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DECENTRALIZED URBANIZATION POLICIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIENCE OF TURKEY

Abstract:

Today, while the dynamics of globalization are observed in almost every area of life, some changes; which are sometimes in the opposite and sometimes the same direction, but somehow interrelated; are faced. In that process, approaches some approaches seeing centralized policies and structures inadequate for solving some of the problems except for certain areas, have begun to come up. The proportional change on the urban and rural population that was created by the immigrations, which have gone along with the industrialization, has consistently improved in favour of the city, and eventually has paved the way for negative consequences such as the clutter of that population on some specific points.

Some countries, which adopted liberal policies, have refused to interfere with the natural development of the urbanization process and have expected such rapid urbanization to reach equilibrium after a period. However, that rapid urbanization, which is limited to certain centres and leads to regional and urban imbalances, has pushed many counties to take various measures and to create new policies for struggling against it. First, some efforts were made for improving the living conditions of rural areas and creating new opportunities in order to stop migration that is the main reason for this and to keep the rural population in their villages and even to bring the immigrants back. Some countries have had the expectation of benefits for the development of the whole country, from directing the population to some major city centres. That ultimately has led to certain social and cultural problems. On the other hand, for eliminating those social, cultural and economical problems, some countries have applied decentralized urbanization policies, which were expected to end the regional imbalances, by preventing the population and urbanization from being directed to some specific centres, in the aim of spreading that evenly throughout the country.

In this study, first, the concepts of urbanization and regional development will be dealt. Urbanization policies that have been developed by scholars and been implemented in different countries, will be discussed. Strategies, which provide regional development taking the advantage of different policies and especially the investment policies, for eliminating disparities between regions, will be specified. Then, the idea of decentralization in urban and regional development will be focused. And in the last section, decentralised urbanization and regional development policies, which have been applied and are being applied in Turkey, will be discussed.

Keywords:

Decentralization, Urbanization, Regional Development, Decentralized Urbanization, Regional Imbalances, the Case of Turkey

JEL Classification: R28, H76, R58

Introduction

The proportional change in urban and rural population that is caused by the migration, which began with industrialisation, continuously increased on behalf of the cities, and at the end that resulted in negative conclusions such as aggregation of the population at some specific points. Then that aggregation led urbanization to develop away from its natural process and towards an uncontrollable direction, causing ugly cities and unbalanced urbanization. That also led population, development, industry and trade to gather in a few cities, the emigrant regions to fall behind, some disparities to occur between the regions and cities in the same country, or inside and around cities. Some approaches suggesting that centralist policies and constructs failed -except some specific areas- to resolve some problems, began to arise, during this process. Decentralist policies came to the fore, in not only management but also in social and economic development and urbanization.

Some countries, which had adopted liberal policies, denied to interfere with the natural development of urbanization process and assumed that this rapid urbanization would have a balance in time. However, this rapid urbanization, which led to regional and urban imbalances and was bordered to specific centres, forced many countries to take some measures and make new policies for struggling that issue. First some effort was made to create better life conditions and new opportunities in the rural regions for stopping the immigrations, which are the main cause of this, and keeping the rural population in their villages and own lands. And some countries expected benefits for the development of the whole country, from directing the population to few major cities. That caused a set of social and cultural problems, as a result. On the other hand, some countries applied decentralist policies aiming to spread the population and urbanization to the whole country in a balanced manner by blocking the tendency of them towards a few specific centres; in order to cope up with those social, cultural and economical problems.

In this study; first the concepts of urbanization and regional development will be dealt. The urbanization policies, which were put forward by the scientists and applied by some countries, will be discussed. The strategies, which provide regional development through different policies and primarily the investment policies, for eliminating the imbalances between the regions, will be stated. Later the approach of decentralization in terms of urbanization and regional development will be emphasised. In the last part of the study the decentralist urbanization and regional development policies, which had been and is being applied in Turkey, will be analysed.

