# The Role of Small Town in Instability of Rural Development-
## Case Study of Small Towns of Babol County in Northern Iran

**Mostafa Taleshia[1] and Azizeh Mohammadi[2]**

[1] Department of Geography, Payame Noor University, 19395-4697, Tehran, Iran.
[2] Department of Geography and Urban Planning, Payame Noor University, 19395-4697, Tehran, Iran

## ABSTRACT

A common policy on regional sustainable development and particularly rural development is the application of development model for small towns. Following this policy, the conversion of county centers and rural settlements with more than 10 thousand people into the urban area has been considered in Iran in recent decades in order to improve quality and standards of living in rural areas, decentralize of population in large cities and to make a balance of the urban hierarchy. The outcomes of a study in Babol city in northern Iran indicate that, during the 2006-1996 decade, small towns have not been successful in the development of rural settlements, so that the results of taxonomic method show the number of developed rural settlements of total rural settlements has been reduced from 19 to 9. Achieving rural development through small towns pattern is tried that the socio–economic functions of these cities to be considered more than ever. Because, these small towns by creating new businesses in the agricultural sector through the development of complementary agricultural units on the one hand and the strengthening of urban infrastructure services on the other hand try to meet the needs of rural communities.

**Key Words:** Small Town, Regional Development, Rural Settlement, Urban Settlement, Urban Function.

## INTRODUCTION

Small urban centers are considered the first urban center in the rural areas. Any types of activity are affected first the rural areas. Positive movements promote the structural relationship of the settlement which will be regulated the effects of fragmentation and weakening of the spatial -structural relationships of these points. It should be noted that the first and most important effective part on these interactions particularly on the structural relationship of urban - rural areas is economic and commercial activities between two these areas. Small towns are useful for mutual cooperation of workers and villagers and the city and its suburb. Small towns facilitate the rural-urban linkage through the development of agriculture industries and increasing agricultural production and thereby would be cause to increased rural incomes [1,2,3] Therefore, the reasons for the deployment of small towns in order to improve the linkage between urban - rural settlement arise from the necessity of following:
   • The need to improve access to markets for agricultural inputs.
   • Create jobs for the labor surplus in rural areas.
   • Agricultural development and economic growth.
   • Create a market for agricultural commodities.

Therefore, strengthening the linkage between urban and rural settlement has favorable effects on productivity and agricultural production, rural development and regional stability. Urban centers economically are linked with their influence area in various exchange activities. These activities can be divided into five business processes, the flow of private capital, innovation distribution and exchange of information, public investment and daily traffic and expanding employment. These exchanges can be useful for both urban and rural areas. Therefore, the small town's development program should strengthen linkages between urban and rural settlement and reduce markets deficiencies. Improve linkage between urban and rural areas through small towns requires to consider the physical links (roads). [4,5,6,14]

The physical linkage between urban and rural areas development has positive effects such as reduction of transportation costs, increasing agricultural production, changes in production structure, acceptance and deployment of business inputs, promoting efficient farming, developing product processing, increasing land values, making a more effective marketing and new models, enhanced access to non agricultural activities, easy access to public and social services [2].

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[*] **Corresponding Author**: Mostafa Taleshia, Department of Geography, Payame Noor University, 19395-4697, Tehran, Iran.
E. mail: taleshi_mo@yahoo.com, mostafataleshia@hotmail.com

Studies performed in Latin America show that the development of urban transportation and communication facilities, not only causes the development of small towns, but also provides a basis for unity and coherence to the market of such areas. Highways are increased access of rural producers to urban markets and villagers can also carry more products with new vehicles such as vans and trucks to urban markets. Merchants could take over all of villages and buy the more products. Construction of highways not only is transferred urban market function to rural, but also increased trade relationship between the rural areas [3]. The goal of this study is The Role of Small Town in Instability of Rural Development- Case Study of Small Towns of Babol County in Northern Iran.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Recognition of the study area

Babol has 1578.1 square kilometers areas, which has been accounted 6.6% of the total area of Mazandaran province in northern Iran. In 2006 the county population was 469591 people. The 247515 people were settled in urban areas and 222076 people were living in rural areas. The county has 7 urban points Babol, Amyr Kla, Gatab, Khoshrodepey, Marzy kla and Gelo Gah. Babol city with a population of 201335 people is the most populous and Marzy kla with 525 people is the least. Cities of Amyr Kla, Gatab, Gelo Gah, Khoshrodpey and Zargarmahaleh each have 25291, 6956, 5028, 4776 and 3604 people.

