

The Impact of Decentralization on Turkey's Urban Planning System

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Turkey's decision to abolish its state supervision of urban development planning in 1985 and the subsequent outcomes of this decision will be examined in this paper. The paper is organized in three parts; in the first part a brief summary of the local government system in Turkey will be presented, the second part will be devoted to a short story told from a historical perspective and which describes the relations between the central and the local governments in Turkey, and, finally, the impact of the unsupervised transfer of planning rights to local governments will be examined by using examples from the amendments to municipal development plans. It is hypothesized in this paper that, decentralization is not the sole remedy for urban planning problems unless effective state supervision and strong civil initiatives are present alongside it.

Part 1.

Article 2 of the Turkish Constitution states that the Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by rule of law. Local governments as autonomous public corporate entities are established to meet the local common needs of its inhabitants. Decision-making organs of the municipalities are directly elected by the people; their powers and duties are specified by laws. Local governments are bound to central administration supervision that is exercised through the power of tutelage (Polatoğlu,2000).

Turkey's population is of 72.4 million, and of which 67 % live in urban areas. There are four types of local government, namely; Provincial Local Government, Municipality, Metropolitan Municipality, and Village Administration. Provincial Local Governments (a total of 81) are field administrations established to carry out tasks in the regions beyond municipal boundaries within their respective provinces. Once a province, which is the agent of the central government, is established, the provincial local government and its local authority is simultaneously founded. In terms of the territorial groupings system drawn up by Eurostat, the provinces fall into NUTS level 3. Municipalities are established in settlements which have more than 2,000 inhabitants. As of 2005, there are 3,227 municipalities throughout the country. In the Turkish administrative system, in addition to its ordinary municipalities, there are metropolitan municipalities (a total of 15), which are designated strictly to the most populated urban centres. Villages, on the other hand (a total of 36,250) are traditionally bound to local administrative units having less than populations of 2,000.

The contextual features of Turkey's local governments, as identified by criteria developed by Judge, Stoker and Wolman (1995:12), can be described as follows:

1. Greater emphasis is placed on party politics rather than spatial politics,
2. Until recently enacted Municipal Law, the direct role of central government provided a limited scope for municipalities in engaging various local services,
3. The elected mayor has a prominent role in urban politics,
4. The local fiscal structure is rather restricted by the law. Upper and lower local tax brackets are defined by the law; hence, local taxes and charges comprise around 1/6 to 1/5

of the total municipal tax revenue percentage. In other words, municipalities do not rely heavily upon finance from local taxes. (Ersoy, 1999),

5. Although the local governmental structure is rather fragmented, it does not encourage economic competition among localities as in the United States because of the huge physical and social infrastructure and human capital disparities between them.

This study will concentrate on municipalities as the basic units of local governments. Therefore, the second part of this paper is devoted to describing the brief historical development of municipal organizations in Turkey.

Part 2.

According to Duncan and Godwin (1989), the necessity for local governments is because of capitalist societies and their nature as creators of spatial uneven development. In direct parallel to this spatial differentiation is the state which develops new institutions having relative autonomy *vis a vis* the central state. Hence, the local state becomes both an extension of and a constraint on its center. The main reason behind this contradictory position derives from the double function of the local state; acting as a representative of both the center and of the local groups. Most of the time these two functions are in contradiction and this contradiction is resolved through the power relations between local and central power holders.

As organizers of urban development in the modern sense, municipalities have a history of more than one and a half centuries in Turkey. The modernization of social life began in the Ottoman Empire with the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Re-organization Proclamation) in 1839. One of the aims of the Ottoman administration in issuing this proclamation was to avoid foreign political pressure that demanded political participation of ethnic groups in the Empire, and, thus decentralizing these regions autonomously. The focus was also on strengthening the central government's dominance. In other words, the attempts to institutionalize local governments was an effort toward achieving consistent and fairer taxation, a better delivery of services, an order of economic power, rather than the development of local democracy (Ortaylı, 1978: 1). Whatever the driving reason behind it, from 1855 onwards, starting with the former capital city of İstanbul, municipal organizations bearing legal corporate status were established in Ottoman cities.

