of small towns shouldn't be generalized and they aren't magic bullets. So the policy of promoting rurals to towns is not consistent with UFRD strategy in the region. Although the promotion of the village to town hasn't been successful in gaining its objectives in the studied region, it is inevitable, because some villages have the conditions of being towns, such as having a certain population. So it is necessary to make guidelines and criteria for promoting villages to towns. These guidelines and criteria should be flexible and in accordance with regional conditions and tendencies.

Keywords: Town, Rural Settlement, Evaluation, Promotion of villages to towns, Mountain Regions, Dailaman District.

References


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