

Rural Development in Contemporary Iran 1950-2010

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Abstract: *In many developing countries, pressure exists from external interests who urge their allies to carry out development programs as part of an institutional overhaul or as a means of avoiding radical or revolutionary change. The goals of these programs presume that it is possible to eradicate or, at least, diminish social inequality. However, contrary to these expectations, development plans from above do not effectively alter rural social structures, and, as such, brings socio-economic inequalities, as in the case of Iran. This work assesses the impact of rural development programs on Iranian peasants and examines some demographic and socio-economic dimensions of the country's rural community during recent decades. The present article goes on to evaluate the significance and implementation of 1960s & 1980s land reform laws, and the socio-economic effects of land redistribution on the Iranian peasantry's relation of production, land exploitation patterns, farming systems and rural class structure (i.e. the weakening of absentee landowners and the expansion of the rural petty bourgeoisie). The result shows that the fundamental problems of rural development plans in Iran are the following:*

a) Lack of a correct thinking on rural development. The reality is that despite defining idealistic, ambitious goals at the beginning of each plan, the planners and managers consider rural development as a process that makes villages similar to cities. b) Lack of a definite strategy for rural development, with clear definitions for development, rural development, and developed villages. Of course, this is a problem that can be seen in all development plans. c) Lack of a comprehensive approach towards rural development and existence of an abstract, non-systemic view of village and rural development. d) Lack of a single, umbrella organization that takes responsibility for rural development plans and projects.

Keywords: *Rural development, inequality, stratification, Iran*

Introduction

This essay analyzes to uncover the nature of Iranian rural development, who implemented it, and whose interests it treated and protected. The term "Rural Development" can be defined as improving the living standards of the low income population in rural areas, and making the development process sustainable. Relying on theoretical and conceptual debates and the finding of practical studies this work develops a deeper insight into Iranian rural social stratification, and demonstrates that the country's rural community has undergone change due to other social development, it reviews the experiences of rural development plans in contemporary Iran, considering the role and status of the rural people in concepts such as centralism, bureaucracy, and the participation of rural population. The experience of rural development in Iran in the last few decades indicated that the majority of programs and efforts for modernizing Iranian rural community were using external models in the form of economic growth before revolution and fulfilling basic needs after revolution.

Methodology

The research approach of the present work relies upon two different complementary methods. The first is based on a thorough review of published and unpublished literature about socio-economic of rural Iran. In addition to this, the most useful information is derived from several case studies on the effect of rural development on the Iranian peasantry. The data for these case studies were obtained directly from my own field work over a long period of time. For this part a combination of different methods such as direct observation, participant

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observation and several in depth interview were used. Also each item of information which was gathered through different field work in rural areas was cross-checked.

Dominant Theories of Rural Development in Iran

There exists a logical, clear relationship between rural development programs and policies and theoretical perspectives and schools. Generally, considering the theoretical views, there are two general theoretical traditions regarding rural communities; a tradition and view that considers rural community as a homogeneous community, and a tradition that considers rural community as a heterogeneous one. The first interpretation is older and more traditional and has somehow fascinated all classical sociologists who have considered non-urban communities as static. The static view of rural communities has reinforced this idea that some external forces from modern sections of society shall undertake to foster change and development in villages and therefore, the rural communities must be receptors of elements of change. This view has given rise to expansion of modernization approach and designing extrinsic, top-down development strategies and plans (Beats, 2000:198). The modernization theories are inspired by Evolutionary and Functionalist Theories and the researchers of this school, consider modernization a process with several stages. In each historical period, societies pass through one of these stages. Furthermore, they consider modernization as a process that breeds consistency and increases the tendency to homogeneity among societies, In addition, they consider modernization as a European process which is formed in that region, is disseminated among its different societies, and is irreversible (Sue, 2001: 49-50). Therefore, many researchers believe that the new nations shall take the same route that nations of West Europe had taken. Thus, many developing countries have tried to use extrinsic development strategy within the framework of modernization, experience technocratic, reformist models for rural development, and have focused on increasing agricultural products through utilizing technology and agricultural inputs and commercialization of agriculture through directing it towards production of cash and export crops, breaking chains of traditions, promoting appropriate western developmental theories, and realization of Green Revolution. On the other end of this spectrum, there stands the strategy which believes in creating fundamental changes in rural communities. Within the framework of this approach, it is not possible to eradicate poverty and attain to real development without fundamental changes in social and economical structures which are attributable to those types of structural changes that are similar to full-fledged revolution in society (Azkia, 2005: 226).

The majority of developing countries have implemented technocratic strategy for rural development. The main objective of this strategy is to increase agricultural products, which is achieved either through encouraging peasants to accept advanced technologies, or through integrating lands. The economic system is principally based on the ideology of liberal capitalism. Focusing on competition, free markets, and diverse private ownership is considered as the necessary requirement for obtaining the goals of rural development plans. However, in practice, the ownership of land and other means of production are, to a great extent, centralized. The reformist strategy of rural development, too, considers distribution of income among some parts of society, especially medium peasants and therefore, attaches less importance to increasing the productivity of agricultural products. In this system, there have been some efforts for creating a balance between more equality in the society and growth of agricultural products through changing methods of supplying agricultural inputs. The result of such actions is emergence of a type of duality in agriculture sector. The ideology that accompanies this rural development usually belongs to nationalist and sometimes populist school. In this type of strategy, distribution of revenues flows from high income groups to medium groups. The lower- income groups may enjoy more revenues due to the job opportunities that were created. But it is highly improbable that they enjoy a change in their overall conditions of life or their political influence is increased (Ibid, 233).

Therefore, since development has started in Iran from 1940s and the dominant model at that time for the development of third World Countries was modernization, the same model was used for development in Iran. Therefore, in the development plans before Revolution, the dominant view of planning was based on economic growth inspired with modernization “(Jomeh Pour, 2006:151) and we witness the victory of the growth model and emphasis on rapid industrialization of the country. At that time, the development plan for agriculture and rural sector was treated as marginal, despite the fact that they accounted for half of the country’s population (Azkia&Ghaffari, 2004:118). After the Islamic Revolution, unlike pre-revolution era, the Rural Development Plans followed economic development models which were mainly formed on the basis of the model of responding to basic needs, with the primary aim of re-distribution of resources.

Rural social structure

At the beginning of the twentieth century, almost 33 percent of Iranian population was nomadic, approximately 40 percent lived in rural settlements, and the remainder lived in towns. Beginning in the 1920s, as industrial

progress and agricultural development proceeded, the nomadic population gradually declined while that of village (and towns) rose. At the time of the country's first nationwide census in 1956, approximately 70 percent (13.3 million out of 19 million) of Iran's total population was rural, with 85 percent of rural inhabitants living in villages (Census of Population and Housing 1976, 1980).

During the seventy five-year period 1922 to 1997, the general mortality rate decreased, although the fertility rate remained high and did not change dramatically until the late 1980s. As a result of falling mortality, especially among infants and children, the normally slow growth of population took a sharp upward swing in the late 1950s; by the late 1970s, the highest among all the developing countries and remained at this high rate for a decade. However, owing to the resumption of family-planning programs and population control policies, since 1987 the fertility rate has decreased. In fact, by the mid-1990s, the annual population growth rate had declined to nearly 1.5 percent. The fertility rate for 2006 census is estimated 18.71 in thousand and mortality rate for rural area is 6.93 per thousand. This is why the annual growth of population in 2011 has declined to 1.3.