Having been defeated alongside its allies in the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the Sevres Treaty, which imposed the western imperialist power's plan to divide the Empire. Before the implementation of the Treaty, a popular resistance was built up and a nationalist liberation movement was organized under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk). In 1920 a parliament was established in Ankara, and a new Constitution in which provincial local administrations were defined as autonomous administrative units were formed. The 1921 Constitution, prepared under the conditions of war, was based on local governments as autonomous administrations, unlike the 1876 Constitution.

The 1921 Constitution was democratic, in the sense that it gave the widest autonomy to local governments. It became ineffective however, after the promulgation of the 1924 Constitution following the end of war and the foundation of the Republic.

Following the foundation of the Republic in 1923, however, the local administrative system was reorganized in accordance to the French centralist system. “After the proclamation of the Republic and declaration of its new capital, authority was given to Ankara in urban development and municipality problems. A system similar to that found in Istanbul was lawfully instituted in Ankara, in 1924. The mayor and members of the city council were appointed by the central government (Ersoy, 1992: 327). (For a detailed study of the evolution of the local governments during the Republican era, see Tekeli, 1978).

In short, the early Republican years witnessed the intensification of the centralized system in administration, in contrast to the liberal approach observed in the economy. This result however, may be considered natural in countries where independence is new since the power of the central state is a condition for national unity (Keleş, 1988).

During the first years of the Republic until the 1960’s, it may be observed that the mayors – especially those of big cities- were appointed by the central government and in many cases assumed the governor’s role as well, whereas the municipal councils came to power by election. This fact is a supporting example for the paradigm, which argues that the local governments are social structures in which the interests of the central government and its local agents are represented at the same time. In other words, while the mayors were representing the central government, councils served as representation of strong local actors. Either way; the local working class representation was limited. If the areas that are considered as the local government’s responsibility are taken into account, these limitations are easily understood. Collective consumption goods that are important for the working class, and its social reproduction such as health, education and housing, are regarded as the responsibility of the central government. However, the area of local government responsibility was limited to the services, which are also important for local merchants and craftspeople. This explains why throughout this period as well as afterwards that local merchants or craftspeople were over-represented on municipal councils.

As a result, from the first days of the Republic onwards, one can observe a structure of dual-representation that is organized within and around the state, in which two domains support each other. On the central level one can observe a system of representation that has a corporatist nature and which was representing big capital interests, whereas on the local level the system was based on the representation of small scale and local group interests like local entrepreneurs and traders. As one can observe this structure existed without great changes until the beginning of the 1980’s (Sengul, 2001a: 103)

Turkey experienced a military coup in 1980, at which time constitutional and legislative changes were made in accordance with the authoritarian system. The 1982 Constitution, which was adopted during this period and is still in effect, rests on the principal of totality of central and local administrations. Article 127 of the Constitution states that, “ Local administrative bodies are public corporate entities established to meet the common local needs of the inhabitants of provinces, municipal districts and villages, whose decision-making organs are elected by the electorate...The central administration has the power of administrative tutelage over the local governments...” In other words, autonomous local governments function according to the principle of decentralization and can make decisions and take actions independent of the central government. However, “local governments are subject to the control of the central administration

exercised through the power of tutelage. This ensures the indivisibility of administration and protects public interest. Tutelage is not a hierarchical form of control, it is a special kind of control exercised by central administration over the actions and decisions of local governments as to their legality” (Polatoğlu, 2000; 104-105).

The military intervention in 1980 prepared the setting for the rise of entrepreneurial municipal model as well. The military regime held elections in 1983 with the participation of the newly established political parties in a restricted context. Both 1983 and 1987 elections were won by *Ana Vatan Partisi* (The Motherland Party; M.P. thereafter). The new administration in power announced that their philosophy of government derived from liberalization, private ownership and democratization principles, and promised substantial legal changes to this end. The local governments were to be strengthened and centralistic tendencies were to be curbed.

During this period of the M.P. political party in power, reorganization of the greater city municipalities, privatization efforts, large scale urban infrastructural projects, renewal of town centers, slum clearance projects and introduction of new planning authorities turned the urban centers into an investment arena. Besides, in a country, where the political parties have branch subsidiaries, local economic development policies had a very positive effect on the strengthening of the party branches and formation of new cadres. The new balance of power created a new and a more complicated situation in which “rather than changing the dominant forms of interest representation, dominant interest groups have been articulated with the traditional forms of representation by using new channels. That is to say, clientalism and corporatism have remained the dominant forms of interest representation while channels of representation became more diversified” (Şengül, 1993).