The rural settlements of Babol County with 538villages have a permanent population. From this amount 157 villages are under 20 households. This group has been allocated the largest number of rural (29.18 percent) and lowest population (12.2 percent) among the population groups. While the largest demographic group in rural areas is 249 to 100 households with more than 22.68 percent of the number of settlements, more than 32.91 percent of the rural population is dedicated to itself (Figure 1).
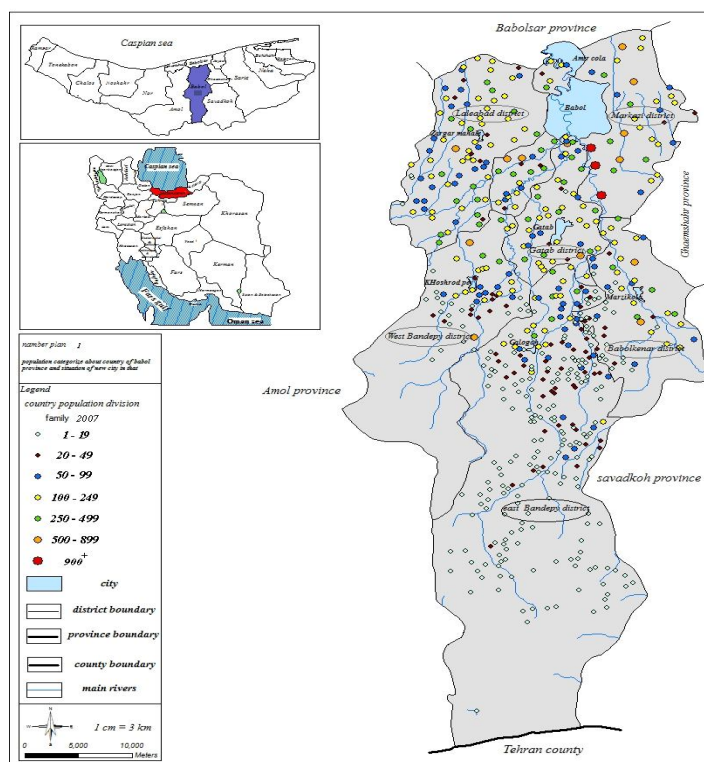


**Figure 1:** The map of Study area

### 2.2. Methodology

The methodology of this study is a descriptive - analytical with applied approach. The affecting factors on assessing the development of rural settlements include population, liberated percent, the number of services and the employment ratio. Statistics, information, and resources are gathered through the national center for statistical studies and analysis of statistical data is done using numerical models of taxonomic.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to determine the degree of development of villages in small town's area the taxonomic analysis has been used. The purpose of the calculation and evaluation of this indicator is to determine the development scale of rural settlements and small towns and how much the functions and services are expanded into the surrounding areas.

In this method, using five indicators of population growth rates, percentage of literacy, employment, and number of services in the rural areas and small towns, is tried to examine the development level of villages in small town's areas. To perform this analysis the commercial town's area has been considered. To achieve the level of development two times of before and after urbanization in 1996 and 2006 has been calculated by taxonomic index and the rank of each settlement has been specified in any period. According to these finding:

- Rural Service, including educational and cultural services such as primary, high schools, and libraries, sports sites.
- Political and administrative services, including the village council, Jihad services, rural cooperatives.
- Health services, including public baths, health care centers, Health Home, birth facility, physician, dentist, dental surgeon, and obstetrician, veterinary technician.
- Communications services, including the P.O box, post office, post office, telecommunications office, Internet access, vehicle access, access to newspapers and magazines.
- Business services, including cooperative store, grocery, bakery, meat shop, coffee shop, bank, farm machinery and repair shop.
- Religious services, including the mosque, shrine, and other religious places.
- Infrastructure services such as electricity, gas piping, water piping, and water treatment system.

In this analysis three levels of development (developed, developing, and underdeveloped village) is determined. The numbers of each level are different and their degree is cited in Table 1. In addition, the development degree of each settlement is categorized by their urban settlement area (Figure 2).

