

An Investigation and Analysis of Context and Requirements of New Regionalism with Respect to Increasing Competitiveness and Creativity in Iran; (Case Study: Qeshm Island)¹

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ABSTRACT: Mismatch of territories under authority of local governments with urban-regional activity domains, on one hand, has caused numerous problems and, on the other hand, has hindered taking maximum advantage of regional capacities and partial and competitive advantages. Hence, application of a new regionalism approach, which focuses on shared planning and management by all stakeholder groups within the pertinent domain, may help solve such problems. In this regard, this paper aims to investigate legal grounds of new regionalism, generally, in Iran and, particularly, in Qeshm Island, and its requirements for increasing competitiveness and creativity in Qeshm Island. Hence, underlying concepts of new regionalism and their relation with a creative city are investigated at first step. Next, legal grounds of new regionalism within national laws and organizational goals and missions of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization (FTZO) are investigated. Finally, a comparative study of new regionalism related issues and goals of Qeshm FTZO is provided. Results indicate that such an approach has been referred to both in national codes and goals and missions of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization. Moreover, new regionalism can lead to increased quality of life by considering concepts of smart growth, social justice, and environmental justice which can result in attracting creative classes of citizens and building up a creative city. Furthermore, this approach can increase competitiveness in Qeshm Island through making use of its partial and competitive advantages and facilitating laws and regulations with regard to economic activities and foreign investment.

Keywords: *New regionalism, Creative city, Creative class, Competitiveness, Qeshm Island*

INTRODUCTION

Cities and metropolitan areas are becoming larger and more complex than what could be managed within current governmental domains. Such domains have become an important site of struggle and strategy around the politics of the everyday: of work, living, access to services, rights to public spaces and so forth. Age-old contradictions of spatial growth in capitalism come to rest in and through the territorial structures of city regions. These contradictions are not resolved simply through a one-way process whereby economic growth can be traded off against matters of territorial distribution, equity, quality of life, and the environment (Jonas & Ward,

2007, 174). Metropolitan spaces are becoming, more and more, the adequate ecosystems of advanced technology and economy ... The decrease of communications costs does not by itself lead to a spreading and diffusion of wealth and power, on the other hand; on the contrary, it entails their polarization (Harding, 2007, 446). In other words, the links between a city and its surrounding areas (including villages, countries, industrial workshops, touristic areas, etc.) create problems and opportunities at the same time, thus traditional plans within political and geographical boundaries of the city are not effective enough. Hence, we have to develop our own concept of city (policy and authority) to include city-region (Jonas, 2012, 825) and contribute to development and economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental equity by using new approaches, such as new regionalism, which seek

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competitiveness, creativity, and innovation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper aims to investigate legal grounds of new regionalism, generally, in Iran and, particularly, in Qeshm Island, and its requirements for increasing competitiveness and creativity in Qeshm Island. Hence, underlying concepts of new regionalism and their relation with a creative city are investigated at first step. Next, legal grounds of new regionalism within national laws and organizational goals and missions of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization (FTZO) are investigated. Finally, a comparative study of new regionalism related issues and goals of Qeshm FTZO is provided and subject plans and area specific plans with respect to new regionalism and increased competitiveness and creativity in Qeshm are proposed (Fig. 1). Data collection is based on library research and official and written documents. The research methodology falls into two parts: the first is a research review which is a sub-category of meta-analysis; the second part is a case study which is a sub-category of qualitative inquiry.

New Regionalism

Regional planning is not a new concept for whose history Wheeler has described five periods: ecological regionalism in early 20th century, regional science in late 1940s, Marxist regionalism in late 1960s, public choice regionalism in 1960s, and the latest new regionalism in 1990s which emerged as a reaction to globalization effects and metropolitan growth (for instance, sprawled development of suburbs, traffic jam, extinction of plant breeds, decreased quality of life, and social equity issues) (Peterson et al., 2007,132). Pre-assumptions of new regionalism may share two main characteristics: explicit focus on economic development and competitiveness and governance arrangements which include different forms of cooperation, for example, participation of actors and public and private networks (Lackowsky & Zimmerman, 2011,157). Hettne considers new regionalism as a regional project for creating