This new era was propagated as one of increased local government power *vis a vis* the central government. The first concrete evidence of this assumption was the increase in the financial powers of the local administrations. A series of new legislation were enacted for increasing municipal revenues and the 5% share allotted to municipalities from the national revenues was increased to 10.30%. As a result of this legislation, municipal incomes increased considerably in 1985. (For a detailed analysis of the financial system in Turkish local governments, see Ersoy, 1999).

Though it is a fact that the local governments enjoyed their most prosperous days during the 1980's, the reasons behind this can be linked to conjectural political developments rather than increasing local power as alleged. As mentioned above, following the *coup d'état* of 1980 all the political parties were abolished. A brand new political party M.P. established by a very small group of politicians won two consequent elections. This new party had no political base either in urban or in rural areas. Therefore, with the seizure of power the vital problem for the party was to form loyal political cadres and the grassroots that would support it against the traditional parties on the national and local levels. It may be argued that the empowerment of local governments financially through increase in the municipal incomes helped M.P. in two ways. First, a new local parochial capital with close ties to the M.P. was created and supported through transfers from the national budgets, and secondly, the increased quality of the urban infrastructure thanks to such investments contributed to the creation of new party cadres and sympathizers in urban areas. In fact, M.P. was always been a party supported by ballots given in urban areas. Hence, a hasty conclusion which regards improvements to the financial structure of local governments in the

1980's as an attempt to increase the powers of local governments as castles of local democracy could be misleading.

Year 2002 marks another important turning point in the political life of the country. For the first time in the history of the Republic a political party with Islamic roots came to power. *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (The Justice and Development Party, J.D.P. thereafter) with 1/3 of the votes won 2/3s of the seats in the parliament. The J.D.P. had emerged as the outright winner of the Turkish election for the first time since 1987. The party projected the image of a center-right conservative party arguing that it respected the basic principles of a secular constitutional order, in spite of its Islamist roots. The new government's public administration reform package which was partially enacted by Parliament and effectively made significant changes to the terms of the relations between central and local governments. Thanks to these new amendments; various functions traditionally performed at the central state level were transferred to local governments, mostly to newly organized provincial local administrations. In terms of urban planning functions which were already at the jurisdiction of local governments, however, no significant changes were made.

In brief, in terms of the three dimensions of decentralization developed by Pickvance (1997:130) namely, "the range of functions carried out at the local level", "the degree of autonomy", and "the degree to which the local government is funded from its own resources", the Turkish local governments lie between the extremes of "most centralized" and "most decentralized" models. However, it should also be underlined that the existing model represents a more decentralized one compared to the pre-1985 model.

In the final section, modifications in the urban development plans will be studied to show the effects of decentralization on the planning system.

Part 3.

A few words should be said about the functions of the municipalities in Turkey after the 1980's before the plan modifications and the composition of the municipal councils are examined. As the development of the municipalities followed a rather different track in Turkey than in Europe, the municipalities were never been local beds of power providing social functions in reproduction of labor power even in their most effective period. In fact, until the 1980's, thanks to etatist and developmentalist ideology accompanied by import substitution policies, "Turkey's plans and priorities have consistently favored industrial development over urban facilities" (Danielson and Keles, 1985).

The military intervention in 1980 prepared the ground for the rise of the entrepreneurial municipal model. Municipalities became financially stronger and their priorities were redefined. While municipalities were withdrawn strategically and selectively from the key areas of collective consumption, "their investments shifted more and more towards infrastructure which had been neglected so long in the cities. The changing balance of power especially among the fractions of capital and subsequent channeling of state funds to infrastructural investments favored the large cities as the locus of investment. Municipalities, in this context, became the primary agents for pouring investments into cities"(Şengül, 1993).

In short, following the 1980's, the changing role of municipalities from service providers to the agents of local economic development, contributed to the capital formation of the local private sector (Ayman Guler, 1992). This function has been performed basically through planning decisions and infrastructure investments.

