

New hierarchical arrangements for addressing the implementation problems of regional development policies in Turkey

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Abstract

The lack of an efficient coordination between national, regional and urban development strategies in Turkish spatial planning system negatively affects the performance of these strategies. With the Ninth Development Plan of Turkey (2007-2013), a new spatial approach was developed to address this coordination problem: a reversal of top-down hierarchy of spatial planning and introduction of new and intermediate implementation tools. However, the structural and hierarchical problems of Turkish planning system constitute an important obstacle for an effective implementation of this approach. In that respect, this paper analyses whether new hierarchical arrangements brought by the Ninth Development Plan of Turkey can effectively address the implementation problems of regional development policies in Turkey.

Key words: Regional development policy, implementation problems, planning hierarchy, Turkey.

JEL Classification: H83, O18, O21, R52, R58.

1 Introduction

In most cases, planning tradition, public administration and spatial planning system play a key role in the implementation and performance of regional development strategies. There is considerable accuracy to this statement in the Turkish case.

The implementation of a “participatory” and “bottom-up regional development policy” can be seen as a precondition for both the adjustment to the European regional policy and pursuing a national development policy responsive to local initiatives [1]. The efficiency of this new regional development policy relies in some degree on being able to develop a different planning hierarchy in terms of providing an effective coordination between spatial and socio-economic development goals. To enable this coordination, the central planning authorities in Turkey devote their institutional efforts primarily to the introduction of new implementation tools for spatial planning. Here, the main problem is that the spatial planning tradition in Turkey is mostly based on a centralised public administration system. Here, the weak interdependencies between spatial plans at each scale signify a lack of interscale implementation tools in the spatial planning system. With the New Development Plan of Turkey, a new approach on urban and regional planning in Turkey was developed to address this spatial scale problem: a reversal of top-down hierarchy of spatial planning and concerning this, introduction of new and intermediate implementation tools [2]. It is very early to

evaluate the performance of this new approach. However, it is obvious that this new strategy has to grasp the nettle of the spatial planning system and public administration in Turkey in a similar way to the past.

Within this framework, this paper analyses whether new hierarchical arrangements brought by the Ninth Development Plan of Turkey (2007-2013) can effectively address the implementation problems of regional development policies in Turkey.

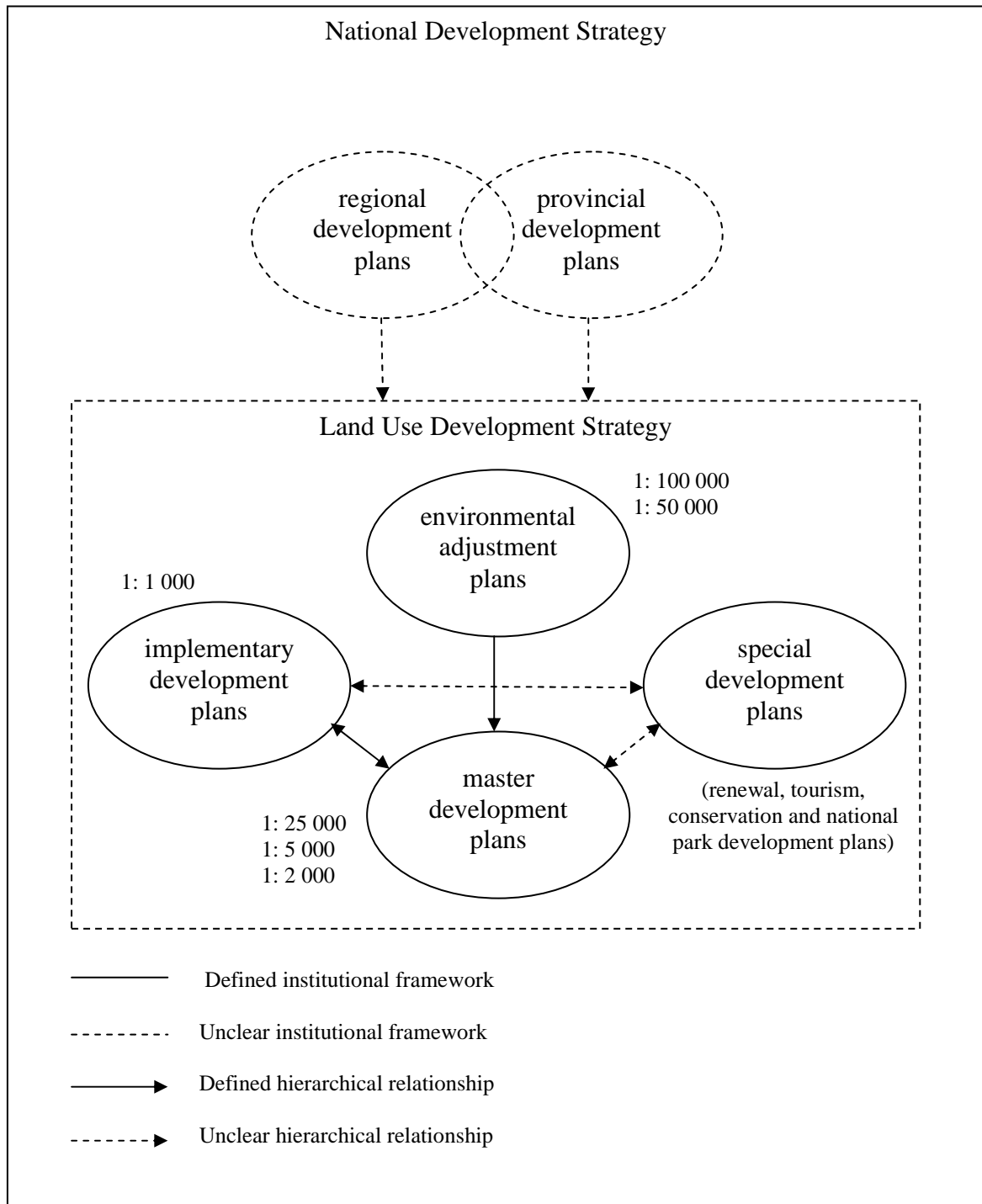
2 Prelude to New Spatial Planning System in Turkey: The Ninth Development Plan

