

# Chapter 1

## Urban Development Policy and Urban Sprawl in Turkey

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### Introduction

Metropolitan areas are rapidly changing in response to urban development dynamics. Urban sprawl is defined as a form of urbanization which inefficient, low-density, suburban development around the periphery. Sprawl is a leading process at the edges of urban growth and implies deficient and weak planning control on land policy.

Since the beginning of twentieth century, the world population has increased dramatically, and especially metropolitan areas have undergone diverse structural changes. As many other developing countries, Turkey was faced with the fast urbanization which necessitated immediate formulation of new planning policies in metropolitan areas. Metropolitan development areas have spread out into rural areas, so planning policies supposedly regulate this new pattern of development.

In Turkey, local governments frequently use partial plans with a tendency for discontinuity for urban fringe areas. In actuality, the urban space is patchy and the applications can be different from the plan decisions. Partial plans may completely change the urban settlement character. Since 1980, urban development in metropolitan areas in Turkey has been especially piecemeal, rather than holistic. So, in the process, urban development planning has tended to be piecemeal, resulting urban sprawl.

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This paper is concerned with the notion of urban sprawl, particularly planning policies in metropolitan areas. It aims to discuss the impacts of planning tools and regulations for urban sprawl. The paper also investigates a research problem that could show the characteristic of metropolitan development and planning procedure in Turkey.

## Urban Sprawl

“Urban sprawl” is used to describe low-density, inefficient, suburban development around the periphery. Sprawl is defined as a form of urbanization distinguished by leapfrog development, commercial strips, low density, separated land uses, automobile dominance and a minimum of public open space (Table 1.1).

Squires (2002) defines sprawl as “a pattern of urban and metropolitan growth that reflects low density, automobile-dependent, exclusionary new development on the fringe of settled areas often surrounding a deteriorating city”. Urban sprawl is a consequence of many factors, such as the need for industrial establishment for larger and less expensive locations which force them to move out of the city centre where they were previously settled, the increasing mobility of middle and high income groups due to private car ownership and changing socio economic value systems.

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European Environment Agency defines the stimulants of urban sprawl as macro economic factors, micro-economic factors, demographic factors, housing preferences, inner city problems, transportation and regulatory frameworks (Table 1.2). Sprawl is the leading edge of urban growth and implies deficient and weak planning control on land subdivision.

**Table 1.1** Characteristics of sprawl (Ewing 1997)

Leapfrog or scattered development	It means subdivisions shopping centers and office parks widely spread apart
Commercial strip development	It is characterized by huge roads with shopping centres, gas-stations, fast-food restaurants, banks, parking lots, etc.
Low density	Suburban buildings are often single-story and widely spaced, with intervening parking lots and roadways
Large expanses of single-use development	Housing consist predominantly of single-family homes on individual lots
Poor accessibility (Automobile dominance)	The longer distances between activities
Lack of public open space	In suburban area, public open space can be difficult to find except school yard

**Table 1.2** Stimulants of urban sprawl (EEA 2006)

Economic factors	Macro-economic	Globalization Economic development Integration
	Micro-economic	Quality of life Land value Land availability Competition between local governments
Demographic factors	Population growth	
	Increase in household formation	
Physical factors	Housing	Housing preferences More space per person
	Urban problems	Poor air quality Small houses Noise Unsafe urban environment Lack of open and green areas Poor quality of schools
	Transportation	Private car ownership Roads accessibility Fuel cost Lack of public transportation
	Urban planning	Weak land use planning Lack of enforcement of existing plans Lack of coordination and organization

In summary, some scholars (Beauregard 2006; Gillette 2005; Teaford 2006) thus conclude that urban sprawl should be accepted as one of the forms of metropolitan growth while others (Burchell et al. 1998; Cox and Utt 2004; Ewing et al. 2002; Snyder and Bird 1998) condemn urban sprawl because of its detrimental affects such as social segregation, upheave and change or economic prosperity; urban sprawl is one of the evitable spatial attributes of metropolitan development (Balta and Eke 2011).

There are two main reasons of urban sprawl. First reason is lack of laws and regulations supporting planning, second, reason is lack of goodwill and determination of local authorities to keep the urban macroform as planned.

## Urban Sprawl and Energy Consumption

In the last years, cities have gone through problems as global climate change. Together with the urban growth, greenhouse gases (GHGs) are receiving increasingly more attention (Glicksman 2007). The rise in population and individual car ownership is mainly attributed to urban sprawl. Suburban areas is often believed to

be less energy efficient than urban core. Overall energy consumption of a territory, especially as far as travel energy consumption is concerned with urban sprawl (Ewing 1994).

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Urban sprawl has many effects on urban environment as unplanned expansion of the city may not coordinate with the public transportation system which brings loss of time in journeys towards the city centre, increased energy consumption and increased traffic congestion. Motorization has increased energy demand.