1. Decentralization in Urbanization and Development

As a result of migrations that began with industrialization, imbalanced development just like the excessive increase of the population of certain urban centres, occurrence of imbalanced urbanization and uneven distribution of population, has led to imbalances between regions. Thus, due to occurrence of regional imbalances together with urbanization problems, development problem of the emigrant underdeveloped regions also became on the agenda. Urbanization being in specific areas or in a few certain

cities and the development occurring at a few urban centres; led the countries to *decentralist urbanization and regional development policies*. In other words, they saw the need for inhibiting the aggregation of development and urbanization in certain centres, but rather for implementing policies and practices to spread that to the whole country. For this reason, regionalization or regionalism has been one of the concepts, which began to come forward today together with the concepts of decentralization and urbanization. These two concepts often come to mind together with urban and regional development policies, when the local politics is mentioned. Decentralization lies behind those concepts, which involve inter-related elements.

During the change from industrial society towards the information society, local governments and cities, are stated to be the most affected and changed areas especially with regard to the locality arising from globalization and the tendency for effective and efficient service delivery and democratization contributes to that process. This change from centralized industrial society decentralized information society affects the local governments, urban structures and therefore local, urban and regional policies directly and in a powerful way (Ökmen, 2005: 55). In the 20th century that passed an age of urbanization and local governments, while the number of countries trying to benefit from raising urbanization for development increased, the size of the city and urbanization problems expanded, as well. The countries, which tried to direct their social and economic development by planning, reserves special place for and give importance to development plans, and the issues of urbanization, settlement regional problems (İldırar, 2004: 22).

Decentralist Urbanization

Finding solutions for problems related to social, political, economic issues and land use, can be possible by discussing them one by one, or all by implementing general policies, which form the basis of almost all those, for changing the country's residential order in the long-term. The whole of the coherent policies to affect the speed, way and geographical distribution of the flow of the population from villages to cities in a manner that will help the development of the country is called *the urbanization policy*. Urbanization policies developed by scholars and tried to be implemented in different countries are displayed in several different ways (Keleş, 2010: 51-53):

- Some countries tend to keep the speed and way of urbanization open to the effects of the laws of supply and demand. For these countries, *the difficulty and high cost of effecting the speed and way of urbanization, make it rational not to interfere with the natural course of urbanization*. However, as well as for many social and economic policy areas, the liberal trends of the last century lost their validity for urbanization. For this reason, governments often adopted the method of increasing economic benefits and reducing social disadvantages of urbanization through intervening with urbanization using specific tools.
- In some countries, *it was tried to minimize the speed of urbanization and make the members of the masses, who flock to the cities, as many as possible to return to their villages*. When these efforts failed, some countries (the case of India) aimed to keep the

peasants in their villages by using the measures and policies to increase social and economic opportunities in the villages, to train villagers, to make the rural areas develop, and to make the villagers work with the government such as 'village and community development "and the land reform.

- And in some countries, *decentralist policies* were tried. *Decentralization approach in urbanization policy*, estimates the population to be distributed to the whole country and to be given a balanced manner rather than to be amassed in one city or a few large cities. Distribution of economy and human resources to all geographical regions; provision of industrial development in villages, towns and cities; blocking of the big cities for the new industrial enterprises to be established and even moving the ones once established away from even the city centres, are seen as decentralist urbanization efforts. Britain, France, Soviet Russia, China and India are among the countries, which adopted the decentralist urbanization policies.
- In some countries, *centralist policies* were applied. This policy, which is opposite for the decentralization policy, aims to direct urbanization to large cities and thus create metropolitan areas. It is a settlement structure developed according to M. Jefferson's "law of the primate city". In underdeveloped countries, generally centralized policies are implemented and all the resources in those countries are absorbed by one centre or a few centres. That results in population being collected in one city or a few cities or indirectly leads to social problems and inter-regional excessive imbalances.

Decentralist Regional Development

Inter-regional imbalances, is an important problem, which all developed and developing countries face and more felt in the underdeveloped countries. Not only are some countries developed and less developed in terms of social and economic development, but also are some regions in some of the countries, relatively developed and less developed. Those development disparities inside the countries lead to many social and economic problems, and raises new approaches to reduce disparities between regions, and to ensure regional growth and development for achieving social and economic integration across the country (Akiş, 2011: 238).