Since 1956, Iran's urban population has been increasing at the expense of the rural one. The most important reason for this increase has been rural-to-urban migration. However, other factors are involved, such as the incorporation of larger villages as cities. Overall, the rural population as a percentage of the total has declined steadily, falling to 61 percent in 1966, to 53 percent in 1976, to 45 percent in 1986, and to only 38 percent by 1996 and 31 percent in 2006 census. Despite the fact that the percentage of rural population has fallen, the absolute figure has risen, from 17.8 million in 1978 to 23 million in 1996 (Census of Population and Housing 1996, 1997), and 22 million in 2006 census.

Both fertility and mortality rates in rural areas are higher than those in urban areas. Economic and social factors have affected these rates. One of the most important factors of increasing population is access to manpower. In Iran, traditional agriculture has consisted of several activities, such as farming, rural handicrafts, animal husbandry, and gardening. These activities need labor, even the work of woman and children. There is a historic relationship between the "*Nasaq*" (the customary right to use village plough land and water resources), on one hand, and the size of a family, on the other (Azkia, 1980). The peasant family farm is a multilateral social organization. It not only is a consuming unit but also supplies almost all labor for the producing unit. Nevertheless, the average family size has decreased from 5.4 to 5.1 member in 1975. Yet according to the least census 2006 the average of rural family estimated around 4.4. The decrease in the fertility rate as well as the steady decline in the extended structure of the Iranian family, economic constrain, as well as increase in literacy rate may be considered major causes of the decrease in family size. The marriage rate in rural communities is also higher than in cities for four principle reasons. First, rural families encourage marriage of the youth. Second, the need for agricultural labor induces peasants to get married in order to use the relatively cheap manpower of their wives and children. Third, social sanctions as well as the cultural ethos are major factors in persuading youth to get married (Vosooghi, 1990). And fourth, religious beliefs are important and encourage youth to get married.

Intergroup marriage (that is, within the extended family) is one of the major characteristics of rural families in Iran. This pattern might be related to the limited range of mate selection, on one hand, and the dominating role of the family, on the other. According to the results of a 1972 survey in rural areas, early marriage was very common. In fact, 10 percent of men and 40 percent of woman had married when they were between 15 and 19 years of age. After the revolution, the age of marriage for both men and women began to rise to 24.5 years for men and to 22.3 years for women, and in 2006, 25.5 years for men and 23.4 years for women. Date also show considerable achievement in increasing rural literacy rates after the revolution. The rural literacy rate in 1972 was estimated at only 6 percent; by 1986, only seven years approximately 48 percent of rural people older than 6 years of age were literate; and the rural literacy rate had risen to 69 percent by the time of the 1996 census (Census of Population and Housing 1996, 1997). Examining the figures for males and females, one sees that illiteracy among rural females is higher than among males. For example, the literacy rate for rural woman in 1986 was 36 percent, although it had risen to 62 percent by 1996. Literacy for rural men in the same years was 59.9 and 76.7 percent. The increase in literacy is mainly owing to the Literacy Movement Organization of Iran, which has established numerous branches in rural areas since its creation in 1979. According to 2006 census approximately 81 percent of men and 69 percent of woman in rural areas were literate. Among the people between 6 to 24 are undertaking education in rural areas nearly 48 percent belong to female and 52 percent to male group.

Changing rural settlement

In most parts of Iran, a village (Deh or Rosta) comprise relatively small, settled group of people living in and forming almost all the population of a locality whose social, political, religious, and economic relationships are situated within defined boundaries. Each village consists of a few organization of production, and villagers are

involved in agricultural activities in these unities. The basic criterion of the village production organization is the *Nasaq*. Generally, *Nasaq* rights are shared equally, which means that each peasant's land might comprise several noncontiguous plots of varying quality scattered throughout the village. According to the Statistical Center of Iran, there are three types of rural settlements in the country. Nearly 70 percent of all rural settlements are classified as villages - that is, places that meet the definition given earlier and have less than 5000 total population. A second type of rural settlement is the farmstead (*Mazra eh*). A farmstead usually is attached to but distant from the other homes of a village (*Mazrae hetabi*), but some farmsteads are independent (*Mazrae hemostaqel*). A single family or even a dozen or more people may occupy a farmstead, but there are no organization or institutional facilities; the size of the agricultural land is limited, and there are few non-farming activities. Approximately 27 percent of total rural settlements are farmsteads. The third type of rural settlement is called a "place". It is a location such as a mine, a small rural industry, or a teashop along a main road. A number of inhabitants may live in such places but are involved in nonagricultural activities. According to the 1996 census, 46.6 percent of the rural population lived in villages with less than 100 inhabitants. The respective figures for the 1986, 1976 and 1966 censuses were approximately 43, 44 and 47 percent. The total number of rural settlements has increased considerably in comparison with the prerevolutionary era. In fact, that overall number of rural settlements increased 65 percent between 1966 and 1996. The big jump, however, has been in the number of rural settlements - farmsteads and places - with no inhabitants. Uninhabited places increased from 19.3 percent of total rural settlements in 1966 to 32 percent in 2006. During the same period, villages with 100 to 499 inhabitants decreased from 2 percent of total village in 1966 to 35 percent in 1996. In contrast, villages with more than 1000 inhabitants increased from 2 percent of the total in 1966 to 8 percent in 1996 (Census of Population and Housing 1996, 1997). In 2006 census the total number of rural settlement is estimated around 91000 villages.

These statistics provide evidence for three social trends in rural Iran between 1966 and 1996. First, many rural people left the countryside for the cities in order to have access to a better life and better education and to take advantage of the prevalence of jobs opportunities. Second, priority for rural development programs was given to the villages with more than 1000 inhabitants, which means rural development programs emphasized physical planning rather than increasing the economic potential of villages. Therefore, other dimensions of rural development such as increasing the peasant's income and increasing agricultural output were neglected. Third, there was an increase in the number of rural settlements with less than 50 inhabitants. This development was mainly owing to the establishment of permanent settlements for nomadic populations. This decentralization was arbitrary and usually occurred without any planning for settlement schemes.

Rural migration

One can distinguish three different periods of rural migration since the 1950s. In the first period, which was before implementation of the 1962 land reform, the rate of migration was very low, with most rural migration taking place from village to village. According to the national censuses, the urban population increased from 31 percent in 1956 to 39 percent in 1966, but only 2.2 percent of the increase was because of migration from rural to urban areas. The migration was interregional and consisted mostly of landless rural inhabitants, who were more mobile mainly because of the lack of agricultural land (Vosoghi, 1980: 10-15). The second period of rural migration, 1967 to 1978, coincided with the prerevolutionary regime's land reform policies and the problems associated with their implementation (see further Hooglund, 1980). Two factors enhanced the rate of migration: rural unemployment owing to the changes in traditional work opportunities as agricultural machinery began to replace some human labor tasks and the development of various urban-area industries that absorbed the surplus agricultural workforce and other rural laborers. Many rural migrants were unskilled laborers, and most found employment in the urban service sector. The third period of rural to urban migration, 1980 to 1988, included the initial years following the Islamic Revolution. Although there was a sharp decline in the tempo of rural migration in 1979 and 1980 because of the chaos in the urban economy and the disruption in service-sector activities, mass migration resumed in the early 1980s.