## **Urban Development Policy in Turkey**

Metropolitan growth of Turkey is due to fast urbanization and results in urban sprawl. The formulation and implementation of urban development plans in Turkey is guided by the statutory provisions of the country's planning system. The multiple plans are lack of determined policies and the multiplicity of speculative market forces and their heavy demands in Turkey. Thus, metropolitan growth was transformed into an oil-spill form in most of the Turkish cities.

Metropolitan areas have been attracting a large population from rural areas since the 1960s. Although the rate of migration has slowed down in the last two decades, it has caused a considerable increase in the population of the metropolitan areas of Turkey (Erkip 2005). Turkey was urbanizing fast, changing from an agriculture to an urban-based economy. Two major steps were taken in 1960s. A new ministry of planning was established to deal with planning, housing and infrastructural issues, being responsible to draw urban development strategies, to undertake housing programmes and improvement of squatter housing, and above all to approve all plans prepared and adopted in local municipal councils (Balta and Eke 2011).

The new value systems, procedures and concepts brought to the era by globalization, privatization and neoliberalism affected Turkey as well. Two major reforms were undertaken in the Turkish planning system in 1984. Besides the classical municipal administration for cities, metropolitan municipalities were established responsible for larger cities to plan and control the metropolitan region and the municipalities in that area, the Metropolitan Planning Offices being joined to the metropolitan municipalities. Metropolitan planning offices were established in large cities with the collaboration of both local and central authorities which had the aim of formulating new policies, models and methods to confront the negative consequences of metropolitanism. The second major reform was the decentralization of several administrative powers including planning. The local authorities were now responsible for all the stages of planning practice, several administrative powers including approval (Balta and Eke 2011).

In Turkey, local municipalities is flexible regulation of urban development. Cities can be changed by partial plans or planning decisions (Ozuduru and Varol 2009). This process has led to piecemeal implementation through partial plans and plan amendments in metropolitan areas.

As many other developing countries Turkey was faced with the problem of fast urban growth. However, the globalisation trends coupled with the decentralization demands of the age which also affected Turkey caused the abolishment of the planning units, leaving the ground to local authorities which could not stand against the pressures of market forces so easily and urban sprawl has been occurred.

In Turkey, urban development plans are detailed end-state blueprint plans, which envision that a time would come and the spatial development of any city would be completed in the specific planning period. The allegation of the planning system is to control every detail during urban development. Development plans, of which structure and content are defined in planning legislation, are the main planning control tools in the Turkish system. Urban Development Law (3194), issued in 1985, exists at the very center of this legislation and is the main law directly related to production of the urban built environment (Ünlü 2005).

Urban planning in Turkey are guided by the statutory provisions of the country's planning system. In metropolitan cities, master plans are prepared by metropolitan municipalities, and implementation plans by county municipalities, and are then approved. The process stimulates the development of entities' individual behavior, and individual acts come to the foreground primarily through piecemeal implementations as partial plans and plan amendments. Local governments frequently use partial plans for the purpose of steering the public benefit. In actuality, the urban space is broken into pieces and is privatized through these plans, and public spaces are turned over to the private sector through urban projects/partial plans. To allay reactions that the public may put forth, local governments define the plans in planning regulations and apply the procedures anticipated by the law predominantly in a stylistic manner, thereby rendering the applications different from the plan decisions. Partial plans may completely change the urban settlement character as urban sprawl. Since 1980, urban development in metropolitan areas in Turkey has been primarily incremental rather than holistic. In the process, urban development planning has tended to be piecemeal, resulting in the fragmentation of the urban built environment (Balta et al. 2012).

In 1980s, after the legal arrangements, the central government's role in planning has diminished, and authority has been decentralized to local governments. However, in metropolitan areas, the limited capacity and experience of local governments resulted in urban space to be developed through the private sector. So, urban fringe faced partial developments. The holes in planning legislation and the popularity of partial plans resulted in a urban sprawl in metropolitan areas.

The rapid growth in metropolitan areas resulted in infrastructure, environment, and housing problems. In contrast, density increments and land use changes in urban environment have been realized through plan modifications.

## Conclusion

In the twentieth century due to rapid growth, the structure of urban settlements has changed dramatically. Metropolitan areas were mostly affected by increasing population. Metropolitan growth will either concentrate within the city boundaries, increasing the density, but most likely the city will expand on the periphery of the city through decentralization. The detrimental consequences of urban sprawl can be solved through planned decentralization. The diverse existing urban systems must be coordinated with the new development areas in order to establish the integrity of the macroform.

The new value systems, procedures and concepts brought to the era by globalization affected Turkey as well. Turkey is also similar to other developing countries where metropolitan growth is due to fast population growth and results in urban sprawl. The multiple plans were not effectively implemented due to lack of policies because of speculative market forces and their heavy demands in Turkey.

Consequently, partial plans have resulted in uncontrolled development and metropolitan growth was transformed into an oil-spill form in Turkey. Such development increases infrastructure costs and burdens local authorities. Urban sprawl creates problems, such as incongruity of functions, environmental problems, and higher of public services cost, increased energy consumption. To overcome these problems, the uncontrolled growth should be stopped and development policies that address both public and private sectors should be addressed.

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