

The Impacts of Neoliberal Policies on the Performance of Middle Sized Cities: The Case of Turkey

Dr. Melih Ersoy

Introduction

Although the origin of neoliberalism dates back to 1930s, (Birch, Mykhenko, 2010) it became effective following the oil crises of the 1970's. The ideological project of neoliberalism puts forward old policies represented in a fancy parcel which can be summarized as privatization of public assets, liberalization of trade, primacy of market and deregulation resulting in the rolling back of governments. Following the 1980's, such neoliberal policies have been implemented by right-wing politicians around the world. Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) in the UK and Ronald Reagan (1981-89) in the USA, whose policies became known respectively as; Thatcherism and Reaganomics- became prominent political figures in this respect.

Turkish experience followed a similar pattern after the 1980 military coup. Though, the austerity policies were put into effect several months before the coup, their peaceful and smooth implementation was made possible due to the repressive military rule. In this respect, 1980 became a turning point in the Turkish socio-economic as well as the political life of the country.

This paper aims to investigate the impact of neo-liberal policies, pursued since 1980, on the demographic and socio-economic development of the middle sized cities in Turkey.

The paper will consist of three parts. The first part will summarize the development of urban planning history of Turkey in the Republican Period with an emphasis on the spatial distribution of the urban settlements. The second section constitutes the main body of the paper in which various data related to the demographic and socio economic variables is used to show the development of the middle sized cities between 1980 and 2000. The last part will evaluate the findings with respect to the creation of sustainable city distribution in Turkey.