In Turkey, the spatial planning attempts starting from the late Ottoman period gained an institutional presence and legal clarity in the Republican era (since 1923). Among these attempts, regional planning emerged as a new policy area in the 1960s. However, a periodisation for regional planning in Turkey must take account of the 1950s at the time when the morphological changes in the cities have been occurring due to rapid rural-urban migration. The regional development policy in Turkey evolved through a number of stages since the 1950s: the spatial allocation of “public investments” throughout the 1950s and the beginning of 1960s, the launch of “regional development projects” through the financial support of international institutions during the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, the implementation of regional development projects for underdeveloped regions with a strong state incentive in the 1970s and last, a reorientation to the development projects for assisted regions since the 1980s [3].

In the early 2000s, the regional development policy of Turkey gained a new dimension parallel to the restructuring efforts on the hierarchy of spatial planning (see Figure 1 for the spatial planning system of Turkey). For this institutional restructuring, the main turning point is the introduction of the Ninth Development Plan of Turkey that attempts to establish a new strategic framework for spatial planning. The plan implies a holistic development strategy for making the legislative status of spatial development practices clear. Accordingly, “the preparation of a regional development strategy at the national level” matters to build cooperation among the national spatial and economic development efforts and to provide an institutional framework for “lower level plans and strategies” [1]. Here, a new hierarchy of spatial planning is aimed to establish through both organising local development initiatives toward a predetermined goal of economic development and making sub-regional level (NUTS 2) central to the achievement of goal consistency between spatial plans at various levels and national development strategies [4]. Through the new hierarchy of spatial planning, it is aimed at bridging the gap between regional policy plans and master development plans. New implementation tools like provincial development plans are introduced to address this hierarchical problem.