**Table 1:** the degree of development of rural settlements in small town's area of city of Babylon

| Development Degree | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Level 1<br>Developed | Level 2<br>Developing | Level 3<br>Under Developing |
| 1996 | 0.160-0.626 | 0.727-1.084 | **1.085-1.543** |
| 2006 | 0.198-0.443 | 0.443-0.687 | **0.688-0.933** |

### 3.1. Analysis of Khoshrud Pey City Area

The total numbers of villages in business services area of the city are 13, which have been calculated and analyzed. For better analysis we have done a ranking system based on the degrees from index calculation in two periods of time which is summarized as follows:

Comparing the results of the two periods indicates in the first period (1996) 8 villages (61.54%) are located in developed group which in next period has declined to 3 villages (23.8%).

The second level of rural development (developing villages) in the first period is 4 villages (30.77%) and in the second period decreased to 3 villages. Villages of third level (undeveloped), has increased from 1 in the year 1996 to 98. Figure 2, indicate that the studied city has been not successful in expanding services and functions into the surrounding areas.

**Table 2:** Status of development of rural settlements in the city of Khoshrud Pey before and after urbanization

| City | year | Level 1<br>Developed | | Level 2<br>Developing | | Level 3<br>Under Developing | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Khosrud Pey | 1996 | 8 | 61.54 | 4 | 30.77 | 1 | 7.69 | **13** |
| | 2006 | 3 | 23.08 | 3 | 23.08 | 7 | 53.85 | **13** |

### 3.2. Analysis of Gelo Gah City Area

Comparing the results of the two periods indicates in the first period (1996) 13 villages (72.22%) are located in developed group which in next period (2006) has declined to 4 villages (22.22%).

The second level of rural development (developing villages) in the first period is 4 villages (22.22%) and in the second period decreased to 1 village. Finally in the third level (underdeveloped villages) in the first period, there was only one village (5.56%) and in the second period has increased to 13 villages (72.22%).

As can be seen, the first and second levels are reduced, but the third level is rising. Figure 2, indicate that the studied city has been not successful in expanding services and functions into the surrounding area

**Table 3:** Status of development of rural settlements in the city of Gelo Gah before and after urbanization

| City | Year | Level 1 Developed | | Level 2 Developing | | Level 3 Under Developing | | Total |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Gelo Gah | 1996 | 13 | 72.22 | 4 | 22.22 | 1 | 5.56 | **18** |
| | 2006 | 4 | 22.22 | 1 | 5.56 | 13 | 72.22 | **18** |

### 3.3. Analysis of Gatab City Area

Comparing the results of the two periods indicates in the first period (1996) 11 villages (64.771 %) are located in developed group which in next period (2006) has declined to 3 villages (17.65%).

The second level of rural development (developing villages) has been reduced from 6 villages (35.29%) in the first period to 5 (29.41%) in the second period. in the third level (underdeveloped villages) in the first period, there was any village, but in the second period (2006) has increased to 9 villages (5.94 %). Figure 2, indicate that the studied city has been not successful in expanding services and functions into the surrounding area.

**Table 4:** Status of development of rural settlements in the city of Gatab before and after urbanization

| City | Year | Level 1 Developed | | Level 2 Developing | | Level 3 Under Developing | | Total |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Gatab | 1996 | 11 | 64.71 | 6 | 35.29 | 0 | 0 | **17** |
| | 2006 | 3 | 17.65 | 5 | 29.41 | 9 | 52.94 | **17** |

### 3.4. Analysis of Zargar Mahale City Area

Comparing the results of the two periods indicates in the first period (1996) 6 villages (64.67%) are located in developed group which in next period (2006) has declined to 1 villages (11.11%).

The villages of second level (developing villages) has been increased to 3 villages (33.33%) in the first period and 4 (44.44%) in the second period. In the third level (underdeveloped villages) in the first period, there was not any village, but in the second period (2006) has increased to 4 villages (44.44%). Figure 2, indicate that the studied city has been not successful in expanding services and functions into the surrounding area.

**Table 5:** Status of development of rural settlements in the city of Zargar Mahale before and after urbanization

| City | Year | Level 1 Developed | | Level 2 Developing | | Level 3 Under Developing | | Total |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Zargar Mahale | 1996 | 6 | 66.67 | 3 | 33.33 | 0 | 0.00 | **9** |
| | 2006 | 1 | 11.11 | 4 | 44.44 | 4 | 44.44 | **9** |

### 3.5. Analysis of Marzi Kola City Area

Comparing the results of the two periods indicates in the first period (1996) 6 villages (75%) are located in developed group which in next period (2006) has declined to 2 villages (25%). The villages of second level (developing villages) have been decreased from 2 villages in the first period to 1 in the second period. In the third level (underdeveloped villages) in the first period, there was not any village, but in the second period (2006) has increased to 5 villages (65.5%). Figure 2, indicate that the studied city has been not successful in expanding services and functions into the surrounding area [7, 8, 9].