a new order in response to negative effects of globalization. New regionalism is also defined as ideas or a new movement which identifies a specific region and tries to give it a specific role in economic, political, security, or cultural domains. Soderbaum says new regionalism is described by being multi-dimensional, complexity, fluidity, and inconsistency and the fact that it includes a range of state or non-state actors to gather as unofficial multi-actor unions (Park, 2006, 285-6). The nature of new regionalism explains the evolution of regionalism apart from government-based approaches which focus on economic development, regional competitiveness, environmental issues, creating networks, and so forth. This approach acknowledges that conventional policies of governments are insufficient with regard to many challenges of sustainable development and there is need for linking together both state and non-state actors in the process of planning at local to international scales of planning. Some main characteristics of new regionalism include focus on spatial definition, focus on regionalization in order to manage growth related problems, acceptance of unified and holistic approaches, focus on normative approaches, and combination of urban planning principles and physical planning (Peterson et al., 2007, 133-4). With regard to regional competitiveness in new regionalism projects it must be noted that basic factors such as population, trade, capital, or technology which can be easily displaced (in comparison to environment, social and economic infrastructures, basic service network) need more attention in "regional competitiveness" concerns (Prytherch, 2009, 140). In brief, new regionalism can be defined as an approach which seeks to identify a specific region (with a domestic or international scale) with various goals (including social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental) to react to problems raised by local, national, or transnational factors. The governance management system includes all types of (state and non-state) actors and it is formed in an up to down and vice versa manner simultaneously. It must be noted that this approach is implemented in different forms which depends on different features of each place and

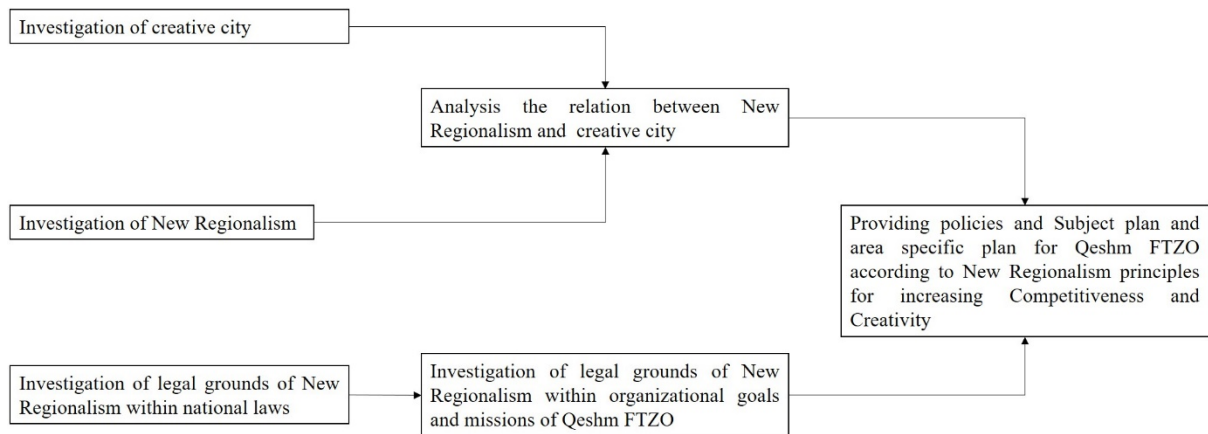


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

each specific time.

Levels of New Regionalism

Different researchers have proposed different levels and scales for new regionalism. Hatsuse, for example, proposes four levels; hyper-regionalism, macro-regionalism, meso-regionalism, and micro-regionalism. Hettne, one of the pioneers in new regionalism, proposes three levels: macro-regionalism, submacro-regionalism, and micro-regionalism (Park, 2006, 186). Therefore, we can investigate three levels of macro-, meso-, and micro- new regionalism in new regionalism projects (Table 1).

Table 1. Levels of New Regionalism

Levels of New Regionalism	
New regionalism level (scale)	Territorial scale
Micro-	National
Meso-	National-International
Macro-	International

City-Region and Creativity

New regionalism projects are defined in line with a specific "region" (Park, 2006, 286), thus "city-region" fall into micro level of new regionalism projects. The mediating hyphen in city-region expression indicates the unified regional function of city and region (Jonas, 2012, 825). In fact, the most striking agglomerations in evidence today are the super-agglomerations or city-regions that have come to being all over the world in the last few decades (Jonas & Ward, 2007, 169). City-regions facilitate internationalization of capital and territorial integrity of competition between governments. City-regions are considered as regulatory incentives for generation and distribution of wealth in capitalism (Jonas, 2012, 823). These days, city-regions are increasingly examined in terms of their functionality for creativity, innovation, development, and competition within a globalizing economy. Cities are, firstly, economic territories because of their role in stimulating trade, creativity, innovation, entrepreneurialism and, second, political territories because within them can be found autonomously developed regulatory and decision-making capacities. In this regard, Richard Florida's important and influential work on the creative class implies the idea that city-regions can be essentialized as places of creativity and innovation. Florida argues that city, regional, and city-regional economic-growth is powered by creative people who prefer places that are diverse, tolerant, and open to new ideas (Jonas and Ward, 2007, 173). In defining city-regions in the study of regions, the key dimensions center around the division of the world by levels of analysis and by levels of functional-physical distinction. Physical regions refer to territorial, military, and economic spaces controlled primarily by states, but functional regions are