The strategic content of the Ninth Development Plan is mainly characterised by a number of new policy areas: local devolution, regional prioritisation, holistic development strategy, new rural planning strategy and subnational (provincial) planning. In a comparative framework, Table 1 attempts to systematise the implementation problems corresponding to each type of spatial development policies. As seen in this table, new policy areas in the Ninth Development Plan bundled with a number of implementation tools introduced by new planning legislation. However, there are important hereditary constraints affecting the efficiency of these approaches and tools. A systematic discussion of the issues in the Table 1

Figure 1 Spatial Planning System of Turkey



———— Defined institutional framework

----- Unclear institutional framework

————> Defined hierarchical relationship

-----> Unclear hierarchical relationship

Table 1 New Spatial Development Policy and Implementation Tools in the Ninth Development Plan of Turkey [2]

main policy areas	tasks	implementation tools	institutional obstacles in implementation
local devolution	to redefine responsibilities between local and central initiatives in regional development	new spatial planning legislation new hierarchy of spatial planning new public administration legislation	political pressures tensions between central and local planning institutions historically centralised public administration system
regional prioritisation	to create new regional centres to restructure the hierarchy of regional economic relations	public investment projects rural pilot projects	insufficient financial funds political pressures and citizenship territorially embedded regional centres
holistic development strategy	to take local measures to overcome particular regional problems	new spatial planning legislation new interscale planning tools	political pressures inefficient allocation of implementation power in planning
new rural planning strategy	to enhance the quality of rural services to support local entrepreneurship	public investment projects new rural development plans rural pilot projects	insufficient financial funds a lack of clear legislation in rural planning political pressures and citizenship
subnational planning	to provide an intermediate spatial planning level	new interscale planning tools	inefficient allocation of implementation power in planning

made below may be useful to clarify how the new spatial planning strategy of Turkey must efficiently match the policy tools with the implementation problems in regional development policies.

The issues of the allocation of planning power among the institutions responsible for spatial planning in Turkey are important to comprehend why a new power structure is necessary for the better performance of planning practices. Here, the channelisation of executive power into the local initiatives (particularly municipalities) has a central importance. In the Ninth Development Plan, a rearrangement of the allocation of planning power aims to enhance the executive power of local institutions. In the same plan, local devolution is highlighted as an important policy area in the determination of different levels of spatial planning. In recent, a need for a new planning mechanism providing coordination between the local and national planning authorities became apparent due to the authoritative ambiguity in the performance of planning practices in Turkey. Providing coordination between different planning levels and determination of tasks and responsibilities in the preparation and implementation of spatial plans appears to be the important topics in the devolution. The report of the Ninth Development Plan also emphasises the necessity of a redefinition of the tasks, power relationships and responsibilities between local and central initiatives in terms of institutional “cooperation” and “supervision” in regional and local development [1].

The foundation of a new planning mechanism also requires the introduction of a broad spatial planning strategy bridging between regional, urban and rural development strategies in the Turkish case. The socio-economic imbalances between rural and urban settlements and regions fuelled by rural-urban migration make necessary the implementation of “a holistic spatial development policy” including local measures to be taken to overcome particular regional problems [1]. As emphasised in the last development plan of Turkey, there are two key tasks to put this policy into practice: to determine the interscale planning tools and standards and to implement a deconcentration principle.

The other important issue highlighted in the new spatial planning strategy of Turkey is subnational planning and interscale planning tools. With new institutional arrangements and acts, subnational level becomes a prominent scale in the introduction of spatial development strategies in Turkey. New subnational planning tools like provincial development plans and strategic plans bring new responsibilities and tasks to local institutions. Provincial development planning was introduced as an intermediate planning level that bridges the gap between spatial and socio-economic development plans in the early 2000s in Turkey. In this period, provincial development plans mainly functioned as lower level or sub-regional development strategies between environmental adjustment plans and regional development strategies [2].

Last, through an area-specific regional development strategy, regional prioritisation, a new settlement hierarchy is aimed at building. In the Ninth Development Plan, regional “prioritisation” is suggested as a major policy tool in both creation of new regional centres and restructuring of the hierarchy of regional economic relations in favour of the less developed regions and provinces in Turkey: “[i]n terms of improvement of quality of life, increase of job opportunities, providing accessibility and establishment of intra- and inter-regional interaction, regional prioritisation will be given urgent attention in public investment projects and service supply” [1]. The Ninth Development Plan also highlights how regional prioritisation will be used as the main strategic tool for establishing new settlement hierarchy

in the planning of rural areas. At this point, it is pointed out that the characteristics of rural areas and the needs of rural communities will determine the principles of this new rural planning strategy.

In conclusion, the new spatial planning system of Turkey brought by the last development plan is bundled with legislative, administrative and executive arrangements. After all, the performance and efficiency of new implementation tools in the Ninth Development Plan requires a close inspection in respect to the structural and actual problems of spatial planning in Turkey.

