

Elaborating the Role of Local Participation in Comprehensive Plans' Success Rate

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Abstract: Preparation and implementation of rural pilot plans are amongst the most important government's responsibilities for organizing and developing the country's villages in the course of which the development and expansion trends of the villages are specified meanwhile coordinating and modifying the their physical texture. Now that about two decades have elapsed since the development of a pilot rural plan, various effects in textural-spatial grounds, including alteration of the villages' texture, change of the house construction pattern, discoordination in the villages' network of passageways and facilitation of the villagers' traffic can be seen. In spite of the preliminary objectives and programs of these plans for the development of the villages in various regions of the country, it seems that the preparation and execution of them have been faced with numerous problems in practice due to the villagers' lack of participation. In Gilan province's villages, as well, the implementation of pilot plan has not taken the expected trend and the objectives of the pilot plan have been actualized to a lesser degree. Thus, the present study aims at emphasizing the importance and necessity of the pilot plans in rural spots via adopting a special approach to the villagers' participation in village development, particularly successful implementation of the pilot plans.

Keywords: Local Participation, Pilot Plans, Comprehensive Plan

INTRODUCTION

Rural pilot plans constitute one of the most important programs taken into account in line with rural development planning following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the area of villages' textural development plans. Rural pilot plans have adopted approaches pivoting about the textural changes in villages' development so as to implement projects the entirety of which seeks alteration of the villages' textures for a subsequent achievement of rural development (Papeli Yazdi and Ebrahimi, 2013).

Pilot plans or, in other words, rural development comprehensive plans are approved guidelines for navigating the construction and reconstruction operations in villages through first getting aware of the cultural, economic and social statuses thereof. In fact, meanwhile organizing and reforming the existent texture, pilot plan specifies the extent and the sites of prospective expansions and the methods of using land for various case-specific performances within the format of enactments of spatial organization and rural domiciles' plans or districtwide comprehensive plans (Haidari Sareban et al, 2017, p.84).

These plans have been previously or currently being pervasively executed in various regions of the country. Although many years have passed since the implementation of such types of plans in various parts of the country, there is no comprehensive information available about the effects and outcomes of their implementation and it is necessary to conduct studies in various regions. In other words, there are so far scattered researches done regarding various aspects of these plans but there is no extensive information at hand of the different effects of them in various regions of the country. On the other hand, some of the existing evidence confirms the unfavorable results of these plans in various spots of the country. Moreover, in a

similar study, the results and effects of the improvement signal the failure of these plans due to the limitedness of the people's participation and elongation of the project implementation period and so forth (Ya'aghoubi Farani and Mo'taghd, 2016, p.114).

The results of some of the studies performed by Islamic Revolution's Housing Foundation in 2013 affirm the failure and instability of some of the rural development plans, including rural pilot plans, due to the absence or weak participation of the villagers in the stages of executing the aforesaid plans in some parts of the country (Mo'taghd, 2014, p.3).

Gilan Province is a pioneer in implementation of these plans and they have been implemented so far in 800 villages of the province but only 39% of them have been completed up to the present point in time (Gilan Province's Housing Foundation, 2018). Based thereon, the current research paper has been conducted with the objective of elaborating the local participation role in the success rates of pilot plans in Gilan Province's villages so that, meanwhile identifying and investigating the importance of the villagers' participation in pilot plans, appropriate solutions can be devised for the corroboration of the villagers' participation in such plans.

Familiarization with the Study Region:

Gilan Province is over 14044 square kilometers in area and it is bound from the north to Caspian Sea and it shares borders on its west, south and east with Ardabil, Zanjan, Qazvin and Mazandaran Provinces, respectively. The province features a temperate and humid climate. It is composed of 16 counties, 43 districts, 51 cities and 109 villages and Rasht is considered as the most populated city thereof. According to 2016's census, Gilan Province accommodates a population of 2530696 people out of whom 927660 are villagers.