An important stimulant of migration was the imbalance in the output of the rural workforce and the urban economy. There was a huge mass migration of peasants and landless people from villages to large cities notably Tehran. Rural migration during this decade was characterized by the abandonment of agricultural land, the selling of livestock, sharp declines in agricultural production, a profound tendency toward urbanism in rural men, and the creation of well-to-do strata of peasantry. With the implementation of the First and Second Five-Year Plan following the Iran-Iraq War, the government's investment in rural development policies helped to decrease the rate of rural migration. A comparison of census data shows that the total number of rural migrants to cities decreased from nearly 3.6 million in the decade from 1977 to 1986 to only 1.9 million in the decade from 1986 to 1996. In the later decade, a total of 8435865 people reported having changed their place of

residence: 66 percent declared their previous residence to have been urban, but more than 28 percent moved to rural areas. Of the total rural migrants (2833000), 33.3 percent moved between villages. Also in 2006 census the total number of rural migrants to cities decreased to 2330054 persons. Meanwhile the total migrants from cities to rural areas are estimated 2004012 people. One of the reasons for decreasing the number of migrants to cities is the lower growth of population in rural area in 12 provenances of Iran.

Changes of Social Stratification

Regarding land ownership, the rural community can be classified in two groups of *Nassaq* holders, farmers and landless farmers (sharecroppers and tenant farmers). From around three decades ago, in the literature of rural sociology the peasant community is divided into three groups of poor or small farmers, medium farmers, and rich or well-off farmers. This superficial classification is considered as being somehow equal to social stratification of peasants (ZahediMazandarani, 1998, 107). The basis for this classification has usually been the amount of land occupied, or the size of production unit of the peasant family. Therefore, social stratification of rural community in the villages of the country in accordance with the amount of land is as follows:

Size of Production Unit	Social Stratum
Less than 2 hectares	Poor (small) farmer
From 2 to 10 hectares	Medium farmer
More than 10 hectares	Rich or Well-off farmers

The landless farmers are usually subdivided into three groups of sharecropper farmers, tenant farmers, and land labors (Azkia, 1996). Based on 1991 agricultural census results, from the total 2,595,000 farming production units, 33.4 percent were up to two hectares, 45 percent had an acreage ranging from 2 to 10 hectares, and 21.6 percent were over 10 hectares. For more information on this issue you may refer to tables (1) and (2).

Table (1): the size of agricultural production units and distribution of producers

Classification of production units (based on their acreage)	Classification of Production Units		Percentage of Agricultural producers from total population of village
	Number(thousands)	Percentage from all classes	
Less than 1	496	19	11.7
1 to 2	373	14.4	8.8
2 to 5	674	26	16
5 to 10	492	19	11.7
More than 10 to 25	454	17.4	10.8
25 to 50	75	2.8	1.7
50 to 100	23	0.9	0.5
Over 100	8	0.5	0.1
Total	2595	100	-

Source: Agricultural Census, 1991, Planning and Budgeting Organization

Based on the data presented in table (1), we can compile table (2):

Table (2): Distribution of peasants' strata in rural areas of the country in 1991

Stratum	Number	Percentage
Small	869	33.4
Medium	1166	45
Well-off	560	21.6
Total	2595	100

Small Peasants

Based on the results of 1991 Agricultural Census, from a total 2,595,000 agricultural production units, 869,000 units, which are equal to 33.4 percent, covered less than 2 hectares each. The farmers working in the production units smaller than 2 hectares can be considered as Small Farmers and thus, may be considered as members of the vulnerable rural stratum. This classification, which takes the size of occupied land plots as its basis, conforms to

a great degree with the global studies on stratification of peasant communities, especially regarding scales and norms related with classifications in Asia (ZahediMazandarani, 1998, 108).

Medium Peasants

Based on 1991 Agricultural Census, from the total farming production units in the country in 1991, about 1,166,000 units, that is to say, equal to 45 percent had acreage between 2 to 10 hectares. 26 percent of the land had occupied an area from 2 to 5 hectares and 19 percent had an acreage for 5 to 10 hectares. The agricultural producers with the size of their units ranging from two to 10 hectares may be included in the middle stratum of the peasant community in Iran and can be considered as medium peasants.

Well-off Peasants

In accordance with the results of 1991 agricultural census, from the total agricultural production units in the country, about 560000 units equal to 21.6 percent, have acreage between 10 to 100 hectares and more. The agricultural producers of units with an acreage over 10 hectares are included in the higher stratum of peasant community and are considered as wealthy peasants.

Non-farmers

A significant portion of the *khoushneshins* in the villages is non-farmers. as mentioned before *khoushneshin* means a person who is not tied in any special sense to any land or location and settles wherever he likes. In the conventions of rural community, *khoushneshin* has a negative connotation and signifies low social status. In rural sociology, this group, by definition, consists of persons who do not have farming *nassagh*. The children of *nassagh* holding farmers are also considered as *khoushneshins* until they inherit *nassagh* from their father. Non-farmers are composed of three main groups of "village traders" and "village workers" and "village artisans". Village traders include forward purchasers, peddlers, shopkeepers, usurers, and village workers including carpet weavers and other weavers, factory workers, and construction workers. Landless herdsmen who do not own farming land and water, and government workers settling in villages shall also be included among non-farmers (*khoushneshins*) (ZahediMazandarani, 1994, 165). The classification of inhabitants of villages is shown in the following graph.