The strategies providing regional development by taking the advantage of various policies -mainly investment policies- to eliminate the disparities between regions, can be grouped under three main headings (Keleş, 2010: 300):

- First, distributing dredging and expanding the available resources throughout the whole country, that is what is called *decentralization*. Economic advantages and infrastructural benefits expected to be brought by through gathering the economic activities in the centre were criticised by the economists due to wastage as a result of that distribution and dredge policy.
- Secondly, concentrating the investments in certain *development poles*, or with its more commonly known name, *attraction centres*. Selecting these attraction centres among the underdeveloped regions, lessening the inter-regional imbalances as well as obtaining the benefits of aggregation, is intended.

- Thirdly, giving some priorities to the underdeveloped regions in terms of investment, and those regions are called *development priority regions*. Those priorities may not only be investments in the form of public service, but also economic investments, which directly impact the development.

In the past, and especially since the processes of experiencing global change, it is seen that the countries have adopted different strategies. These regional development strategies might be applied in very different circumstances and often in a mixed manner or together. Not only the first type of strategy, but also the other two involve a *decentralized basis* in logic. Because the aggregation to be directed to development poles, and the priorities to be given to certain regions in terms of development, carry the purpose of creating other developed cities and regions than already developed urban centres.

The latter two of these strategies are more preferred in recent years, due to their provision of both economic development and social justice without neglecting any of them. It is generally adopted for the investments concentrated in the attraction centres to be about economy, production, infrastructure or services. However, while giving priority to some underdeveloped regions in public services or public expenditures, it is seen that the same principle is not adopted in terms of investments based on production in all countries. For instance, it has been proven through the experiences gained in Turkey that, a sufficiently efficient development may not be achieved by merely establishing universities in the underdeveloped regions. This did not help the underdeveloped regions in terms of development, and also its added a new one to the problems, due to the creation of underdeveloped universities (Keleş, 2010: 300-301).

Countries have begun to make structural reforms in their regional development policies, in order to fight against the pressures and threats caused by rapid economic change and globalization in an increasingly competitive environment and to take advantage of the opportunities emerging in this process. As a result, a transition has come to the fore *from centralist (traditional) development approaches to decentralized and regional development approaches* (Akiş, 2011: 238).

2. Decentralized Urbanization and Regional Development Policies in Turkey

There are some differences between regions in all the countries in the world, in terms of development and underdevelopment. These imbalances may be seen not only between regions, but also between cities and even zones of the cities (neighbourhoods). In order to eliminate or to some extent reduce these imbalances, certain economic, social and political solutions are demanded (Bulut, 253-254).

After 1960s in Turkey, a centralist development approach was brought to the forefront, within the scope of import-substituting industrialization strategy. The "Development Plans" which are binding for the public sector, and guiding for the private one were formed under the control and decisiveness of central administration. In addition, local and regional planning and policies also progressed in the same direction. On the other hand in 1980s, when neo-liberal policies dominated, in parallel with the process of

capacity weakening for the state's economic control, central administration's functions for directing the urban and regional development were reduced as well. Thus, an approach; which found the state's taking initiatives in the sectors of production such as agriculture and industry inappropriate, expected the urban and regional development almost entirely from the local enterprises, limited the state's role only to the improvement of urban and regional investments; began to be at the agenda (Bağlı, 2009: 203).

Rapid and unplanned urbanization, and increasing migration from the villages to the cities, as a result of industrialization; brought about regional imbalances. The idea of spreading urbanization throughout the country using certain policies, supports the objective of eliminating or minimizing inter-regional imbalances. In the past, the life was more or less similar except specific sociological, geographical, social and cultural differences, in almost all of the countries. In the world, where communication increases and an increasing globalization is faced, these processes get much more similar. Also Turkey, like the other countries, has experienced problems related to rapid urbanization and regional imbalances. Some policies have been adopted to solve these problems.