Some researchers welcomed the current Development Law enacted by the M.P. administration in 1985 as a "revolution". However, others argued that it was a "reaction" to the previous era, in terms of its empowerment of local authorities regarding development plans. During the first 60 years of the Republic, the superior approval of the Ministry of Resettlement (later Ministry of Public Works and Resettlement) was required for all urban development plans prepared or approved by the city councils to be put into effect. Furthermore, the Ministry could exercise its authority in making changes to plans sent for approval as well as approving the plan modifications.

The current law stipulates that urban development plans within the boundaries of municipalities and their adjacent areas are made and approved by municipalities. Plans falling out of these areas are made and approved by provincial governorships. However, this authority is not unlimited. "Master" and "implementation" plans have to be in accordance with regional and environmental development plans prepared by the central government, if any exists. Thus, a coordination between local and higher level plans is aimed. The central government to practice administrative tutelage in this sense is not against the local government principle (Ünal, 1990:165).

In brief, the authority to make and ratify physical plans (development plans) are given to local governments. In this process municipal councils are the sole authority to make decisions about planning and ratifying the prepared plans.

According to the hierarchy of plans specified in the current Development Law, socioeconomic and spatial strategy plans are prepared at regional and sub-regional levels and these are followed by development plans prepared at the settlement level. Every municipality is legally obliged to prepare and update the development plan for the settlement. Development plans therefore are the most widely applied form of plans and are classified as "master plans" and "implementation plans". Master plans are usually drawn on 1/5000-scale maps and show general land uses, main zoning types, main transportation routes and population densities. They are prepared as upper scale strategy plans and used as a guide for the implementation plans. Applications are made according to implementation plans, which are produced at 1/1000 scale and show all the details related to land uses at the level of parcels and lots. Municipal Councils are the sole authority in making decisions about planning and ratifying the prepared plans. Neither at the central or local level, is there a technical control mechanism to ensure the quality of the plans prepared.

Comprehensive modifications on current plans can be made through "Revision Development", "Partial Development" and "Additional Development" plans. However minor amendments at the level of lots are made through Plan Modification which is the most frequently used tool to change the plan decisions. Modifications in development plans follow the same procedure as in the preparation and ratification of other plans. In other words, the Municipal Council has the final say in decisions (For a detailed study of plan modifications in Turkey, see Ersoy 2000). The question to be posed at this stage is why Turkish municipalities are strong enough to resist external

pressures during the planning stage plans fail to show the same resistance at the plan modification stage? To answer this question a brief summary of the plan making procedure needs to be given.

As mentioned above, all municipalities are obliged to obtain development plans (physical plans). This is not only a legal necessity but also a condition for getting credits and technical support from the Bank of Provinces. Development plans are prepared by the planning departments of the municipalities, or by the Bank of Provinces, a public agency, or obtained from the market through private firms. However, in any case, plans are prepared by registered professional planners who make use of their technical expertise and follow the current rules and regulations. Information related to the owners of the plots does not exist on the base maps. In addition, land ownership in Turkish cities is very fragmented, and even a small plot of land may have several shareholders which, in fact, is one of the reasons why changes in favor of landowners mostly receive widespread support from a significant section of the urban population. In brief, development plans are prepared by professionals who generally follow the technical rules and guard the public interest. The encroachment of the landowners at this stage is rather limited. As pointed out by Wolman and Goldsmith (1992), "... many officials will be professionals who belong to national professional organizations and have their own ideas about policies which they persuade politicians to accept. This will constrain the 'responsiveness' of the local government to local demands" (Cited in Pickvance (1997:132)). The plans, once prepared are publicized for a short period of time at the municipalities. However, except for the small group of well informed and educated landowners, most of the small land owners cannot even locate their lots on the plans. Hence, often, plans are ratified by the municipal councils without any serious objections. This problem free picture changes, however, after the land titles are distributed by the land registry. Some landowners object to relocations, while others blame the municipality for unequal development rights. Some apply to courts to regain the development rights obtained in the previous plans. Therefore, an influx of plan modification applications takes place in the years following the ratification of development plans. At this stage applications are made on a plot basis, and the owners are known. Municipal councils as mentioned above have the final say on the applications. This is also the stage where the work of the professional planners is ignored as the local politicians and holders of private interests start making bargains.

It should be emphasized that plan modification is the most frequently used tool to change plan decisions on behalf of private interests. In practice mostly specific individuals and powerful local people are protected and rewarded through plan modifications. Urban rent is still considered to be the most effective toll in the hands of municipalities to distribute wealth at the local level, and as mentioned above municipal councils have the sole authority in ratification process.

