Reviewing the Experiences of Rural Settlement Planning for Endangered Villages, with a look at Safi Abad Resettlement Plan in Minoodasht (North Iran)

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1. INTRODUCTION
Changes in rural spaces are stimulated by internal (local) factors or external forces and events such as policies and development plans in local, regional and national scales. Implementation of Safi Abad resettlement plan –a village in Minoodasht Township in northern Iran- due to landslide risk, led to some changes in its spatial-physical aspects which seriously affected the socio-economic system of its community. Hence, exploring the experiences of rural resettlement plans, this research aimed to study the consequences of Safi Abad resettlement plan.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The theoretical bases of “Resettlement” could be found in a variety of theories and approaches. In this study, Diffusion Theory has been adopted. This theory had its origin in natural sciences, particularly in plant and animal studies. After a while, it caught the interest of researchers in geography and sociology who deal with spatial analyses. This theory focused on the interaction, distribution, contact, change, and growth of resettlement patterns and physical distances separating the original settlements from the new ones, and the local economic resources of the new sites. According to this theory, there are three types of diffusion processes. The first type reveals that the first adapters of innovators, who are early majority, are followed by the second adopters who are the late majority, and the third adopters are those who arrive last. Adoptive process depends on a variety of factors including local customs, language, culture, ethnicity, income, and political and administrative policies.

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3. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a descriptive-analytical method. The data were collected by library research and fieldworks such as observation, interviews and completing the questionnaires. The impacts of this resettlement plan were investigated in three main aspects including physical-environmental, socio-cultural and economic. The data gathered by questionnaires were analyzed by Wilcoxon W-test in SPSS software.

4. DISCUSSION

Resettlement is a voluntary or involuntary movement of a large number of people from the original settlement to a new settlement mainly due to three reasons: natural hazards, regional or rural development plans, and political or security matters. Clearly, these movements have some consequences. There are three attitudes towards this matter: the first is “in favor of it”, it believes that resettlement is just about mechanical and physical movement; it disregards the socio-economic consequences. The second attitude is “against resettlement” and focuses on social and economic aspects of the resettlement and believes that resettlement will bring about serious socio-economic consequences. Finally, the third attitude puts forth a moderate way to the issue and justifies the plan provided that a comprehensive study is conducted beforehand. In this research, the third attitude is taken into consideration, so we believe that resettlement plans must be the last alternative, and should be implemented only if a comprehensive study has been conducted and necessary precautions have been taken.

5. CONCLUSION

After the implementation of Safi Abad resettlement plan, the positive consequences of the project mainly focused on physical and environmental aspects, which include:

- The strength of the houses;
- The higher physical and visual quality of the houses and other buildings;
- Changes in land use for public services;
- Improvement in quality of streets and pavements;
- Reduction in environmental pollutions.

However, the negative consequences have appeared in economic and social aspects, among them the following are more considerable:

- Disruption of the rural employment’s structure, especially reduction in animal husbandry;
- Rise in unemployment;
- Change in the traditional social structure of the rural areas and an increased sense of insecurity.

Based on these results, we suggest that a mere mechanical and physical approach to rural resettlement plans should be avoided; otherwise, many social and economic issues will appear. Moreover, it is necessary to encourage the public participation to guarantee the success of the plan. Prior to resettlement, it is also essential to carry out comprehensive localization studies with regard to socio-economic, historical and cultural aspects of the local communities.
Key words: Rural Planning, Rural Development, Resettlement, Safi Abad.

References (in Persian)


References (in English)