defined by non-territorial factors such as culture and the market that are often the purview of non-state actors. For instance, an ethnic group may want to create a cultural region and use it agentively to promote an independent political community. In the global system, economic regions are constructed by transnational capitalist processes, environmental regions by the interplay between human actions and the biosphere, and cultural regions by identity communities. The distinction between physical and functional regions is reminiscent of Manuel Castell's differentiation between a "space of places" and a "space of flows" (Yrynen, 2003, 25-8). In fact, new regionalist projects place more emphasis on functional regions i.e., space of flows.

New Regionalism Procedure

New regionalism procedure at the micro level has five steps: placement, regionalization, determination of functional regions, establishing planning committees and organizational institutions.

1. Placement

Constraints and potentials of the study area in all domains (economic, social, cultural, etc.) are categorized in one of three local, national, and international levels based on the knowledge and analysis of the study area (Scott, 2009, 22-23). Next, constraints and potentials of the micro-level are marked as direct effects area and meso- and macro levels as indirect effects area.

2. Regionalization

In this phase, the study area is regionalized as local, national, or international based on new regionalism criteria and the constraints and potentials which were categorized in the previous phase. In fact, the best area for implementation and planning is identified based on spatial flows and functional relations. Micro-level regionalization criteria are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Regionalization Criteria (Source: based on Scott, 2009, 249; Page, 2000, 66; Yrynen, 2003, 44)

Regionalization Criteria	Regionalization based on:
Regionalization based on breaking point	City distance and population
Service regionalization	Statistics of purchase of daily needs
Activity regionalization	Correlated industrial and economic activities
Natural regionalization	Mountains, rivers, and other natural topography
Touristic regionalization	Tourist attractions and other relevant activities

3. Determination of Functional Regions

Functional regions in which all activities interact with and influence each other are determined by overlaying regionalizations. In fact, functional regions are regions where performing any activity or planning influences the whole region. Thus, the whole region must be considered as an integrated one. Such functional regions are called city-region in planning literature.

4. Establishing Planning committees

New regionalist special plan acts as the superior plan and decision making about other downstream plans (including zoning, land use allocation, etc.) in functional regions shall be performed by the planning committee. Members of this committee include state (municipalities, local governments, townships, etc.) and private actors and other stakeholders which are included in the functional regionalizations. It must be noted that the combination and degree of importance of the actors in each region may vary and depends on political, economic, and social characters of the region. Such committees may be established based on various fields of study of the study area, including, tourism, economy, transportation, etc.

5. Organizational Institutions for Good Governance

In order to properly implement and supervise the prepared plans in functional regions, the implementation and supervising responsibility must be borne by an organization. Local governments within the functional areas can cooperate through various methods such as integrative approach, multi-layer approach, linked functions approach, or collective networks approach based on existing conditions and grounds (Savitch & Vogel, 2000, 162-164).

Global Experience of Pearl River Delta (PRD)

In further attempts to continue reviewing the development ideology and in order to use the capital and technology of developed countries, Chinese authorities started implementing open door economic policies since 1979 (Lalehpoor et al., 2011, 7-8). China borderlands were the pioneers in terms of experiencing these policies. Pearl River Delta (PRD) was one of such regions which could make good use of the new situation. This region is a crowded and high density and developed urban area in China which is located on the south of the State of Guangzhou, neighboring Macau and Hong Kong, and includes 9 cities (Miu, 2005). It could be argued that PRD experiences new regionalism at micro and meso levels. At the next level of new regionalism, three macro functional regions and a Great Pearl River Delta (GPRD) were formed by PRD and the collaboration of Macau and Hong Kong and performing macro (international) regionalization.

The drafted micro and meso plan was a reaction to problems such as urban sprawl, environmental damages, and irregular constructions as a consequence of avid competition among cities. This plan was aimed to turn the "personal hero" of the region into a "hero team" to compete with other regions.