Table 6: Status of development of rural settlements in the city of Marzi kala before and after urbanization

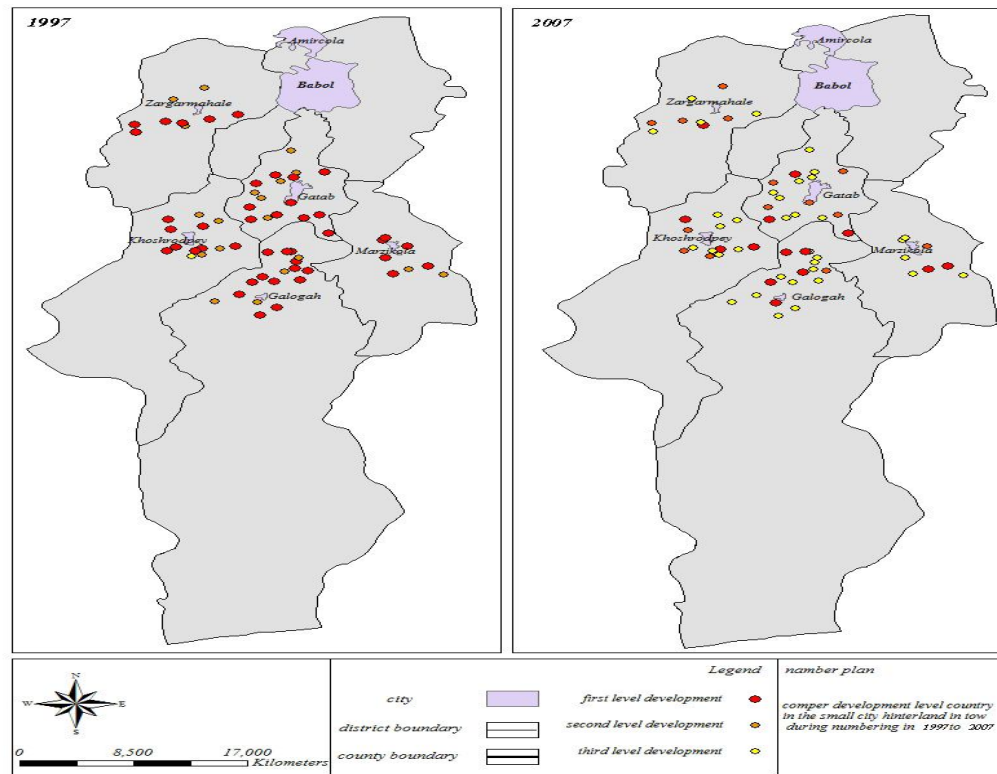| City | Year | Level 1 Developed | | Level 2 Developing | | Level 3 Under Developing | | Total |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Marzi kala | 1996 | 6 | 75 | 2 | 25 | 0 | 0 | **8** |
| | 2006 | 2 | 25 | 1 | 12.5 | 5 | 62.5 | **8** |

**Figure 2.** Compare development level country 1997 to 2007

## 4. Conclusion

Regional development is occurred through the development and diversity of functions and creating new and sustainable relationships. This communicational process is produced through the relationship between small town and rural areas. Following such relation the rural would be accessed to services, facilities, infrastructure and economic activities in urban areas [10,11,12].

For better performance of the functional role of small towns in Babol County and the increasing of granting service to rural settlement and achieving a successful policy in small town the following is recommended.

- These small towns should have reasonable municipal services and facilities, until they could play the role of municipal services for rural settlement.
- Regarding sufficiently to provide rural area and giving the necessary services to them in order to prevent migration of villagers to cities and reduce urban and rural problems.
- Creation of employment in these towns to absorb surplus labor of surrounding rural area through strengthening agro-based industries.
- Market towns should be act like a market for agricultural productions of rural areas.
- The Small towns are considered an appropriate market and trading center for agricultural products, which in addition to create jobs, will be an effective stimulant in improving the agricultural field, returning more income to the rural sector and accelerate socio-economic development [13,15,16].

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