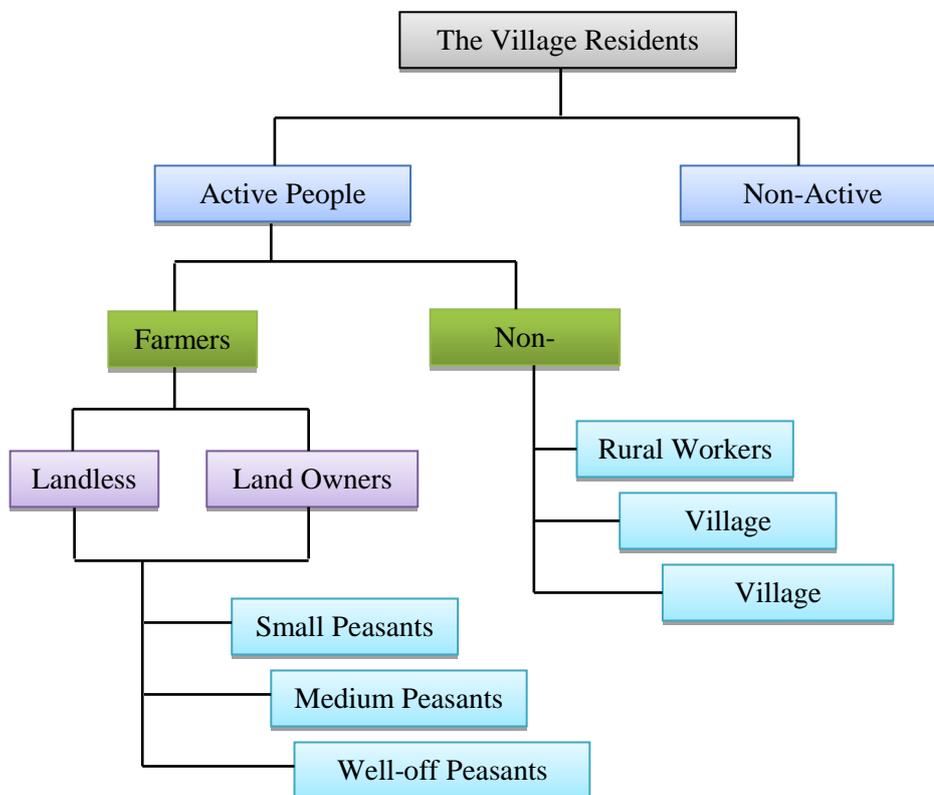


Figure (1): The social classification of the village residents

Based on the detailed results of agricultural census in 1991, among 4,256,143 rural families, about 2,620,000 families, which is equal to 61.6 percent, had farming nassagh and 1,636,143 families, equal to 38.4 percent were landless (ZahediMazandarani, 1996, 74). Generally, reviewing the studies and empirical researches on rural stratification in Iran reveals some delicate points. The first point is the growing, evolving theoretical and methodological improvements that can be seen in these studies. Frequent use of combined measurement, advanced statistical methods, and methodological delicacies depict a very promising future in such researches. However, as Durkheim puts it, "any work related to method is always tentative, because with the scientific advancements, the methods change" (Durkheim, 1973). Nevertheless, it seems that nowadays, utilization of unreliable methods in rural studies is reducing and gradually, methodology of studies on rural stratification is removing its deficiencies and shortages. The second point is that social stratification in rural community does not contradict the fact that social mobility among different social groups is possible. In fact, in the majority of rural areas of Iran there is no obstacle for inter-group marriages and kinship relations. The rural classes are not socially isolated from each other. Rather, they are distinguished on economical grounds. The Islamic Revolution influenced the social stratification of rural communities and caused some shifts among different social groups. The Islamic Revolution played a significant role in reinforcing the political and social position of lower and medium levels of rural community and, in contrast, reduced the social and economical status of higher stratum of rural communities. Nevertheless, from economical perspective, the well-off peasants gained more from developmental policies that were adopted in villages after the Revolution. From this perspective, like before the Revolution, the well-off peasants gained the most from developmental policies.

The third point to mention about social stratification is that the villagers do not attach any significance to classes in its sociological meaning. Iranian villagers simply define their position as good, medium, and low (instable) in relation with ownership, production, and annual revenue. However, it can be said that these two factors are among important criteria in defining rural social status. Agricultural land is one of the important factors in assessing wealth in rural communities because social status is derived from land ownership and land, in its turn, plays a very significant role in revenue generation. In fact, the landowners who do not have considerable annual revenue do not enjoy a high social status. In the same way, the landless villagers who gain considerable revenue through different economical activities do not necessarily occupy a high social standing in the hierarchy of social status in Iranian villages. Ultimately, Iranian rural communities have somehow benefited from the impressive structural developments that the Islamic Revolution has created in political, social, economical and cultural structures of Iranian society. Under the influence of the Islamic Revolution, the rural community lost its static condition and does not resemble a simple mass anymore, and this was very rare in the history of Iranian rural communities (Ghaffari, 2001, 193). In the aftermaths of the Islamic Revolution, a new social stratum has emerged in rural society. This new stratum includes the new generation of poor, medium peasants, rural workers, schoolteachers, office workers, and rural *Basij*. This stratum enjoys considerable social and political power, and has occupied the majority of formal and organizational positions of village organizations, (including Islamic Councils). The power of this group stems from their interactions with the political network and power structure at national level. In addition, this social group gains more from rural development policies and programs.

Post revolutionary rural development

One of the consequences of prerevolutionary economic development was an increase in the socio-economic gap between rural and urban areas as well as between different sectors of the economy. The post revolutionary economic development policies aimed to increase equity and to meet basic rural needs. The government's objective in implementing rural development was to stem rural-to-urban migration. Iran's population has grown rapidly since the revolution, with most of the increase in urban areas. In fact, owing to mechanization and the decline in the profitability of handicrafts, rural employment actually fell in the decade from 1977 to 1986, from 3.6 million to 3.3 million. To counter this trend, the post revolutionary government gave priority to rural development and to the provision of different social services - including the allocation of sensations to rural inhabitants sixty-five years and older, agricultural assistance to farmers, and the distribution of livestock feed to the peasantry and nomads. Infrastructure projects included the construction of roads, the establishment of rural schools and clinics, and other programs involved creating rural jobs and encouraging popular participation in cultural development. There was a considerable shift in the balance of resource allocation, with rural areas receiving approximately 26 percent of total public investment in the first decade after the revolution.

The government set up various organizations to manage the priority attention given to rural areas- the most important one being the Jihad-e Sazandegi, which is responsible for coordinating rural development (World Bank, 1994). The creation of the Jihad was a reaction to the entire traditional (prerevolutionary) administrative machinery and was based on the idea that traditional rural organizations had proved themselves unable to combat rural deprivation. Tackling rural issues was seen to require a fundamentally new and rapid approach and a revolutionary administrative system. Jihad's philosophy of rural development draws on two traditions: the integrated rural and community development approach pioneered in Africa and Latin America in the 1960s; and the traditional solidarity of the *Ummat* (Islamic community), which was revived at the time of the revolution. From these traditions, Jihad has fashioned a program of institutions and activities that give primacy to structured participation, with a strategic role for the state as catalyst and facilitator. Participatory institutions in rural areas included the Islamic rural councils (which I discuss later), village centers, rural development houses (*Khaneh-e Hamyay*), village libraries, and the cooperative structure. Participatory activities are founded on the traditional practice of voluntary mobilization (*Basiji*), which brings people together for communal activities. Jihad's intervention is encouraged, and facilitators who are members of village councils are elected to promote development (Ferdows, 1983). Popular participation is supposed to be integrated into all Jihad programs and can be seen in practice in watershed-management, livestock, and nomadic programs. Cost sharing also is a prerequisite in all of Jihad's programs.

Up through the late 1990s, Jihad had gone through three main stages: implementing specific infrastructure projects; establishing programs to increase agricultural production; and building comprehensive development programs. However, in none of these periods has it had a coherent overall strategy for rural development. Instead, all of its efforts have been based on past experiences rather than on scientific analyses of successful and unsuccessful programs. For political reasons, Jihad has introduced a notable level of infrastructure facilities and services to rural areas. Nevertheless, because of the lack of clear planning for development, the programs carried out have not been fully successful in meeting the basic needs of the rural population (Shakoori, 1998). In recent years the ministry of Jihad has joined to the ministry of Agricultural at the name of Agricultural Jihad which is responsible for agricultural activities.