Policies of Rural Development and Infrastructure

Rural development is one of the most important issues of our country. The problems in the villages, where more than 20 percent of the population lives, and in the small and medium-sized cities in the underdeveloped regions, remain substantially. Since the early years of the republic, it has been tried to solve the problem of rural development and some different methods have been applied. Peasant policies, village institutes, community development, the central villages projects are some of the methods (Görmez and Eroğlu, 2013: 18). Here the Central Villages Project, which is also known as KÖYKENT, KÖYDES and BELDES projects will be discussed:

a - Central Villages Project: This project can be examined under one heading with the projects of *KÖYKENT* and *agriculture cities*, because they are similar. Central Villages, which began to be discussed towards the end of 1960s, is a project tried to be progressed by the state. It is based on the idea of selecting one central village and providing service to the residential areas around it, due to the state's inability to serve the scattered villages. By doing this, it is expected that rapid migration towards the city will be prevented in the long-term. Even the selected central villages are designed to be cities in the future. It is thought that those projects having the aim of providing service to rural areas had important deficiencies and failed due to lack of support from the community (Görmez and Eroğlu, 2013: 13).

b- KÖYDES and BELDES Projects: *Project of Supporting Village Infrastructure* (KÖYDES), which was implemented in a narrow-scope manner in the cities except İstanbul and Kocaeli in 2005, was transformed into a comprehensive infrastructure programme with the participation of the Ministries of Finance and Interior in 2006 and 2007 under the coordination of State Planning Organization. The infrastructure projects, which were implemented by the General Directorate of Rural Services until it was vacated in 2005, have been progressed by the provincial special administrations and unions of village service delivery, in the new era, which began with the KÖYDES

programme. The selection of projects to be implemented under KÖYDES, was made locally not in Ankara (the capital). The overall objective of the program is to resolve the issues of the villages and dependent settlements about drinking water and road, through the provincial special administrations and unions of village service delivery under the leadership of local authorities, at the lowest cost and in a short time by using the local facilities most efficiently (Hartavi, 2009: 240- 241)

These rural development policies primarily intend to stop migration to the cities, and to make the immigrants go back to the rural areas in the long-term. They are based on the idea of ensuring development of villages and small municipalities and resolving the problems due to lack of infrastructure for making the rural areas more liveable. If these villages and municipal areas develop and become places with better opportunities over time, it might be possible to make the population to be distributed all over the country rather than aggregating in certain cities. The central villages project implemented in the past, KÖYDES and BELDES Projects, and the Unions of Village Service Delivery being implemented today are among the decentralized policies with this objective.

Urban Renewal and Urban Transformation

Urban transformation applications are implemented in case of not only rapid and irregular urbanization and migration, but also of natural and unusual reasons such as war and disasters. Areas, which are subject to urban renewal, are the areas dilapidated or somehow remained outside the existing plans. Besides these, the need to urban renewal may also occur due to disasters such as fire or earthquakes. In this case, urban transformation may be implemented in order to fix the destruction occurring after the disaster or to reduce possible losses before the disaster. Urban transformation has become one of the most discussed issues in recent years in Turkey, especially together with the urbanization and settlement problems, which occurred after the destruction caused by the Marmara and Düzce earthquakes in 1999. For various reasons, and mainly for risk reduction about disasters and transformation of slum areas, urban transformation projects began to be implemented. In these projects Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) and metropolitan municipalities have played a major role. The legal basis of those implementations are the new local government laws, which gave powers to local authorities about urban transformation. In addition, it was also aimed to create a legal basis through the Urban Transformation Law Draft, which was prepared with the aim of eliminating the unhealthy construction areas in the cities and especially the natural disaster risks (Genç, 2008, 115-116).

In addition to eliminating the disparities between the parts or the cities, urban transformation can be also considered to be a factor for preventing the aggregation of the population in certain cities and reducing the gaps between cities in the long term, when applied in emigrant cities, due to transforming those cities more developed more liveable and attractive ones. These benefit to be provided in the long run, although does not make urban transformation a decentralized urbanization policy, but makes it a policy, which supports the decentralist urbanization approach and generates appropriate results for it.

Mass Housing Policy and Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration (TOKİ)

The legal entity, Mass Housing and Public Participation Administration was established *outside general administration*, with the Mass Housing Law No. 2985, which was issued in 1984. Later, this administration was divided into two in 1990 with the legislative decrees No. 412 and 414, and the Mass Housing Administration took over the management of the public housing fund (Keleş, 2010: 391-392). The aim of establishment of Prime Ministry Mass Housing Administration (TOKİ) is provision of national level resolutions for the problems about urbanization and housing policy, removal of the housing deficit and need in a planned manner by the public, and obtainment of house ownership for the ones, who have some shortages in buying houses for themselves. In addition, regulating the procedures and principles to be applied to the contractors, development of suitable construction techniques and tools are among the establishment mission and objectives of TOKİ. The mission definition of TOKİ determined by law, show the public housing policy. Through its implementations, it contributes house ownership of the ones belonging to the lower and middle-income groups (Yetgin, 2007: 319).