Furthermore, the plan was focused on creating a prospective landscape for the future of PRD. In reaction to these problems, the State government proposed a regional plan which included four categories, namely urban growth areas, town growth corridors, open space areas, and ecologically sensitive areas, which were based on land use. In order to maintain regional integrity, five integration plans together with necessary resources and powers were provided to regions: infrastructure integration plan, industrial integration plan, public services integration plan, rural and urban development integration plan, and environmental preservation integration plan. Moreover, an evaluation team, constituted of representatives of the local government, representatives of Public Council of the State, and academic representatives, was appointed to evaluate the progress of plans annually. Also, the central cities of PRD, in competition with Beijing and Shanghai, are trying to attract high value added industries. Unequal quality of life is a main public concern in this region. In reaction to these competition challenges and public concerns, PRD cities soon looked after new development approaches which could enhance collaboration and integrate competitive advantages. Two important steps were taken in this regard:

First, free movement constraints of production agents between cities were removed to encourage low value added industries, through land redevelopment tax exemption, to move away from cities.

Second, inconsistencies among cities were eliminated through an integrative approach (Ma, 2012, 99-103).

Legal ground of New Regionalism in Iran

Goals and policies set out in the Perspective Document and general policies of the fourth and fifth development plan refer to some points which could be used to prepare necessary grounds for implementation of new regionalism (Lalehpoor, et al., 2011, 11; Ghahremanpour, 2009):

- Becoming the first and biggest economic, scientific, and technological power in Southwest Asia (including Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East, and neighbor countries) with a focus on software movement and knowledge production, accelerated and continuous economic growth, improvement of per capita income and eliminating unemployment.

- Preparing necessary grounds for competitiveness of domestic goods and services in domestic and international markets and preparing appropriate mechanisms for eliminating non-oil export constraints (Expediency council, 2015).

- Paragraph A, article 75 of fourth development plan: Taking advantage of the well-known situation and different capabilities of the country to develop science and technology and interact with global economy in different ways, including setting out science parks and technological, scientific, specialized, and research facilities and centers and also determining the role and function of free trade and special

economic zones.

- Paragraph C, article 43 of fourth development plan: Making necessary provisions in order to make maximum utilization of domestic and regional capacities in information technology, biotechnology, environment, space, and nuclear domains.

- Paragraph B, article 75 of fourth development plan: making proper use of capabilities and capacities of macro-cities in order to improve their transnational role and improving the international position of the country through enhancement of development management, planning, and implementation in such cities, determination of their transnational and international functional domain and simultaneous transfer of their regional and domestic functions to other cities (expediency council, 2015). Fundamental evolution of service section structure and increasing the share of basic knowledge and modern services with a focus on development, services supporting production, tourism services, trade, banking, insurance, transportation, and transit services, and using

modern technologies in this section with commensurate with the international role and position of the country (National Regulations of Spatial Planning, passed by Board of Ministers, 2009).

Article 28 of the fourth development plan refers to the following macro policies with regard to consistency in foreign policy which indicates taking an interactive approach: Improvement of bilateral cooperation, regional and international;

Continue avoiding tensions in foreign relations;

Enhancement of constructive relations with non-hostile countries;

Using foreign relations to increase national capabilities (Expediency council, 2015).

In addition to interactive policies of the fourth development plan, general policies of the fifth development plan refer to new points or relevant characters which indicate such approach is followed stronger in the fifth development plan.

Table 3. New Regionalism in line with the Goals of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization (FTZO)

Goals and missions of Qeshm FTZO (Qeshm free area organization, 2015)	General principles of new regionalism
Using partial and competitive advantages of Qeshm (the Island) for development	Competitive advantages and space of flows
Liberation of economic activities from intricate laws and regulations	
Attraction of foreign investment	
Acquiring international credit for the Island	Formation of regional identity
Linking the domestic and Qeshm economy to global economy	Regionalization at micro, meso, and macro levels

Table 4. New regionalism related discussion in line with the Goals of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization (FTZO)

	Social and environmental justice	Creative city	Good governance
Goals and Missions of Qeshm FTZO (Qeshm free area, 2015)(00) (organization, 2015)	Improvement of quality of life in Qeshm	Creating an enjoyable environment for living, safe for investment, and prospective for new ideas	Providing services to stakeholder groups and facilitate their participation in management of Qeshm resources and investment activities
	Creation of necessary opportunities for all citizens in order to use, benefit, and understand the existing potentials and assets of the Island	Training skilled and specialized human resources	
	Elimination of impoverishment and improvement of job opportunities		

Such characters are:

- Bilateral cooperation; regional and international with neighbor countries in priority (Paragraph 39-1);
 - Active and purposeful presentation in regional and international organizations (Paragraph 40);
 - Enhancement of Iranian managerial role in distribution and transit of energy in the region (Paragraph 41);
 - Improving cultural, legal, political, and economic interactions with the world especially the Iranian-Islamic region (Paragraph 42);
 - Full-scale development of cooperation in trade, investment, and technology with Southwest Asian countries (Paragraph 30);
 - Emphasis on export development strategy especially in high-tech services (Paragraph 29)
- (Expediency council, 2015).