Pilot Plan Conceptualized:

As a spatial reality, rural areas of Iran are products of the interaction between different ecological, social-cultural, political and textural indicators. Pilot plan or, in other words, the comprehensive rural development plan, is an approved guideline for navigating the constructions and reconstructions in the villages via first gaining insight over the cultural, economic and social statuses thereof. Based on the procedures on the methods of investigating and enacting local, district, regional and statewide reconstruction and development plans as well as based on the city-building and architectural regulations passed at 01/12/1999 by the cabinet, rural plans are defined as programs that, meanwhile organizing and correcting the existent texture, specify the amount and the site of the prospective expansions and the ways of using land for various performances such as housing, manufacture, business, agriculture, installations and equipment and general rural requirements and needs in a case-specific manner within the format of spatial and rural domiciles' organization plan enactments or comprehensive districtwide plans (Riahi et al, 2017, p.37).

The followings are the most important goals of such plans, as stipulated in paragraph 2 of the procedures of article 7 of Housing Foundation's charter, approved at 12/17/1988 by Islamic Consultative Assembly (Annabesteani, 2014, p.131):

- A) Setting the ground for development and reconstruction of the villages according to cultural, economic and social conditions
- B) Fair supply of facilities through granting social, manufacturing and welfare loans
- C) Textural guidance and development of the villages
- D) Specifying the required loans for the improvement of the villagers' housing and public bioenvironmental services

After preparing and enacting the plan and its declaration by provincial governor to the county governor and the local officials, the rural pilot plans enter an executive stage in which the proposed land use map and the pilot plan's rules and regulations are considered as an authentic legal document directing the corresponding officials in prospective development of the village and all construction licenses are issued in adherence to the approved pilot plan (Reza'ei and Safa, 2013, p.52).

Villagers' Participation in Rural Development:

To move within the framework of the rural development, intellectual and attitudinal changes should be seminally brought about in the villagers meaning that the villagers' considerations of the objectives and work and activities' values in rural regions should be changed (Haidari Sareban, 2012, p.171). The thing that is of great importance in this process is the role of a committed government that can play its role well in instructing the individuals and place human development atop of its agenda and encourage individuals to actively participate and take part parallel to the deepening of the collective life provided that the government can set the grounds for the growing of the people's capacity in line with the creation of mutual relationships and facilitate inter-citizens' contacts so that self-confidence can be enhanced. However, public participation policy is the prerequisite to the empowering of the individuals. The recent studies in various developing countries are reflective of the idea that the participatory solutions have been successful for the rural development. Based thereon, the failure or success of the rural development plans depend on the degree to which the local communities take part and involve in them as well as on their appraisal of such plans. General experiences are indicative of the idea that the people's participation in any development stage is the key factor giving rise to the successful implementation of the projects while, in opposite, failure happens when the people's participation in various stages is ignored (Danesh Mehr and Ahmadrash, 2009, p.131).

The results of years of concentrated experience with the negligence of the people participation in Iran, as well, are expressive of the wastage of national capitals, including material and spiritual, and wastage of the governmental facilities and eventually discontent of the villagers of the government and reconstruction activities, incompleteness of some reconstruction plans, failure and abandonment of some of these plans and the individuals lack of sense of duty in regard of this area (Annabestani and Musavi, 2017, p.571). People's lack of participation might be stemming from such factors as their unawareness of reconstruction plans or its not being predicted in the country's programming structure for the reconstruction plans or other cases of the like and these may be accompanied by such problems as people's lack of sense of duty in remaining adherent to the reconstruction plans and the subsequent loss of stability. Thus, the pilot plans, as the most local programs associated with the rural society, need villagers' participation (Mawla'ei Hashjin et al, 2016, p.79).

It can be discerned in an investigation of literature related to rural participation and development that guidance, development and strengthening of the course of people's participation in the processes of villages' development program is influenced by a set of factors and indicators in micro- and macro-scales as well as by the purposive and effective intervention of the corresponding organizations and institutions via paving the way for and bringing about the appropriate capacities of attracting people's participation and taking advantage of the various people-based groups' capabilities and abilities (A'azami et al, 2015).