Rural infrastructure

The office of Jihad's deputy minister for rural infrastructure implements its rural infrastructure programs. These projects include roads, potable water supply, wastewater drainage and sanitation, village infrastructure and environment, and rural electrification. Priority is given to regions of dense population in less-developed parts of the country - areas officially described as "deprived" - as well as to areas with potential for agri-industry and other non-farm employment (RoknoddinEftekhari, 1988: 75). Prior to the revolution, only 8000 kilometers of rural roads had been constructed in Iran. Between 1979 and 2009, the network expanded more than thirteen-fold, to 105837 kilometers of gravel and asphalt roads. Similarly, the number of villages with access to clean piped water has nearly tripled from 6611 (447000 households) before the revolution to 1965 (more than 850,000 households, with a total population of 5.5 million) by 1999. In 2011, 76 percent of rural population had access to clean piped water (Water and Wastewater Companies, 2012).

Jihad's electrification program has both economic and social objectives. Priority is given to projects that contribute to agricultural production (e.g. irrigation pumping, agro-industry) or to manufacturing and to communities that are willing to share costs. Thirty years after the revolution, 99.7 percent of rural population have electricity and expanded more than twelve-fold (Electric power Industry statistics, 2012). Jihad's physical achievements have been considerable. Its slogan of popular participation in construction, subsequent operation, and maintenance is a useful link between responsibility and economic reality. Yet these social and infrastructure programs have not been accompanied with any increase in the economic potential of rural areas. That is to say, all of the post-revolutionary activities failed to eliminate the inequalities between rural and urban areas and could not decrease the process of rural deprivation. In the late 1990s, constraints on infrastructure activities become evident; especially the budget and foreign exchange situation began to have an impact on the program. More important, operation and maintenance of constructed facilities began to be a problem and linkages between these important physical developments and other rural developments activities have been weak.

Land reform

In general sense the term "land forms" means the redistribution of land or right inland for the benefit of the small peasants and land less laborers. It is claimed that a comprehensive program of land reform can change the productive relationships and affect class structure in rural areas. By changing the organization of production, it brings about or reinforces social unrest in the country and eventually changes the power structure by transferring

most of the local and national power of landlords, either to peasantry and bourgeoisie respectively or to the bureaucracy and its chiefs (Katouzian, 1973). The implementation of land reform during the era under study (1960s&1980s) has demonstrated these characteristics to varying degrees. Firstly, it has been followed by the decline of agricultural activities in terms of manpower and output. Secondly, it has reinforced distinct social strata in rural areas. Thirdly, the traditional organizations of production have changed. Finally, it has consolidated bureaucratic power over villages. In this section an attempt is made to analyze the Iranian land reforms during the above decades and its socioeconomic implications for the peasantry.

The land reform Laws of 1960s

During 1960 and 1961, the Shah's regime faced some domestic economic problems and political unrest such as higher state expenditure a shortage of foreign exchange, political crises, resulting from six years of press censorship, secret security police abuses, and a general lack of personal liberties which led to various forms of disturbance (Hooglund, 1975). On the other hand, according to international relation point of view the pressure of the US government concerning corruption and the misuse of US in Iran because at that time the US was the primary source of economic and military aid or Iran). The Shah's response to US pressure was the white revolution; whose most notable feature was measure land reform in 1962 (Halliday, 1979, 253). In 1962 the council of ministers approved the land reform law, which was recognized as the first stage of land reforms. After one year of relatively radical reforms. Prime minister (Amini) and his friends were seen as a group threatening the integrity of the Shah's absolute power from within. Then, after a short period "Amini" was dismissed. In general, the conservative section of bureaucracy won the game, and as a result there was a reversion to the original goal of encouraging peasant proprietorship.

With changing government policy in terms of land systems three distinct phases could be seen during the decade in which the transfer of land ownership took place. The first phase of reform sought to solve the problem of large land ownership. Once this was initiated, the next problem was to improve the tenancy situation. However, in practice the enforcement of this second stage did not produce the expected results, and third phase of the reform was launched to eliminate all forms of land tenancy. We can make some cautious estimates of general effects of land reforms on the distribution had taken place, there were an estimated 3.2 million rural household, of which 2.4 million had cultivated rights (bank Markazi, 1972) or were peasant proprietors. When the redistribution of land was officially completed about 963403 peasant households had received or bought land as a result of first and second stages. The supplementary law of 1969 added about 738119 peasants' households to this group. In total 1701522 households benefited from the land reform law (ibid).

This figure of 1/7 million households was about half (58 percent) of the total number of rural household in Iran (Ashraf, 1972)

The consequences of land reform programs of 1960's

- 1) The land reform law, with its main original objective to create independent and self-reliant peasant, changed during the decade of implementation to a conservative form. The redistribution of land was unequal among peasants and in many cases the land received by peasant did not constitute a viable holding. The holdings of nearly 65% of peasants were less than 5 hectares, while the threshold of viability outside north part of Iran was ten hectares per household. Our study confirmed that the only a minority of peasant-the influential ones-acquired relatively large parcels of land. Also, there was the problem of fragmentation: in some cases the average number of plots of land held by peasants exceeded fifteen. Lack of government to provide credit led to the breakdown of peasant economy. Therefore, many peasants were not able to sustain a subsistence level of living, and consequently the flow of the rural poor towards the city increases. Azkia's study demonstrates how indebtedness among the villagers has grown considerably since 1969. In spite of the fact that many rural development programs were introduced, the amount of indebtedness nearly trebled, and in some regions of Iran nearly 70% of credit was provided by various middlemen (Azkia, 1980). Land reform was deliberately designed to distribute land to peasants, and the Khoshneshin population was ignored by the officials. Their migration was accelerated by unemployment in rural areas and low pay in urban jobs.
- 2) Land reform did not contribute to agricultural development for a number of reasons.
 - a. There was a tendency to encourage industrial and services sector of the economy. Therefore, in all development plans the money allocated to the agriculture was insignificant in comparison with that going to other economic sector.

- b. The failure of newly established cooperatives in mobilizing agriculture. This helped to increase the role of rural petty bourgeoisie. in providing necessary loans for peasant
 - c. The practical effect of redistribution was the breakdown of the traditional units of agricultural activities where undertaken collectively. The distribution of such collectively units had the effects of lowering productivity and total agricultural output (ibid).
 - d. The distortion of agricultural policies: delivering the most fertile land, with ample resources of water, to inefficient agro-business companies, farm corporation etc. channeling almost all financial capital and technical inputs to these large scale farming, and paying less attention to peasant farming. Furthermore an agricultural policy was implementing by state to keep down the price of food –mostly produced by peasants-by opening up the previously self-sufficient Iranian market to food imports. The peasants who were “free” by the former regime only in the sense that they were free to try to sell their label power in the cities
 - e. The policy of the state was based on priorities which hindered the interest of landless and small peasants in favor of rich ones. Our study prove that rural proletariats and the small peasants at a lower rate of increase income during this decade that the other peasants. The annual rate of growth for middle and rich peasant was twice and treble that of some small peasant (ibid).More importantly the annual rate of growth was more significant among the rural petty bourgeoisie that among peasants.
- 3) Land reform was aimed at weakening landlord power in rural areas in order to consolidate monarchal power through the penetration of the central bureaucratic apparatus in rural areas. However, land reform did not eliminate the absentee-land-owner from rural Iran.(ibid).When the land reform was officially completed in 1972 ,there were more than 200000 absentee land owners who escaped the expropriation of their lands through bribery and various connection with land reform officials. The absentee land owners transformed themselves into a new ruling class as capitalist farmers, state employers, merchants or shareholders industry (Azkia, 1980).The central government was able to take advantage of the existing rural class structure by reinforcing the position of well-to-do peasants, head of the production units (boneh) and various middlemen at the expense of the peasant as a whole. Also the central government, through its various agents, was able to affectively assert its control over the rural areas. The striking consequence was the peasants failure to gain control; of their own affairs. The mass of the peasant are powerless, as they were before 1962 land reform.

