The Planning System and Urban Dynamics in Turkey:
The Case of Mersin City

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Abstract

Turkey is undergoing rapid population growth and urbanization particularly since the 1950s. Between 1960 and 2010, the total population increased from 27.7 million to 73.7 million, and the proportion of people living in urban areas increased greatly. The share of the urban population in total population was 31.9% in 1960, in 2010 increased to 76.3%. The rapid urbanization in Turkey, fuelled by continual high levels of internal migration triggered by industrialization and aggravated by regional differences, has also placed extra strain on the provision of housing as well as on all services and public utilities. While population in large cities increased drastically, there is also ample evidence of new emerging centers. Towards the end of the century, Turkish urban system is dominated by large number of small and very few large cities. The main determinants of the city growth are both of the being a coastal town, and having a large market potential.

The planning system is too complex in Turkey. Even though there are many authorized institutions at central and local level for preparation and implementations of plans, the coordination between them is very limited. Every institution try to act according to their responsible areas and laws. But in some cases these responsibility areas can be overlap with each other. On the other hand, sometimes central or local governments tend to use their planning authorities for their political benefits. Plans constitute very appropriate tools for speculative developments. As results of these situations, unethical problems can occur in urban areas.

With 7% of population growth rate city of Mersin, which accommodates 1.281.048 people according to 2007 population census is one of the regions letting in the most immigrants and the most rapid urbanization. According to Chamber of Architects Mersin Branch, 17% of the population is formed by earleir citizens, 25% of the population is formed of immigrants from the districts of Mersin and 58 of the population is formed of the people who has immigrated from their regions, notably Southeast. The population immigrated from other regions is living in inadequate conditions in terms of settlement, accommodation and other social and economic requirements. Accordingly it might be said that the city is experiencing an urbanization process without planning. On the other hand, as being of a shore city, there is high demand for “second house” in the city. The second house, which is one of the most important factors of housing, is defined as the houses mostly used by the citizens who live in the surrounding provinces that are not used in most part of year.
In this paper, it is made a preliminary evaluation of the planning system and development in urban areas in Turkey. The aim of the paper is analyze the impact of planning and land policies and practices on urban planning in Turkey in case of Mersin. Also it is argued in this paper, how effective planning tools and land policies can be improved in the Turkey case.