Given the buildings are create the city and they create the soul of it, housing is an part of development of the cities and regions. TOKİ has started some housing projects in the small cities, which do not have the self-dynamics for mass housing, and even in small districts, where the public employees or citizens have to live and go to the major cities for work every day, and has tried to resolve the housing problem of them. It can be stated that TOKİ influenced the progress of urbanization and served to spreading urbanization and development to the whole country, by trying to develop the underdeveloped cities and regions to the level of the major cities, at least in terms of housing opportunity and housing stock. TOKİ, which can be considered as a decentralist urbanization policy tool in this regard, is sometimes criticized about not producing aesthetic and architectural featured houses.

Regional Development Agencies

Regional development agencies, carry on an important function for eliminating regional development gaps, for they create, develop and increase their regions' industrial, economic and agricultural potential, support enterprises and projects, promote the mobility and breakthrough in the whole region. Due to aiming to make all regions in the country have a close development progress and level, they are considered to be a product of a decentralist regional development thought. They are remarkable important mechanisms, in terms of preventing the rapid and imbalanced urbanization, which results in aggregation in certain centres, through minimizing the migrations from the region by increasing the region's opportunities and attractiveness and duplicating work and trade opportunities. However, some criticisms about Turkey's regional development agency application are also available.

According to Tekeli, who states that The European Union's view about development challenge and evaluation about development agencies is different from that Turkey

(2008: 319-322), the EU development agencies are inside the governance mechanism rather than being a part of government system. In addition to this, while Turkey's regions, which are the most advanced ones in Turkey and have the highest level of relationships with the world, seem underdeveloped when compared to the EU; then the already underdeveloped regions are in a double under developed position. Therefore, the development agencies in Turkey should not be treated monotonously. It will be more appropriate to determine the regions in different ways, according to the nature of the problems of each region and regional capacity differences of them.

Çukurçayır (2010: 640) referring to another problem in the formation of the development agencies, states that the private sector plays a decisive role in some agencies. It is seen considerably difficult for a development agency; which is established under the influence of the private sector, senior managers and key positions of which are charged by the private sector; to work without ignoring the principle of realising social objectives and public interest. Also Keleş (2010: 311), development agencies being institutions not under public leadership but under the under heavy influence private sector, organized and interest groups and their operating under private law, indicate that great things cannot expected from them regarding the elimination of inter-regional disparities.

Regional Projects

If we look at the history of our country, the regional dimension had always an important place among the efforts for development, which were carried out through Five-Year Development Plans (FYDP). As it is mentioned in the Eighth Five-Year Development Plan and the Special Commission Report (SCR) for Regional Development, four key tools were used for regional development in fact (DPT, 2000a, DPT, 2000b; DPT, 2006):

- First of there is the regional plans, which are prepared in order to reduce the disparities between regions and achieve sustainable development for integrating the priorities about the sectors within the framework of the aims and strategies of the development plans and the spatial dimensions. Most prominent ones among these are: Eastern Marmara Planning Project, Antalya Project, Çukurova Regional Project, Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), Zonguldak-Bartın-Karabük Regional Development Project, Eastern Anatolia Project (DAP) Eastern Black Sea Regional Development Plan (DOKAP). *Other plans except GAP, which has been transformed into an integrated regional development project, could not be implemented for various reasons.*
- Second one, is the *Priority Regions for Development (KÖY)*. That plan could not give the expected results due to being limited to financial measures.
- The third tool is the *provincial development plans*. These plans, could be prepared for only certain provinces due to economic and financial deficiencies; the dimensions about resources and time required to implement the plans were not adequately defined and these plans could not find the ground for implementation although the current situation, vision and strategy were determined.
- The fourth tool can be defined as "*regional dimension*" of the other development policies. In other words, there are certain regional level impacts of various policies implemented for national development. For example, the organized industrial zones

(OSB), which can be seen as a tool of industrial policy, and the financial support mechanisms, which are the tools of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) policy, have had a direct impact on regional development.