3 Implementation Problems of Regional Development Policies in Turkey

Since the 1960s, regional development policies in Turkey attempt to eliminate socio-economic development disparities among the regions. However, some structural problems (rapid pace of urbanisation, the institutional and administrative deficiencies, partisanship and misuse of political power etc.) negatively affected and still affect the performance of these policies.

One of the most important problems is related to the institutional characteristics of spatial planning system. The administrative and organisational framework for spatial planning is not well defined in functional terms. There are three important problem areas in Turkish spatial planning system: goal inconsistency among different spatial scales, lack of interscale implementation tools and complexity of institutional structure for spatial planning [4]. In one way, these are the problems associated with the structural characteristics of state bureaucracy and public administration in Turkey.

The executive conflicts between the state planning institutions and local municipalities hamper the implementation of spatial development policies in the long-run. One of the most notable problems is that there is not a clear hierarchy of spatial planning in Turkey. Also, the legislative framework on spatial plans is more complex and not complementary. The plans at each spatial scale function as the independent implementation tools rather than being complementary in terms of planning and administrative scope. The lack of hierarchical relations among the plans can be seen as a different expression of goal inconsistency between the same spatial plans. This is most evident in the hierarchical gap between regional development strategies and urban plans. These structural deficiencies and hierarchical gaps contribute adversely to the efficiency of spatial development strategies at each scale.

Another crucial issue is the integration of interscale planning tools (both rural and urban) into a single regional development strategy. To actualise such a holistic development strategy entails the introduction of new planning legislation as mentioned earlier. Despite the existence of a holistic development approach in the report of the Ninth Development Plan, the same plan regards the rural development planning as a different strategic field of spatial planning instead of rolling rural and urban development strategies into one national regional development strategy. The plan also neglects to consider both how the priorities of physical plans will be reflected in the upper scale plans (regional development plans) and how provincial goals will be formulated to determine the main spatial development framework for lower level plans (urban development plans) are unclear in the Ninth Development Plan [2]. The implementation experiences of the provincial development plans in a number of Turkish provinces since the early 2000s partially illustrate these ambiguities.

In Turkey, for carrying out the actual institutional and hierarchical arrangements on spatial planning, it is necessary to make a revision of the whole planning system. To fix the coordination deficiencies between the various spatial plans, new interscale implementation tools like provincial and rural development plans were introduced in recent. But, the efficiency of these new interscale tools requires a broader enhancement of both the institutional structure of spatial planning and public administration system in Turkey. Here, the devolution of planning power to local initiatives has utmost importance and regional prioritisation and growth pole strategy can be only realised through strengthening the local administrative structure in Turkey. For strengthening the status of local initiatives in the spatial planning process, there is an urgent need for a reform of public administration expressed by public opinion for a long time in Turkey. Through only this anticipated reform, the transformation of a multi-headed executive structure into a real hierarchical planning system can be possible.

In conclusion, new strategic arrangements on spatial planning in Turkey brought by the Ninth Development Plan did not eliminate the blurriness in the status of existing planning tools in the planning hierarchy. How new subnational implementation tools of development strategies like provincial development plans will be inclusive of all regional and sub-regional development plans instead of existing implementation tools (regional plans and rural development schemes) must be elucidated in a possible revision of this plan [2]. In that respect, the spatial planning agenda of Turkey in near future seems to be full of the actual institutional (especially local) struggles with the power structures of planning bearing the traces of a highly centralised public administration system.

4 Conclusion

This paper concludes that a well-functioning spatial planning system is a system working compatible with the overall institutional system of political power, public administration and state's socio-economic functions. In the Turkish case, the structural and hierarchical deficiencies of planning system constitute a major obstacle for ensuring an efficient coordination and complementariness between various spatial planning levels. The Turkish case also demonstrates that the new interscale implementation tools will have limited success without a broad institutional restructuring of spatial planning and public administration system. In this task area, the legislative position of existing implementation tools like regional development, metropolitan and environment adjustment plans must also be strengthened.

Definitely, these institutional tasks in the long-run entail a radical departure from the traditional planning logic and centralised bureaucratic structure in Turkey. In the same vein, further studies may offer new insights into this issue in the triangle of development policy, planning and implementation.

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