

Research Paper

Discourse Analysis of Iranian Rural Development Policies in the Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad Governments

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Citation: Havazadeh, M., Hemmati, R., Shakoori, A., & Aghababaei, E. (2020). [Discourse Analysis of Iranian Rural Development Policies in the Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ahmadinejad Governments (Persian)]. *Journal of Rural Research*, 11(1), 6-21, <http://dx.doi.org/10.22059/jrur.2019.291602.1414>

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22059/jrur.2019.291602.1414>

Received: 30 Oct. 2019
Accepted: 30 Dec. 2019

ABSTRACT

This article attempts to interpret the formation of discourse of development in Iran's rural development policies by analyzing the discourse of Hashemi and Ahmadinejad governments in the areas of development in general and rural development in particular. The research method used in this article is based on the principles of Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory and the proposed method of Post-foundation discourse analysis (PDA). The data used in this article was collected from interviews, lectures, and statements of presidents and clauses and notes related to rural areas in the context of the First, Second, and Fifth Five-Year Development Plans by purposive sampling. The results showed that the rural areas had been incorporated into the discourse of Hashemi's government domain. But the set of factors led to the incomplete relationship between the rural sphere and the discourse of government causing many inconsistencies in this area. On the other hand, discourse of Ahmadinejad government has a stronger and more discursive relationship with the rural issues. In other words, the discourse of Ahmadinejad's government to disrupt the discourse of Hashemi government focusing on physical and external conditions, seeks to improve these conditions. However, as in the discourse of Hashemi's government, the discourse of Ahmadinejad's government ultimately did not pay much attention to the cultural and social spheres of development, emphasizing instead the improved distribution of physical facilities.

Key words:

Rural development, Development planning, Hashemi's government, Ahmadinejad's government, Post-foundation discourse analysis (PDA)

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Rural development refers to planning to provide a better life for the villagers. This planning has been implemented

through different designs and patterns, all rooted in the concept of development. However, this planning was called progressive interventions or technological reforms. Though given social context, the purpose of these changes and interventions has often been unclear and partial, and they have produced consequences beyond the control of the promoters. This study aims to analyze rural de-

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velopment programs in Iran in policies implemented by Hashemi Rafsanjani's and Ahmadinejad's governments, considering rural development as a discourse. This analysis provides a better understanding of the status quo and provides a new approach to the concept of Iran post-revolutionary development to scholars and rural development planners.

2. Methodology

In this research, we used the Thomas Marttila method to operationalize Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis approach. Marttila performs discourse analysis in three steps. The first step (co-construction) involves the phases of thematic conceptualization, contextual conceptualization, epistemological break, deconstruction, and theoretical conceptualization. The second step (Reconstruction) includes synchronic analysis, diachronic analysis, and the third step is collocation. Marttila uses the concepts of discursive relations and identity to identify discursive articulation patterns. According to him, two categories of iterative patterns can be used empirically to understand discursive articulation patterns: discursive relations and identities. It then introduces the typology of their discursive relations and identities and expresses the characteristics of each. The typology of discursive relations is contrariety, antagonism, dissociation, incommensurability, representation, difference, equivalence. The source of data used in the present study was: 1) Interviews, statements, commentaries of Hashemi, and Ahmadinejad. 2) The text of the bills of the First, Second, and Fifth Plans of Development.

3. Results

The findings showed that the critical nodal point in discourse of Hashemi's government was the improvement of physical and external conditions. Therefore, the focus of discourse of Hashemi was on tangible and concrete aspects of Iranian life.

The results showed that in the rural area, his government was forced to act against its disciplinary principles. Understanding rural backwardness, the issue of land ownership, and the inability of private capital to play a role in this area are the elements that disrupted full and comprehensive formation of this intra-disciplinary relationship. Also, the need for infrastructures, as well as the existence of a robust and influential institution such as Jihad-Sazandegi encouraged the government to play a direct role in this area.

Ahmadinejad's government, on the other hand, came to power under the situation that it was felt in the public sphere that all parts of the country should enjoy the same degree of improvement. The discourse of Ahmadinejad's government chose its nodal point (improvement in the distribution of wealth and facilities) to establish itself and to outmaneuver rival discourses. It was believed that rural areas (compared to urban areas) have not equally benefited from developmental advantages.

4. Discussion

Generally, rural development policies cannot be considered impartial, thoroughly planned in the interests of the locals and serving the villagers. Different governments in charge of policymaking have always taken the field of rural discourse into account for their discourse. That is why in the rural development programs, the rural areas and villagers have not been directly and impartially considered.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that rural development was persistently influenced by government policies, and has not fully benefited from the advantages of an established discourse. This is because the development discourse in each government has only been able to take into account some aspects of rural communities, and its discursive nature has prevented it from being fully understood.

Acknowledgments

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest