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Evaluation of Legal Boundary Delimitation of Villages in Rural Master Plans

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Abstract

The rural guidance plan (also known as the Hadi plan) is considered a plan to change the physical structure of villages and is a part of the rural development process. Its preparation and implementation in the framework of the planning system include some criteria and regulations that affect the villages' forms, particularly the value of land. The land price in the villages has been affected by the legal recognition of rural land and the necessity of such construction. As a result, the village has faced many changes and developments as a capital commodity due to guiding governmental organizations with development-centered policies. The government's centralization of rural guidance plans and the functional and linear perspective of the formulation of this centrality have homogenized most plans and prevented public participation in development plans. Consequently, numerous problems have arisen from the planning step to the action phase of the plans. It seems that the development plans in action have not been fulfilled because of the inability to understand and identify the environmental features and territorial values of the village in the plan formulation phase. The realization of the physical development plans of the village (rural guidance plans) requires accurate knowledge about the place and consideration of landscape layers in the planning process. It also requires understanding the description of spatial planning documents' formulation under the title of reading landscape layers. This process not only contributes to discovering landscape layers with the help of landscape experts and the participation of the local community but also reveals the territorial values after being assessed. In so doing, the rural guidance plan and the legal recognition of rural land will be based on participation-based development and the value of villagers' cultural approaches. This process would result in preparing a contextualized plan that ensures sustainable development in the village.

Keywords: Rural Development, Rural Guidance Plan, Landscape, Determining Village's Boundaries

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How does the legal recognition of rural land in the rural guidance plan affect the socioeconomic aspects of villagers?

Extended Abstract

Rural areas in Iran have experienced significant transformation in recent decades, shaped by technological advances, expanding information networks, and globalization. Villages have evolved from static, premodern entities into dynamic socio-spatial systems linked to broader national and global processes. The Rural Guidance Plan, implemented by the Islamic Revolution Housing Foundation, plays a key role in controlling spatial expansion, regulating land use, and improving infrastructure to promote equitable development. Despite these objectives, the plan reveals persistent tensions between centralized planning and local socio-cultural realities. Emphasis on legal boundary delimitation has commodified rural land, inflated property values, and redirected land use toward capital accumulation. While this may encourage population retention, it disrupts agriculture, erodes cultural heritage, and weakens local identity. Standardized technical approaches often displace context-specific solutions, neglecting historical, environmental, and symbolic dimensions essential to sustainable rural life, echoing Heidegger's critique of reducing "dwelling" to construction. Although participation is cited as a guiding principle, in practice it is often limited to cooperation in executing pre-set designs, reinforcing dependency on state agencies and limiting local agency. This gap between planning intentions and lived realities contributes to spatial, economic, and social imbalances. A shift toward place-oriented, participatory planning is necessary. Landscape-based approaches can integrate residents' experiential knowledge, enabling cultural preservation, ecological stewardship, and community resilience. Aligning regulatory frameworks with the socio-cultural, historical, and environmental specificities of rural settlements can transform the Rural Guidance Plan into a flexible, inclusive tool, fostering balanced, resilient, and culturally grounded rural development in Iran.

As a linear and one-sided approach, the rural guidance plan has taken a major part of measures from planning to action levels in the villages by overcoming the centralization policies adopted by the governmental organizations. In most the rural guidance plan, the planner has an objective and physical perspective of the place, and short-term goals in the planning process only help to legal recognition of rural land. Planners must read the landscape layers of the village and discover the interoperative aspect of space from the perspective of people by adopting a landscape approach.

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