

## Research Paper

## A Model to Develop Ecovillages in Iran, Based on the Qualitative Content Analysis of the Websites of Ecovillages Worldwide: An Old Model in New Era

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**Citation:** Barani, Sh., Alibeygi, A. H., & Papzan, A. (2017). [A Model to Develop Ecovillages in Iran, Based on the Qualitative Content Analysis of the Websites of Ecovillages Worldwide: An Old Model in New Era (Persian)]. *Journal of Rural Research*, 8(1), 6-21.



Received: 13 Oct. 2016

Accepted: 31 Jan. 2017

**ABSTRACT**

One of the recent achievements to reduce the ecological footprint of human is creation, expansion, and rehabilitation of a large number of small and sustainable habitats called ecovillage. In this context, many developed and developing countries pioneered and scored extraordinary measures. To identify and compare the development patterns of such communities, it is very important to make shorter way to achieve this goal for other countries. It is the concern of most governments in Iran to benefit from an efficient model of sustainable development. Hence, the current study used the qualitative research approach and qualitative content analysis websites of the world's ecovillages, an inductive approach seeks to provide a model for the development of ecovillages of this country. For this purpose, from a random sample of 50 ecovillages in the developing and developed countries, 25 were extracted and the coding approach in qualitative content analysis was used for them. Finally, motion patterns and development of ecovillages of the developing countries over time were designed, analyzed, and compared to the trend in the developed countries, and a model was proposed for the development of ecovillages in Iran.

**Key words:**

Content analysis,  
Ecovillage, Model,  
Sustainable development, Iran

**Extended Abstract****1. Introduction**

One of the recent achievements of human to reduce the ecological footprint is creation, expansion, and rehabilitation of a large number of small and sustainable habitats called "ecovillages" as the beating hearts of sustainable nature systems worldwide. These habitats are the most practical and most administrative models for planning and organizing human settlements

in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this context, many developed and developing countries pioneered and scored extraordinary measures. It is highly important and significant to identify and compare the patterns of development of the societies in such countries that rely on their knowledge and experience in this direction, and makes the way shorter to achieve the goal for other countries. For Iran also, to benefit from an efficient model for sustainable development is the concern of most governments. On the other hand, the research on ecovillages is a relatively new phenomenon and its concept is discussed in a small number of research projects. The research literature clearly indicated the need to the content analysis based on the experiences and characteristics to reveal unique patterns of such communities.

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## 2. Methodology

The current study used the qualitative research approach and qualitative content analysis from the websites of ecovillages worldwide, with conventional inductive approach, to design a model for ecovillages development in Iran. For this purpose, from a random sample of 50 ecovillages in the developing and developed countries, 25 cases (11 developing and 14 developed countries) that represented the main important features and characteristics of their community on their websites, were selected and analyzed (from 2014 to 2015). To achieve the quality of research that is equivalent to the validity and reliability of qualitative research, provide a clear and transparent manner of the study process, and repeat coding by other researchers in 10 percent text and compare the results of coding was done.

## 3. Results

Twenty-four indicators derived from the qualitative content analysis were classified into 2 strategies (Behavior-based and technology-oriented), and set based on a continuum from the most advanced technology-based strategy to the most significant indicators of behavioral-based strategy. The movement pattern and development of ecovillages in the developing countries based on strategies/indicators, and year of establishment were designed, analyzed, and compared with the trend in the developed countries. Germany has the highest focus on technology-based strategy and lowest focus on behavior-based strategy to develop its ecovillages. Australia relies on both types of strategies to develop ecovillages. In Japan and the United Kingdom with respect to the progress of technology and their industrial background, the main emphasis is on technology-based strategy. India, among the developing countries, the third position in world in the field of technology, uses behavioral approaches and sustainability education to develop ecovillages. In South Africa, the process has faced little deviation and technology-based strategy on behavioral-based strategy leads to sustainable development. According to the recent data from the above comparison, a model was proposed to develop ecovillages in Iran.

## 4. Discussion

According to the obtained results, as the first step, Iran should employ behavioral-based strategies to create sustainable models for rural areas as base communities. This proposed model for Iran has features of local and regional flexibility, and also the ability to be generalized to most areas of Iran, because emphasizing on capitals and technologies is compatible with the site in relation to social patterns, behavior, and the culture of indigenous. For

Iran, prioritized planning to develop ecovillages should be considered based on shorter routes such as teaching sustainable behaviors, strengthening social capital, producing organic products, and the use of local materials in construction. Whereas, according to the model, the path to the development of the country through technology-based strategies such as renewable energy, permaculture design, and sustainable economy is more time-consuming; thus, their enhancement is not a priority, but they can be taken in parallel with the promotion of behavioral-based strategies.

## 5. Conclusion

Extensive and deep research in rural areas to identify, collect, and analyze experiences and useful local knowledge for sustainable development of habitats, development, reconstruction, and modernization of rural settlements in accordance with local climatic conditions, diversification of rural economic activities, evaluation of regional potentials, search, matching, and localization of suitable renewable energy technologies, and governmental supports and training, including subsidies, long-term loans, introduction of successful rural samples and establishment of research, extension and education centers to further strengthen and promote organic production and consumption of healthy foods were suggested.