New Regionalism in line with the Goals of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Organization

With regard to the prospect goals, and mission of Qeshm Free Trade Zone, general principles and discussions of new regionalism can be according to Table 3 and Table 4.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following may be named as policies of the special plan of new regionalism in Qeshm with regard to qualities and potentials of Qeshm and consistency of new regionalism principles with it:

- Maximum utilization of potentials in Qeshm in order to attain domestic and international economic development and prosperity;
- Elimination of problems with regard to spatial inequality through social and environmental justice;
- City management and control through smart growth;
- Creating synergy in the development of Qeshm through participation of private sector and public through good governance;
- Proper management and development of tourism in Qeshm;

Taking lessons from the experiences of this plan as a pioneer plan for other regions of the country in line with the goals of Qeshm FTZO (a pilot plan for the country);

Taking lessons from the experiences of this plan for development of theoretical basis of new regionalism for the Middle East and the Persian Gulf as a serious practical measurement in line with the missions of Qeshm FTZO (acquiring international credit for the Island).

New regionalism special plan by increasing competitiveness and creativeness and by application of its rules, in addition to solving the status quo problems can be lead to some Subject plan and area specific plan (Table 5).

To sum up, applying new regionalism principles in Qeshm FTZO in different scales such as micro, meso and macro can lead to both increasing better quality of life and competitiveness that it will attract creative class which finally a creative city will be created (Fig. 2).

CONCLUSION

Inconsistency of the territories of local governments with functional territories of city-regions has caused several problems such as sprawl, farmland and open space subversion, social inequalities, lower quality of life, etc. Hence, new regionalism approach, by focusing on flows or, in other words, planning on functional regions, has been welcomed in most developed and under-development countries. In fact, this approach puts it that functional regions must be managed and planned in an integrative manner. New regionalism in Qeshm Island, on one hand, can eliminate problems caused by political and functional dissension through implementing concepts of smart growth, social equality, and environmental equality which leads to a better quality of life. A better quality of life can attract the creative class which leads to the creation of creative city. On the other hand, new regionalism cares for increased synergy through collaboration of different regions. Furthermore, by facilitation of laws and regulations

Table 5. Subject plan and area specific plan to be defined in Qeshm based on a new regionalist approach

Subject plans	Area specific plans
Development of tourism based on glocalization	Knowledge city
Design and planning based on smart growth	Creative city
Planning for optimum distribution of urban serviced based on social justice	Economic development special zones
Planning for reduction of environmental problems based on environmental justice	
Urban planning and design for a better quality of life	
City branding	

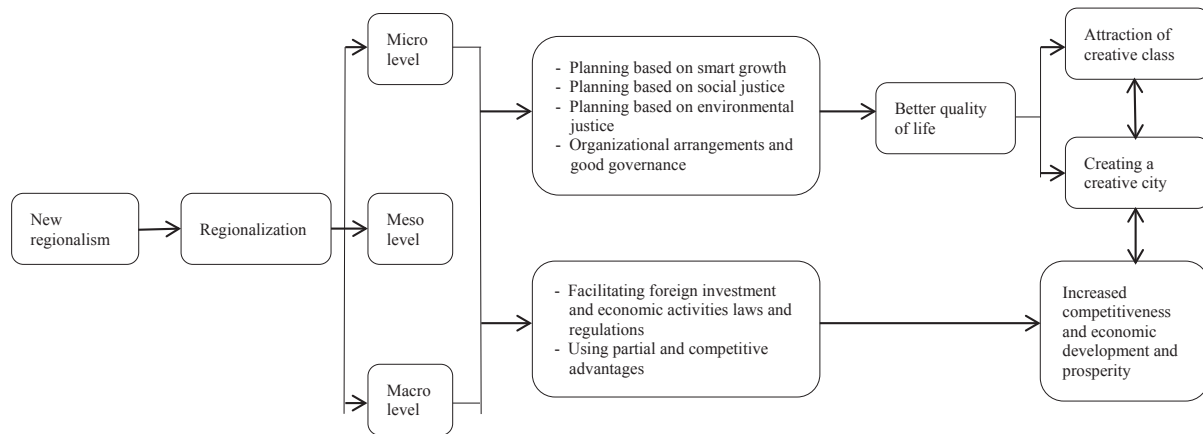


Fig. 2: Conceptual outline of new regionalism in order to increase creativity and competitiveness in Qeshm.

of foreign investment and economic activities and, in fact, making use of partial and competitive advantages, we can improve competitiveness of Qeshm Island at national and international levels.

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