Pilot Plans and Villagers' Participation:

After the passage of several decades, the third world countries have come to the conclusion via implementing various planning strategies for reaching optimal development that the locals' participation in the plans brings about reductions in costs of information gathering, determination of more real and more effective solutions, more coordination and more coherence of the individuals in rural societies and better execution of the regulations. Moreover, for providing of opportunities for the villagers' taking of joint ventures in suitable decisions and practical affairs, participatory management causes the obtainment and establishment of democracy. It is worth mentioning that people's participation is not a concept solely limited to the social aspect and information collection rather, in order to be influential, participation should be carried out in all aspects and dimensions and in an integrated and full-scale manner. Pilot plan in Iran revolves around applied changes in the villages and attempts alteration of the villages' texture and attainment of rural development. Villagers' participation should happen in various aspects and stages so that the objectives of rural pilot plans and other reconstruction plans could be actualized in the villages (Riahi et al, 2017, p.38).

- 1) Participation in decision-making and planning process (recognition of needs, prioritization of them and decision-making)

- 2) Participation in implementation and maintenance
- 3) Participation in exploitation, preservation, protection, repair and maintenance of plans and projects
- 4) Participation in valuation and revision of the plans and projects' effects

The followings can be realized as the aspects of people participation in pilot plans (Rokn Al-Din Eftekhari et al, 2011, p.224):

- 1) Setting the grounds for people participation in designing and implementation of pilot plans (paragraph F of article 6 of the procedure)
- 2) Implementation of physical development plans in cooperation with people (Paragraph E of article 7)
- 3) Paying attention to the principle of indirect intervention in the execution of plans by relying on people participation (the beginning part of article 11)
- 4) Setting the grounds for people participation and organizing the local forces in relation to the preparation and implementation of the projects (Paragraph C of article 11)
- 5) Investigation of the grounds and methods of executive, technical and economic participation of villagers in the previous reconstruction plans in rural level and determination of the weak and strong points thereof (paragraph 2-2-3-4 of the social investigations of project implementation stages)
- 6) Evaluation of the grounds and methods of technical, economic and social participation of villagers in the implementation of reconstruction projects in the past and determination of the method of their participation in execution, exploitation and maintenance of rural pilot plans' projects (paragraph 2-4 of analysis and conclusion of the second stage of the plan)
- 7) Need assessment of the necessary rural programs and projects according to the results of the high-level plans and the villagers' perspectives and prior research findings (paragraph 1-1 of the third stage of determining programs and projects)
- 8) Offering the required suggestions for the strengthening and institutionalization of villagers' participatory activities in social-cultural, economic and technical-executive aspects for sustainable and persistent productivity of the rural reconstruction projects, especially pilot plans and the projects of securing against natural accidents' risks (paragraph 1-2-4 of the third stage of program specification)

Conclusion:

Nowadays, village people's participation is of a great importance as the most pivotal element to the achievement of the rural reconstruction's objectives in such a way that the largest capital that any village can rely on it to leave behind the stages of reconstruction and prosperity is nothing but the participation by the village residents. The more the people mass take more parts in the administration of their affairs the more the success becomes likely by means of which the low classes and deprived people of the society can take more advantage of the results of participation and benefits of rural development and reconstruction. For sustainable development of the rural regions, the villagers per se should be placed in the center of attentions and their role should be believed in; it means that the people should play an accentuated role in the development of their region. Unfortunately, it is sometimes observed that a reconstruction project is implemented in a region without informing the villagers of the decision-making course, plans' whereabouts and even with not demanding of their participation in the project implementation. Villagers should participate in all stages of project cycle, especially from problem-finding and decision-making and planning to implementation and evaluation. The majority of the programs and plans that have been so far implemented for the achievement of rural and agricultural development in the country have not been followed by much of a success in the rural regions. Using contemplation and pondering in an investigation and analysis of the factors contributing to the failure of rural development programs in developing countries, including Iran, it becomes clear that the lack of active participation and presence of the village people in such programs is a major cause of failure. To elevate people's participation in the development plans and projects, before

anything else, it is necessary to pay sufficient attention to the issue that how and with what quality and in what level can pave the way for people's participation in the programs. In line with this, the villagers' participation in reconstruction plans with the objective of fortifying the social, economic and textural foundations of Iran's villages in small to large-size villages with the centrality of the small villages should be incited via gradation of the social and fundamental services in small villages' level thereby to prepare central rural improvement plans so as to come up with physical development patterns for all of the small and large villages in adherence to the various guidelines and with different and variable vigor.

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