The Land Reform Laws of 1980's

Soon after the Islamic Revolution, The Majlis (Parliament) approved legislation for the transferal of expropriated land to the peasantry. According to the Islamic Land Reform Act, agricultural land was divided into four categories: uncultivated waste but reclaimable lands and pastures; reclaimable lands seized by revolutionary courts; poor pasture and arid but cultivable land; and arable land. The state claimed land in the first two categories. With respect to the latter two categories, the maximum size of private holdings was decreed to be triple local peasant's average holdings. However mechanized fields, property belonging to religious endowments, and pastures used for livestock breeding were exempted. It should be noted that the land seizures in the immediate post-revolutionary period lead to a great deal of uncertainty among producers and discouraged people from sharecropping and from renting land for production. The policy has changed several times, leading to further confusion and a withholding of investment in agricultural lands by private owners.The organization for implementing land reform, the Hayat-e Haft Nafar-e Taqsim-e Zamin (Seven-Member Committee for Land Distribution), originally was a separate revolutionary body, but since 1984 it has been a part of Ministry of Agriculture. The Seven-Member Committee in each district is composed of two delegates from the Ministry of Agriculture, one delegate each from the Ministry of the Interior, the Jihad, and the Islamic Court; and two representatives elected by local peasants. The conditions for transferring land are determined by Article B of the Land Reform Law, which stipulates that the people eligible for receiving land should be from the poor strata of rural society, especially the landless *Khoushnishin* and small peasants, but also graduates of agriculture schools.Under the act, the ownership of land is transferred collectively. Therefore, the actual title received by each person gave him no absolute right to any defined piece of land but merely a share of the total land distributed. The actual document conferring this right would be given only after five years of continuous cultivation. According to the notes of the Land Reform Law, the people receiving land are not allowed to sell or transfer it to others. There is a further obligation on all peasants to implement the cropping patterns presented by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The implementation of radical land reform faces serious problems. One major obstacle has been the Shora-ye Negahban (Council of Guardians), which has upheld “the sanctity of property under Islamic law” to invalidate land expropriations. Another obstacle has been the organized and highly effective lobbying of commercial

farmers, technocrats, conservative bazaar merchants, and a segment of the petty bourgeoisie who succeeded in blocking the implementation of a more radical land reform. Therefore, a policy shift away from redistribution occurred in 1986, and the law limits the size of land holdings and restricts redistribution of land to the 51,580 hectares confiscated from supporters of the former Shah and to several tens of thousands of hectares that effectively became abandoned land because its owners emigrated from Iran. Between 1980 and 1990, a total of 602,000 hectares of cultivable state and pasture lands were redistributed among 100,000 households. (Azkia, 1990, 168). A further 631,000 hectares of temporary cultivated land were redistributed among 130,000 households. The total beneficiaries of the post-revolution land distribution program, however, comprise less than 6 percent of all rural households. The nature of land reform initially was radical, especially with respect to those lands owned by supporters of the former regime. However, since 1986, when the stalemate between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians over land redistribution ended with a compromise, the government's land reform policy has changed, and the tempo of land reform has slowed down. The compromise favored the Council of Guardian's view of minimizing the amount of land to be distributed, thus a potentially radical land reform was transformed into a conservative one. As a result, less than 5 percent of total land was distributed, and the number of households benefiting from Islamic land reform does not exceed 6 percent of total rural households.

In comparing the Islamic Republic's and the former regime's land reform programs, one can conclude the following six points. First, the implementation of both land reforms failed to eliminate large land owners from rural Iran; many of them kept some of their land by employing the exemption clauses in the legislation. Second, the center of attention in the former regime's legislation was the peasantry as a whole, whereas the Islamic Land Reform Law gave priority to poor peasants and landless people. Third, the redistribution of land during the former regime was unequal among the peasants, whereas in the Islamic Republic land was transferred equally to eligible people. Fourth, under both land reform programs, ownership of land was transferred collectively to the peasants. Fifth, under the former regime's land reform, *Vaqf* (religious endowment) lands were rented to the local peasants on the basis of ninety-nine year leases, but under the Islamic government the peasantry must return *Vaqf* lands to the government and are obliged to pay rent for using the lands. This article of the 1980 Land Reform Law has caused dissatisfaction among affected peasants. Sixth more than 58 percent of rural households benefited from the former regime's land reform program, but only 6 percent benefited from the Islamic land reform.

Government and Social Participation of Villagers in Iran

Based on the historical-structural approach of Cardoso, and his ideas on dependent development within the framework of new dependency theory that pays attention to internal structures of dependence and its political and social dimensions alongside the external conditions of dependence and its economical dimensions, the condition of development in Iran can be classified as dependent development. Furan uses this approach for analyzing the social development of Iran, from Safavid era up to the years after Islamic Revolution¹. Furan suggests that, economical growth measured through the amount of increase in transactions, increase in the gross national product, and industrialization, may happen in a specific period in some of the third world countries. These achievements are usually accompanied by negative consequences such as inflation, unemployment, health problems, inefficiency of training and education system, shortage of housing, and the like. Therefore, this type of development is called dependent development, which means growth within some confines, advancement, and prosperity of a minority of the people of the society, and pain and suffering of the majority (Furan, 1999, 24). By studying the case of Brazil, Cardoso points to the following four features for the Brazilian military regime that have placed this country in the orbit of dependent development:

1. The interest of international imperialism to direct investment in industry;
2. Coming to power, of the anti-populist part of the Army and technocracy that undertakes the role of modernization of economic and administrative system in addition to acting as an agent of suppression;
3. The traditional sectors lose their dominant role;
4. The public sector loses its power (Su, 1999, 171).

In the process of dependent development, the bureaucratic, authoritarian government, multinational companies, and local bourgeoisie are the three main players. Among these three players, the bureaucratic, authoritarian government is recognized as dependent with features such as dominance of bureaucracy, political monopoly, economical monopoly, depoliticization, and entrenching imperialism (Su, 1999, 176). Consequently, the

¹Of course, Furan draws on the theory of Global System presented by Valerstein too, and explains social development of Iran through a synthetic approach. However, the components of his theoretical model are mainly influenced by Cardoso ideas.

government plays the primary role. As Furan puts it, to the extent that the government is important in development experiences of advanced industrial economies, it is important in the dependent development process in the marginal areas as well. In the Twentieth Century Iran, the position of the government as the receiver and distributor of the huge oil revenues, and the role of Shah as the initiator of economical policies and practically the only political arbitrator, was added to the natural weakness of the industrial imperialist class. Therefore, these two devolved the first role in economical, social, and political development to the government (Furan, 1999, 28).