Before calling attention to the composition of municipal councils it is important to investigate the rate of plan modifications before and after the so-called more democratic change in the Turkish planning system following 1985. The composition and structure of municipal councils will briefly be analyzed in the following sections.

A very small number of case studies have been made about plan modifications in Turkey. These studies conducted both in the pre-1985 and post-1985 era; nonetheless, serve our purpose to portray the effects of decentralization of planning rights.

According to the rescinded Development Law numbered 6785 it was imperative that the central state approve plan modifications proposed by local governments. Therefore it is easier to obtain country-wide data for the period before 1985. Günay (1979:34) states that the sum of 20,787 plan modifications were made throughout Turkey, between 1965 and 1978. Within the same period, an average of 162 plan modifications was approved annually for the urban areas with more than 500,000 inhabitants. Atahan reached similar findings, in 1971 while on average 2.33 plan modifications were made in urban centers of the country. This average increased to 141 in the three most populated cities of Turkey (Cited in Geray, 1972). Following these findings one can estimate that during the 1970's the number of plan modifications per 10,000 persons was around 1.0 in Ankara, the capital city. Günay's (1979) findings display that 40.2 per cent of the plan changes were transformation of green areas to residential uses, i.e. from public to private uses. Atahan's findings are on the same direction (Cited in Geray:1972:600-601). Less than 1 per cent of the plan modifications were made in squatter areas, which indicated that low- income people were not active agents of this process.

The number of plan modifications approved by local governments boosted, following the ratification of the current Urban Development Law in 1985. The let to transfer of the spatial planning functions including the ratification of local plans and their modifications solely to local governments.

In the municipal council of the small city Yalova, 140 plan modification proposals were made in a single year (Akyol,1992; cited in Akyol, 1995:4). In another example, in the Istanbul county Bakirkoy, 230 proposals were made for plan modifications in one year (Demircan, 1989; cited in Ersoy, 2000). In both cases, almost all the modifications were made either for the conversion of the urban land reserved for public uses to private uses, or for the changes in the routes of the traffic roads (Akyol,1995:4)..

Akyol (1995) also refers to the plan modification proposals made for the medium sized city of Trabzon. According to his findings, between 1989 and 1993, 2722 plan modification proposals were made to the city council, 780 of which were ratified. Those changes resulted in the increment of the gross density in the city approximately by 40 per cent. A recently published article indicates that between 1989- 2000 (Beyazlı, 2003:68-69) 1625 plan modification proposals were made for the same city. These plan modifications resulted in the conversion of the urban land from "other uses" to "residential" use calculated to house an additional 6895 residential units, that is, 31.121 inhabitants – $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total population. According to the by-laws, 21.8 hectares of additional green area to be reserved in the plan for such additional population. However, through plan modifications 27 hectares of green area that existed in the plan were transformed for other uses. As a result, the green area per capita was reduced from an already insufficient 3.3 m², down to 2.06 m² (Beyazlı, 2003:68-69).

Ulusoy (1999) conducted a comprehensive study on plan modifications in Ankara. According to her findings, between 1986 and 1998, the Ankara Metropolitan Council ratified 1,152 development plans at the level of master (1/5.000 scale) plans. 70 %, that is 802 of the plan approvals constituted the modifications on previously ratified urban plans. Although she did not have the data on plan modifications at the level of implementation plans (1/1.000 scale) which is at the jurisdiction of district municipalities (lower tier municipalities within the metropolitan area) it would not be surprising to estimate that the total figure will multiply several times.

During twelve year period three different political parties or coalitions headed by these parties were in power in the City Council, namely the center right liberal Motherland Party, center left Social Democrat Party and the radical religious Welfare Party. However, the number of plan modifications approved in each period showed no significant change. Ten percent of all modifications were related to the increment of the density, and one third of the changes related to the alteration in the use of social infrastructures to other uses. In fact, 40 percent of all changes were transformations of green areas to other and mostly private uses.

