

The Biopolitics of Development in Border Regions: Analyzing the Contradiction Between Economic Potential and Population Sustainability (Case Study: Border Villages of Saqqez and Baneh) (Case Study: Border Villages of Saqqez and Baneh)

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Article Info	Extended Abstract
Article type: Research Article Article history: Received: 17 August 2026 Received in revised form: 02 September 2026 Accepted: 12 September 2026 Published online: 18 September 2026 Keywords: <i>Biopolitics;</i> <i>Development;</i> <i>Population</i> <i>Sustainability; Biobased</i> <i>Security; Border</i> <i>Villages; Saqqez and</i> <i>Baneh.</i>	Objective: In contemporary critical social inquiry, development can no longer be conceptualized merely as an economic apparatus of capital accumulation or a set of technical interventions. Rather, it operates as a constellation of biopolitical ideas and governing rationalities designed to administer, direct, regulate, and sustain human life. Within this paradigm, sustainability transcends simple continuous growth; it fundamentally concerns preserving the socio-biological viability of human settlements and imbuing daily life with meaning and material security. However, in peripheral borderlands, this imperative confronts an acute structural crisis: a profound contradiction between substantial territorial-economic potential and the material reproduction of life. In the border villages of Saqqez and Baneh counties in Kurdistan Province, Iran, demographic presence is not a neutral statistical parameter. Border populations constitute a vital “biological body” through which territorial integrity, national sovereignty, and spatial stability are materialized. Depopulation in these critical frontiers compromises national spatial resilience and accelerates what can be termed “demographic desertification.” Despite undeniable border endowments—including thriving cross-border trade, commercial marketplaces, and rich cultural traditions—these rural communities suffer severe out-migration, demographic aging, and spatial abandonment. This study examines this developmental impasse through a Foucauldian biopolitical lens. It interrogates the structural mechanisms through which centralized, top-down development policies treat border inhabitants not as active agents of spatial production, but as passive targets of administrative management, thereby divorcing border economic rents from sustainable community reproduction. Methodology: To address the research questions empirically and analytically, an applied, descriptive-analytical research design combining quantitative survey techniques with strategic planning matrices was conducted across 12 designated border villages in Saqqez and Baneh counties: Survey Instrumentation & Sampling: Data collection involved a dual-tier approach: Expert Survey (N=20N = 20N=20): Administered to regional planners and rural development specialists to calibrate, weight, and rank indicators across four principal dimensions of population



sustainability: economic, socio-cultural, physical-ecological, and geographical.

Household Survey (N=150N = 150N=150): Administered to residents across the 12 villages using a standardized 5-point Likert scale to assess local conditions across all four operational dimensions.

Analytical Techniques: Quantitative data were processed using SPSS. One-sample ttt-tests (test benchmark = 3.00) evaluated the status and statistical significance of population sustainability dimensions. Pearson correlation coefficients assessed systemic interdependencies among the criteria. Strategic Matrix Modeling: Internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats were systematically organized using a SWOT matrix. Strategic priorities and factor interactions were quantitatively appraised through the Strategic Factor Analysis Summary (SFAS) and the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) to determine optimal policy interventions.

Findings: Empirical analyses demonstrate that population sustainability in the investigated border settlements is in an acutely unfavorable state across all evaluative dimensions:

Dimensional Deficits: Descriptive scoring revealed that all four pillars registered aggregate means well below the theoretical midpoint of 3.00: Geographical dimension: Mean = 2.68; Socio-cultural dimension: Mean = 2.73; Economic dimension: Mean = 1.86; Physical-ecological dimension: Mean = 1.34

Overall composite index: Mean = 2.15 (with $t=-15.335$ $t=-15.335$, $p<0.001$ $p<0.001$ $p<0.001$). Statistical Significance:

One-sample ttt-tests confirmed the systematic nature of this instability across every single dimension ($p=0.000$ $p=0.000$ $p=0.000$), decisively rejecting the null hypothesis and affirming that rural depopulation is structural rather than episodic. Systemic Interdependence: Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a robust, statistically significant correlation between overarching sustainability indices and the multi-dimensional indicators ($r=0.729$ $r=0.729$ $r=0.729$, $p<0.001$ $p<0.001$ $p<0.001$), demonstrating that demographic decline stems from a structural and interconnected crisis rather than localized anomalies.

SWOT and SFAS Matrix Results: Strengths & Opportunities: Marked border trade volume, proximity to international boundaries, and commercial momentum constitute real potential. Weaknesses & Threats: Overriding structural handicaps include spatial isolation, fragmented alley layouts, the absence of a comprehensive cadastral land registry, unviable primitive livestock keeping within settlements, precarious low-productivity employment, and rapid youth out-migration. QSPM Strategic Prioritization: Confronted with acute structural vulnerabilities, the QSPM decisively favored Defensive Strategies (WT) over aggressive or competitive postures. Survival and structural stabilization must precede growth-oriented initiatives.

Conclusion: The empirical findings substantiate that population instability in Saqez and Baneh is not driven by an absence of



economic capacity, but by a rupture forged by the prevailing developmental discourse between border wealth and community life. While state interventions have facilitated cross-border commercial corridors and commodity flows, these mechanisms function primarily as short-term “poverty administration” rather than generative “life production.” Commercial rents circulate rapidly toward urban centers and financial hubs rather than taking institutional root in rural production, infrastructure, or community welfare. The rural space is thus transformed into an alienated non-place—rich in trade turnover, yet deficient in living conditions.

Crucially, the absence of cadastral mapping and formal property titles denies border dwellers legal territorial anchorage, rendering their assets non-collateralizable and perpetuating tenure insecurity. Furthermore, national development agendas have long privileged an orthodox, disciplinary conception of frontier security—centered around physical barriers, surveillance, and policing—at the expense of “bio-based security.” True security is inseparable from the material capacity of subjects to reproduce life, access quality healthcare and education, anchor property rights, and anticipate a dignified, predictable future. Depopulation constitutes a silent, collective vote of exit by subjects whose daily existence is no longer viable within their territorial space. Escaping this biopolitical evacuation demands moving beyond intensified disciplinary control toward systemic, defensive spatial policies: Guaranteeing equitable distribution of essential services and public land uses across border villages; Establishing a comprehensive cadastral land register to confer formal property rights; Diversifying the rural economy from precarious informal trade to value-added, place-based production; Transforming border zones from securitized buffer spaces into self-sustaining spaces of life and dignified citizenship..

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