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Research on Distribution of Power within the Forest Policy Networks in Iran through Network Analysis

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Abstract

Since 1963, after the law on nationalisation of the Iranian forests was passed, state organisations have developed a number of policies and plan to manage the forest environments. Nevertheless, in spite of all the efforts, forest areas have been cut down and even amendment of the policies could not stop the damage. Some experts believe that uneven distribution of power between governmental and local organisations in forest policy networks is one of the main reasons of these failures. In this paper, this hypothesis was overviewed through delineation of forest policy networks based on the 4th Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan Documents of Iran (2005–2009) at both national and provincial levels and analysed in the theoretical framework of New Institutionalism Approach. Also network analysis was used to analyse an important political problem relating forests located in Iran: inappropriate distribution of power in forest policy networks. The networks were analysed by UCINET and Netdraw Softwares. The results show that there are no significant relationships between coordinator and executive institutions as the main power centres. There is no distinctive border between the stage of strategy codification and its implementation under the Forth Development Plan. In the Provincial Development Plan, there are no common legal relationships between environmental administrations and other institutions. In general, study of these three forest policy networks shows the absence of institutional-network approach in the codification of forest policies in Iran. That is why power distribution is not appropriate in these legal networks; overlaps and gaps sometimes occurring in organisational authorities and activities, are the negative outcomes. Furthermore, power structures are not the same in national and provincial level. In fact, policy makers of “Kohgiluyeh va Boyer-Ahmad” Province have not paid enough attention to national plan documents and this is another consequence of the lack of network thinking in forest policy. This article offers the necessity of paying attention to commensurate distribution of power between institutions through codification of subsequent developmental documents and plans by policy-makers.

Keywords: Forest policy network, forth development plan, network analysis, new institutionalism, power distribution