Within the framework of such development that is not principally based on real developmental government, the strategies of national development are usually designed in such a way that limited participation at micro levels are allowed and at macro level, participation is allowed to emerge as long as it does not pose any threats to the government and ruling political system. The Iranian rural community before the Land Reforms of 1962 that less often faced the aftermaths of dependent development was managed within the framework of the old feudalist system. The traditional, social structure of this community was based on traditional modes of production. In this community, the spontaneous participation model was extensively present at the level of production units of family, and the traditional collective labor and production units such as *Boneh* and traditional cooperatives at local and ethnic levels. Its spontaneous and traditional feature encompasses economical activities and covers the social, psychological, and non-material aspects of rural life. Of course, the rural community in this era has enjoyed collective, coercive forms of forced participation in the form of non-paid works and in total, traditional participation has manifested itself within different frameworks and in different domains of social life.

Its more objective and effective forms, especially concerning collective agricultural activities, have been mainly instrumental in nature, and this natural tendency was manifested in the form of supplying labor and other production factors for increasing collective activities and production. In this system, decision-making and supervision on implementation of these decisions was the function of powerful and influential figures, Reeve, the Bailiff, and Surboneh who were considered as agents of power and were directly related with the source of power, i.e. the landowner. In the period following the Land Reforms of 1962, when the social structure of villages were undergoing changes, the extent, and expansion of spontaneous participation model was reduced. It seems that the stability of this model is maintained as long as the dominant traditional features and tendencies of the society are kept. In this era, new elements enter the rural life, chief among them the presence of government and its agents for creating development, controlling the village, and absence of the landowner from the village. Concerning participatory modes in the years immediately following the Land Reforms, the villagers faced anti-participatory model because in this era the traditional model of participation was ignored and the development plans somehow conflicted with the traditional models of participation. This caused the decline and disintegration of the traditional spontaneous model of participation. The disintegration of *bonehs* as units of collective production can be seen as a sample of destruction of traditional collective units. The transformation in the feudal system and the entrance of machinery and modern technology has been most effective in their decline. Simultaneous with the destruction and reduction of traditional participatory and spontaneous activities; and presence of the government in rural communities, and its efforts to fill the vacuum that was resulted from the absence of the landowners; we witness the expansion of top-down participation model, or in other words, controlled, directed, and manipulated participation for villages. Formation of the so-called local and developmental organizations that were dominated by the government, such as rural cooperatives, House of Justice and House of Culture, and also the entrance of the Knowledge Brigade (*Sepah-e-danesh*), Health and Promotion Brigade, etc. was in fact the promotion and expansion of top-down, external, directed participation model. Meanwhile, according to Rahman, participation is not a process that can be determined externally. Rather, it shall be created through regular, collective action and rethinking of the people. The participation that originates from outside, or extrinsic participation, is a kind of forced participation that is directed through external forces (Burkey, 1996, 97). The extrinsic expansion of participatory institutions, which is not based on the social and cultural features of the villages, indicates a pretentious type of participation that not only does not attain any success, but it also destroys the self-sufficiency of the villagers and makes them dependent on the government. Such participation takes them far away from genuine, effective participation. Within the framework of directed participation, the people are considered as subjects of change and the relation of agents and promoters of participation with the people is manifested in the form of the relations between the dominant and the dominated (subordinates). Gracee Goodell states that, after the Land Reforms, instead of organizational reinforcement of traditional rural cooperation and collaboration, some external organizations were imposed on villagers without having the required proximity with the social and cultural backgrounds of the rural community. The outcome of this condition was only disorganization. She thinks that they should have linked the rural cultural, social, political, and economical principles to impersonal organizational principles based on kinship (Goodell, 1986, 56). Finally, we can consider the following factors as restricting participation: existence of centralism and efforts to control the size of the villages; dominance of government and unilateral decisions taken

by government organizations; inattention to real needs and social, economical, and cultural conditions of the villages; intensification of inequality; inefficient education and promotion system; lack of a specific participatory policy in developmental plans; limited imaginations and expectations from the government; patriarchic behavior of authorities and government organizations; and reinforcing their dependence have been among the factors that limit participation. From management point of view, "maintaining the spirit of looking for bosses, obeying others, and waiting for a leader or organizer among the villagers, especially in the villages that were less exposed to widespread relations with the city," have functioned as obstacles for real participation of villagers in collective social and economical activities (Taleb, 1997).

The condition of participation in the rural community after the Islamic Revolution was at first influenced by participation at macro levels of the country. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution and during the coercive war, (from 1979 to 1989) the government and the political and religious leaders of the regime, supported incremental and mass participation (mobilization) that were mainly accompanied by political and religious tendencies and was motivated by the incentive to be present in the scene at urban, rural, and tribal levels. This type of participation was directed and led by the political system and attained some political success as well. In this era, the economy was managed by the government and all rules were made to turn the economy into a governmental economy. Despite the existence of three economic, cooperative, and private sectors in the Constitution, the government controlled over 70 percentages of the economic activities. Through adopting import substitution policy, the government has managed the economic activities. The public participation for supporting the government and the Revolution was widespread and was manifested in vast political activities such as presence in politics, war, and elections. However, participation in social and economical aspects was not materialized due to non-formation of required institutions and organizations, and lack of motivation in the people. Of course, when the government does not show any willingness to devolve its works and activities, naturally, participation in social and economic activities does not gain momentum. Under such conditions, the government directly performs the agricultural and industrial activities, and produces water, electricity, and gas. Also, it involves in construction, transportation, transaction of goods, clinic and hospital services, training services, and many other service goods in spite of the definition and classification of the United Nation that considers policy-making and supervision and control of the activities of the society as the main function of the government (Asgarkhani, 1998, 193).

Now, with the overall picture drawn from participation in Iranian society after the Islamic Revolution, we review the trend of participation of the rural community during the same era. Increasing participation in the form of mass mobilization of the people and their presence in the scenes, mainly for political and social reasons, existed in the rural section of the Iranian society, from the early days after the victory of the Revolution. This participation was more obvious during the coercive war. After the victory of the Revolution and the fall of the royal monarchy, like the urban sections, but in a more vivid way the rural section of Iranian society suffered a kind of managerial disconnection with the ruling political system (government) due to the structural relations dominating it. Consequently, all institutions that were somehow involved in social, political, cultural, hygienic, and economic affairs of the Iranian society (excluding rural cooperatives that were an exception due to their nature and economic function), suddenly disappeared from the social life of the villages.

