

Tourism Policymaking Imprisoned by the Parasitic Attitude Towards Culture

Tourism development to a great extent depends on how the main actors (authorities) perceive nature and the identity of tourism. Tourism is per se a part of the culture and inherently falls under a cultural category, requiring a specific policy for effective establishment in the country's development system. What determines the path of this domain depends upon what roles authorities in the fields of culture and economy play while encountering the issue of tourism and whether the political atmosphere considers tourism as an opportunity or a threat in the face of the country's challenges. Criticism of the budgeting system for 2024 in serial report no. 19511 prepared by the research center of the Iranian parliament shows that the budget for the culture has been included in the budget of cultural institutions and culture is known as a burden on companies and government institutions. A look at the budget bill of 2025 indicates the contribution of the tourism industry in decreasing the price of gas is limited. Tourism development has also become dependent on the credit of other state-owned companies. This means that the country's annual development cuts in this area pay little attention to the inter-sectoral synergy aspects of culture. Culture is supposed to be borne by revenue-generating or credit-seeking organizations, rather than being part of development or a center of transformation. Even culture has not been consumed as a commodity but rather has been kept alive as a « Parasit » on a set of «cultural equipment» for artificial respiration. One of the consequences of this is the resistance of the executive bodies to allocate defined shares to culture and the non-organic development of the above-mentioned areas. The seventh development plan shows that tourism includes 17 chapters of which the important ones are tax exemptions, import permits, mixed-use developments, and a small surge in incoming religious tourists. The chapters do not seem to have been developed based on a coherent problem-solving approach to the country's tourism. Rather than being considered the main concern of the country's tourism for the next 5 years, these issues are the actions that can be carried out by the executive agencies in the form of procedures and executive plans. The reverse reading of the program and annual cuts highlights that tourism is still not seen as an opportunity to contribute to an endogenic and value-creating economy, and policymakers have not been involved in this domain for reasons such as the need for the government support for heavy investments and the lack of readiness to streamline the use of the capacities in the private and public sectors. As long as tourism policymakers hold a parasitic attitude toward the cultural sector and reduce the status of culture to the executive bodies of the cultural sector, we need to await miraculous sparks with no hope for their continuance. The most important bottleneck for changing the track in this field is the demand for tourism and its mental institutionalization for policymakers.

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