The data compiled by her demonstrates that in the Ankara Metropolitan area, for three consecutive years (1990, 1991 and 1992), 668, 795 and 770 revision plans were ratified, respectively, that is, approximately 2.3 plan revisions per 10,000 inhabitants. As mentioned above, the revision plans involved comprehensive land use modifications on development plans, and did not include plan modifications made at the level of district municipalities within the borders of the Greater Ankara Municipality; therefore, one can safely argue that the number of plan modifications made at housing lot or a parcel level is much higher than the number of revisions. For the Ankara case, the rate of plan modifications increased several times after the transfer of planning power to the local government. Similar to the previous cases, majority of the modifications were made to the detriment of public use -mostly green areas- which was naturally to the benefit of land owners and housing developers.

All the above field studies clearly depict that the number of plan modifications increased substantially following the enactment of the Development Law No.3194, which transferred the planning rights to local governments without any central state control. It is again confirmed by these studies that the majority of the modifications were made for the conversion of the land reserved for public uses (mostly open areas) to built up areas in private hands, resulting in the increase of the population density and overcrowding in urban areas. It should be emphasized that plan modifications are used as a significant tool in the redistribution of the urban rents in the urban areas of Turkey.

Unfortunately, we do not have detailed comprehensive case studies conducted on the urban areas of Turkey in respect to the functioning of the urban politics or on the community power structures in urban settings, similar to Dahl's (1961) study on the political system of New Haven where he argued that the existing pluralist political system is "open to groups who are active, organized and want to be heard" (Dahl, 1986: 182-3, cited in Judge, 1995: 15) or Hunter's (1953) seminal study on Atlanta which "offered 'scientific' evidence that the local representative democracy in the United States was just a smokescreen for a dominant economic democracy" (Harding, 1995: 39) or Stone's (1989) re study of the same city to illustrate the regime analysis in practice, in which "what is observed is a single regime which despite some elements of change retains a stable means of cooperation and a resolute commitment to an activist agenda of economic growth" (Stoker, 1995: 63), not to mention case studies conducted on the other side of Atlantic, in the United Kingdom.

Therefore it is rather unreasonable to draw conclusions from the above findings on plan modifications to the functioning of local politics in Turkey. Most probably, different cities will exhibit city politics dominated by different types of political regimes. However, before reaching some tentative and rather inconclusive points after considering the relevant facts or evidence I would like to refer to the findings of few study conducted in Turkey.

Although current regulations set limits on plan modifications by putting various pre-conditions, a lack of central or local control mechanism, except judicial ones, making them obsolete in practice. It depends totally on the Municipal Council to accept or reject the modification proposals made by individuals. When considering the amount of extra rent; property owners get, due to plan modifications; the composition of the Councils and the clientelistic relations between the voters and the political parties becomes crucial. Hence, the composition of the Council of Municipalities is very important to grasp the process.

A comprehensive study conducted on the structure of municipal councils of cities over 50.000 inhabitants, indicates that petty tradesmen and industrialist and tradesmen comprised 50 percent of the council members while wage earners contributed only 16 percent to them. Professionals such as engineers, urban developers, consultants and real estate dealers who were directly related to urban growth made up 22 percent of the Council members (Citci, 1989). A study conducted by Keleş and Toprak (2000) shows that in 8 cities of different regions 69.2 percent to 92.9 percent of the councilors were self-employed merchants, white-collar professionals and producers. Ataman (2004) reaches a similar conclusion for the city of Denizli, where white-collar professionals constituted the majority, while only 10.7 percent of the councilors were workers. It may be seen that the professions of the mayors followed the same trend. 35 percent of the mayors elected between the years 1989 to 1994 were petty tradesmen whereas workers and bureaucrats made up only 16.5 percent (Ozhan, 1995).

These studies, though limited, give some idea about the composition of municipal councils. It is white-collar professionals, petty producers, tradesmen, urban developers, and real estate dealers who outweigh the representatives from the working sections of the local people. It is obvious that the latter are not a part of the rent sharing process.