Because they show concrete targets on regional development, regional projects primarily cause certain levels of motivation in the region. In the projects, for which the whole potential of the region is taken into consideration, for some cases it is seen that the weakest sector comes to the forward. This causes an intense effort in all sectors to arise. The projects taken in a decentralized approach involving not only the city centres but also the rural areas and rural population become important factors for ensuring balanced distribution of the population in terms of both the region and the country.

Attraction Centres Support Program

Attraction Centres Support Program represents an innovative approach, which that points out a change in the approach to planning in Turkey. "*The Development Poles Theory*" that the program is based on, is not a new approach, however; attraction centres is a tool of practical planning coming to the agenda for the first time in Turkey. Attraction Centres Support Program, is a program; which is prepared considering the results of the Turkey-EU co-financed regional development programs, is based on the "Study for Gradation of Centres of Population" in 1982, and is for realising the geographical focusing for usage of resources in that framework. In this context, the city centres; which were expected to serve as a attraction centre and growth pole for directing the migration tendency of the relatively less developed areas into the region itself, and have a high potential to serve their environment; were determined as attraction centres. With this program it is mainly aimed to achieve the development momentum through interventions with the cities having high potential for development in the relatively underdeveloped regions and holding the domestic migration within the region by spreading this momentum to the neighbouring centres. The determined centres in the developing regions are the cities; Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, Samsun, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon and Van (<http://www.kalkinma.gov.tr/DocObjects/Download/10424/Tan%C4%B1m.pdf>).

The policy of attraction centres, is one of the decentralist policies developed against a few cities' coming to the fore in the country, and the inter-regional imbalances' arising due to the lagging of other cities and regions behind. However, the growth pole theory aims to achieve the regional development under the leadership of certain centres. In order to provide a greater number of developed cities in the country, it aims regional development and decentralist urbanization by giving intensive support for one or several cities to come to the fore and become centres of attraction. In time the attraction centres get rid of being regions of emigration, and are transformed into immigrant-receiving areas suitable area for investments. In this way, an important opportunity and advantage is provided for preventing aggregation of the population in a few cities in the country and avoiding imbalanced urbanization.

Conclusion

In the process of industrialization, regional imbalances have emerged due to the rapidly increasing migrations and rapid urbanization. An urbanization, which can be stated to be central, through aggregation of population and development in few city centres. This was the result of, sometimes not interfering with the natural course of rapid urbanization, and sometimes the centralist policies applied by focusing on the economic benefits of the aggregation in few cities. However, over time, it was seen that the urbanization concentrated and aggregated in few cities cause inter-regional imbalances lead to many social problems. In response, the decentralist policies, which aimed the country's population and the resources to be distributed all over the country, and extending the growth, development and urbanization throughout the country, became on the agenda.

In this process, some measures were thought and some policies were implemented for rescuing the cities from abnormal concentration of population and unbalanced urbanization. These are based firstly on the idea that development of the villages and the small municipalities should be realised and their deficiencies of infrastructure should be eliminated in order to stop the migration to urban areas, return those, who had migrated to the cities, in the long run. If those villages and municipalities develop and become more liveable in the long run, a decentralized urbanization may be realised through the distribution of the population in these cities to the whole country. The decentralist policies not only eliminates the imbalances by spreading development to the whole country, but also serves for balanced distribution of the income, wide spreading of public services and provision of social justice.

In Turkey, the promotion of rural development and rural infrastructure, aimed to hold the villagers in their village, and even to return the migrants to their villages, at the long term. Using the policies of mass housing, it is tried to meet the housing needs of the residential areas from the metropolitan municipalities to the small cities with populations of 2000-3000. In order to reduce the disparities inside the cities and between the regions, urban renewal is implemented. Even though they are criticized in terms of formation and functioning, regional development agencies also provide positive results for revitalization of the regions. Regional projects provide an important motivation by showing concrete objectives for regional development. Attraction centres project aim to realise regional development program under the leadership of certain centres. However it must be said that, even though certain success has been provided in this regard, notable gains could not be achieved in terms of eliminating regional disparities and wide spreading the urbanization throughout the country.

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