In 1979, the Construction Jihad, as a revolutionary institution that was established by the order of the Leader of the Revolution entered the villages. The incremental mode of participation (mass mobilization) was reinforced in the villages through forces such as relief workers and construction fighters (*Jihad gar*) that joined the villagers from outside. This was more clearly seen in villages in the deprived and disadvantaged areas, and resulted in the revival and reinforcement of spontaneous collective participations among villagers. In this phase, not only there was no sign of bureaucratic system, but it was also considered as a negative factor. With the entrance of Construction Jihad to the villages, another institution called the Seven-Member Committee for Land Distribution approached the villagers for solving the land ownership and land use problems. Attention to participatory activities and solving the managerial problems of the villages, together with facilitating communication with governmental centers for using their material and spiritual facilities, directed the villagers towards establishment of the Islamic Village Councils that were mentioned in the Constitution, but the laws for their formation was not approved yet. Therefore, with the help of the revolutionary institutions that were related with the villages, such as the Construction Jihad, the Seven-member Boards of Lands Revival and Transfer, and in some cases, with the help of the Revolutionary Guards (Sepah-e-Pasdar) and the Committees of Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Councils of Villages were formed even before the approval of the relevant law. In the law approved in 1982, the authority to establish village councils and launch elections for the Village Councils was devolved to Construction Jihad. After some revisions in 1986, the authority to launch elections for Village Councils was devolved to the Ministry of Interior. Consequently, the Islamic Village Council was established as one of the

important participatory institutions at the village level. Due to structural issues such as decentralization and because no real councils were formed in practice, these participatory institutions were not successful and their activities, which had grown more in the early years as compared with the post-war years, was mainly concentrated on administrative, service, and in some occasions, developmental affairs. Furthermore, reasons such as too much emphasis and reliance on the young members; non-observance of the relative weight of the villages' population in electing council members; and in some cases the low educational level and unfamiliarity with previous experiences, albeit imperfect, and other factors have prevented their success. In 1986, establishment of Houses of Cooperation as the executive organs of councils was recommended to help in expanding participatory activities, especially in developmental issues. In this regard, the Housing Foundation initiated some activities in some villages. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development also tried to reinforce participation through establishing Agricultural services Centers. Of course, besides the Islamic Councils, other collective institutions such as Rural Islamic Societies and Basij Headquarters established in the villages and paved the way for promoting participatory activities. Through reinforcing Sectoral Planning and consequently the expansion of bureaucracy, the participatory activities of the villagers reduced and more importantly, the development plans did not follow any specific, clear participatory philosophy. With the start and implementation of these plans, the presence of the government and expansion of bureaucracy was reinforced and the top-down model of participation emerged and therefore, participation in development plans was confined to self-helps, financial supports, and supply of manpower. It means that participation, at its best, was limited to implementation level and does not have a strong presence at decision-making, and supervision level or enjoying the fruits of the participatory plans and activities.

As a result, the government, as the ruling political apparatus that is charged with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the society and determining its mechanisms, plays a dominant role in the social, political, and economical life of the country. This dominance, affects developing countries, in particular, and thus somehow influences all social processes, including the process of social participation. The political structure has not been able to play an effective, successful role for realization of organized social participation of the villagers. Therefore, at the macro level, the experience shows that paving the ground for social participation and its reinforcement requires attitudes and policies that are different from those of the previous governments, policies that are compiled to enable the villagers, save them from their dependence on the government, and engage them in different methods and levels of participation.

If in the past only the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was responsible for the rural sector, since the triumph of the Revolution, different organizations and institutions including Construction Agricultural Jihad, Ministry of Interior, *Behzisti* Organization (Organization for improving life quality), Organization of Cooperatives, *Mostaz'afan* (the impoverished) Institution, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (*Komiteye Emdade Emam Khomeini*), the Institution of Martyrs, Basij Headquarters, etc. are intervening in the rural affairs without required coordination among their responsibilities and activities. Furthermore, these institutions and organizations use different methods and enjoy different social and political positions at the level of villages. More importantly, they continue an interventionist approach similar to the past and act as helpers and agents instead of directing and guiding, training and promoting, or playing a supervisory role. Such an approach will merely result in increasing the dependency of the people on the government and reducing the morality of self-sufficiency and participation.

Conclusion

Rural development in Iran are planned and designed for transforming the social lives of the villagers. However, in practice, these transformations were not actually materialized and instead, resulted in consequences that will be presented below:

1. Principally, the rural planning sets eradication, or alleviation of social inequalities as its goal. However, such goals were not actually obtained in the rural development plans in Iran. Despite expectations, such plans have not been able so far to completely transform the social structure and as a result, have expanded economic and social inequalities (Azkia, 2006: 133).
2. The rural development plans, especially those implemented before revolution, were designed and implemented in a top-down, centralized model and consequently, the rural people did not have a real standing in such plans. These plans were not problem-oriented. Rather; they were extrinsic in nature and had somehow embarked on distribution of resources. The unfairness of this distribution has intensified social inequalities.
3. In this period, the planners have mostly approached rural development with a mechanical, technical outlook rather than a social one. Furthermore, due to subsuming rural development within the

framework of agriculture sector, especially in the First, Second, and Third Development Plans, the rural growth and development was seen as synonymous with agriculture sector.

4. The model of social and economic development and fulfilling the basic needs that was followed in the post- revolution era failed in generating suitable rural development. Because in this model, physical and material aspects of development and redistribution of the effects of economic growth are emphasized and development opportunities are neglected. In addition, increasing the revenues of rural families have not received due attention.
5. Transformations in the patterns of social stratification are among the outcomes of rural development plans in the post- revolution Iran. The Islamic Revolution has promoted the political and social position of the lower classes of rural community and has undermined the social, economic, and political status of well- off social groups. The new groups dominated the majority of social- economic organizations such as Islamic Councils and captured the structure of political power (Azkia&Ghaffari, 2007: 154).
6. One of the characteristics of the post- revolution rural community in Iran has been developmental organizations, chief among them Construction Jihad. Different projects were implemented through the Construction Jihad, with outstanding physical attainments. However, despite all these programs, no action was taken for fostering and increasing the economic potentials of the rural community. Therefore, the developmental measures that were taken in the post- revolution era did not result in eradication of inequality between cities and villages.
7. One of the first effects of Islamic Revolution was reduction of landed capitalism and downsizing production units in the rural community. The Rural Production Cooperatives were also considered as means for overcoming the problems of disintegration and small size of farm lands. The results of implementation of land reform rules also indicate that the land reforms at the beginning of Revolution, especially division of the lands of those landlords that were blamed with supporting the old regime were radical in nature. Both land reforms were not so successful in eliminating of big landlords in the rural community. The land reforms in 1960s covered all rural community and were based on farming *Nasagh* of peasants, and were unequal. However, in the Land Devotion and Reclamation Act that was approved by Revolution Council, the small peasants and landless farmers were in priority and the land was divided equally based on the local conventions in each village.
8. The rural community of Iran is faced with numerous challenges which were not removed by the development plans before and after revolution. In the rural areas, challenges such as lack of job opportunities and suitable participatory mechanisms, unclear division of responsibilities among different authorities of rural development, and inequalities among cities and villages have still remained. The development plans have failed in expanding effective public participation in the process of rural development and as a result, participatory organizations and institutions that can be effective in development process are not established. In the plans launched after revolution, welfare and service activities have gained more significance as compared with productive and employment generation activities.
9. Generally, in the rural development plans in Iran, the economic plans have followed a political orientation rather than being development plans. As a result, they have seldom resulted in structural transformations in different political, social and economic dimensions that are among requirements of rural development (Azkia&Ghaffari, 2007: 133).

It seems that the fundamental problems of rural development plans in Iran are the following:

- Lack of a correct thinking on rural development. The reality is that despite defining idealistic, ambitious goals at the beginning of each plan, the planners and managers consider rural development as a process that makes villages similar to cities.
- Lack of a definite strategy for rural development, with clear definitions for development, rural development, and developed villages. Of course, this is a problem that can be seen in all development plans.
- Lack of a comprehensive approach towards rural development and existence of an abstract, non-systemic view of village and rural development.
- Lack of a single, umbrella organization that takes responsibility for rural development plans and projects.

Non-participation of rural people in determining their own fate.

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