Plausible reasons for the increase in the number of plan modifications following the enactment of the Development Law No.3194 in 1985 can be enumerated as follows:

1. Urban population growth is still rather high in Turkey. Between 1970 and 1990 the total population of the country increased by 59 percent. However, in urban areas – settlements with inhabitants of 10.000 and over- the population growth increase was 2.65 times as much as the national figure. Although the rate of population increase dropped after 1985, the growth rate of the urban population continued. This means that the demand on urban land and the pressure on plan modifications for residential use continued.
2. Before 1985, the local governments' proposals for plan modifications had to be inspected by the technocratic cadres of the Ministry of Resettlement in Ankara. The approval process generally takes a long time, and this difficulty in its bureaucracy functions as a hindering factor for applications, as well as preventing, to a great extent, the probable clientelistic encroachments. Development Law 3194 provides no article related to the public or private control of development plans and their modifications approved by the municipal councils. Hence, submission to land owners' wishes causes the least harm compared to the benefits to be accrued in political terms.
3. Therefore, following the fragmentation and decentralization of the planning power, it became much easier for urban landowners, who were excluded from the centrally administrated planning process so far, to be effective in the local political arena through

plan modifications, which resulted in the rapid increase of such demands. What is argued by Logan and Molotch (1987:52) and as summarized by Judge, Stoker and Wolman (1995:42) is also valid for Turkish cities: "... a small group of (land)owners are mainly interested in making financial gain from their assets. These 'rentiers' lie at the core of the urban development process. They constantly strive to maximize the value of their holdings...rentiers are 'parochial capital'. They own assets that cannot be shifted from place to place". Hence, they resort to whatever means they have access to change adverse land use decisions brought about by the development plans on their plot. Urban rent is still considered to be most effective toll in the hands of municipalities as a means of distribution of wealth at the local level. Some researchers estimate the share of urban land rent in non-productive earnings to be around 75 per cent (Besiktepe, 1990). In this respect plan modifications play a significant role in measuring clienteles relations at the local level.

4. Last, but not least, the strong centralist tradition that prevented the flourishing of strong civil organizations in sufficient quantity, resulted in weak civil initiatives which opposed the plan modifications and caused the degradation of the environmental and the aesthetical values of urban areas.

Concluding Remarks

Weberian paradigm proposes a strict division between the state and civil society. In this framework decentralization is praised for spreading and fragmenting the power that is accumulated at the center. This simple recipe however, has two major problems. Firstly, it attributes a power, which is independent from civil society, to the state. But as is known, there is a strong relationship between political power and economic power however complex it might be. Secondly, the assumption that decentralized local forces are more democratic than central forces is to be questioned. It is sometimes postulated that pluralism, participation, reciprocity, and democracy are driven by local structures. Therefore, policies conducive to the transfer of power to local governments are sometimes celebrated as signs of democracy. However, as pointed out by Pickvance (1997:129) "to phrase the debate in these terms is over simple... any assumption that decentralization means democratic or that centralization means undemocratic is misleading". It is known that local forces are outcomes of social relations, just like central forces. On a local scale, there are interests that are organized in and around the state as well. Because of this fact, when power is transferred to a local level it is possible that anti-democratic structures, like those of central powers, might also be created and strengthened. The Turkish case can be instructive in this respect.

Until the 1980's, Turkey experienced a municipal model highly dependent on the center, which was quite reasonable for the establishment and the further strengthening of a newly emerged nation state. Though the legislation in effect defined a broad range of duties for municipalities, the activities of local governments on the urban areas had been limited to garbage collection, provision of public transportation, and maintenance of roads or tasks that were similar in nature. Apart from the strengthening of the national unity the main reason for this structural limitation was the allocation of resources to industrialization rather than urban investments. In other words, while the capital accumulation processes largely determined resource allocation on a nation-wide

basis, state intervention to the reproduction of labor remained limited and mostly left on the local level.

The military intervention of 1980 changed this structure rather drastically by preparing the arrival for the rise of an entrepreneurial municipal model. Increased financial resources of the local governments were used to foster the needs of the local, national, and in some cases international capital. As long as the presently structured social, economic and political relations persist, decentralization of political power to local units will help little to promote the planned local development. The Turkish urban planning experience in this respect is an example. The transfer of planning powers almost unconditionally to local units -as shown above in the case of plan modifications- resulted in the empowerment of the local rent seeking power groups rather than the needs of the local people and the improvement in local democracy which necessitates comprehensive changes in almost all spheres of life rather than limited amendments in legal codes. In other words, acknowledging the limitations of the data, and recognizing the problems of generalizations, as a tentative assertion it can be argued that decentralization, by itself, if not accompanied by effective central state control and strong civil initiatives, should not be seen as a remedy for the country's urban planning problems.

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