

Evaluation of a Capital City's Transformation over 40 Years in Relation to the Sustainable Development Goals: The Case Study of Ankara, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Reviews of the interaction of urban planning and housing policies, programmes and outcomes over a long period in a city can offer a valuable foundation for future planning. Ankara (Turkey) is a prime example of a city that has evolved from a small town to a major capital in less than a century. It has experienced all the challenges caused by rapid growth similar to many cities in urbanizing countries and is therefore an interesting subject of research. This paper aims at evaluating the current situation of Ankara in terms of urban planning based on a reference study that was undertaken in 1975-8. The reference study includes a large number of household surveys, key informant interviews with leading stakeholders in public and private sectors and in-depth case studies with individual households. However, the research was conducted four decades ago and it has never been published before. In the presented study, the city's situation, urban planning decisions and the social structure in the city are updated and analysed parallel to the reference work and other sources. These aspects of the study are given in relation to the three Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) [i.e., No Poverty (SDG 1), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)]. A future expectation to achieve the SDGs is investigated considering the city's improvement in the last 40 years. The study also identifies current issues of interest for the development of future policies to address the needs of an expanding city and the needs for land, housing and services for its population with the support of the SDG targets.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cities are dynamic structures that change and develop as a result of urbanization. Recently, many countries are experiencing rapid urbanization as a result of various factors such as population growth, limited economic and physical resources, increasing needs and changing living standards. Turkey has undergone considerable urbanization, particularly since the 1950s. The capital city, Ankara, has become a significant representative of this process. Urban planning and industrialisation were considered as essential issues particularly in the first years of the Republic (1923-1950) and various planning projects were developed not only for the biggest city, Istanbul, but also for the capital city Ankara (World Bank, 2015).

Today, even though the city is mostly described as an ‘officer city’, it has a lot of potential and attractions that led to an urbanization rate of 5.5%. However, the city has not yet succeeded to be an ‘ideal capital city’ for the country in terms of economic, physical and social aspects (Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, 2017). Currently, the city has a population of 5.503.985 (TUIK [Turkish Statistical Institute], 2018). In this study, the urbanization process of Ankara will be evaluated via the three of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with the help of Geoffrey Payne’s extensive study that was conducted in the 1970s, and the presented sources. Therefore, it is aimed at giving and understanding how the city developed over the last four decades and how these changes can be analysed in order to reach the SDG targets by 2030.

2. THE ANKARA PROJECT AND THE REFLECTIONS OF THE STUDY

The Ankara Project is based on the original study undertaken by Geoffrey Payne in 1975 and 1976. It aims to discover the changes in Ankara over the last 40 years in terms of planning policies and their applications. Therefore, the study provides a good opportunity to investigate changes on the issues related to SDGs, during the literature review. Even though the original study gives a large range of information about the city in the 1970s, it is discovered that the findings are closely related with three of the SDGs, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). These goals are analysed to reflect the progress of the city over the years with help of comparisons between the original study and ongoing projects and literature reviews. Therefore, the lessons that Ankara can offer cities that are facing similar urbanization problems will be discovered. Moreover, some suggestions are made for the future of the city in order to meet the SDGs by 2030.

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2.1 No Poverty (SDG 1)

Poverty can be defined in many ways. While some sources are focusing on the meaning and the indications of poverty, it is possible to come across with sources that link poverty with some other parameters. The United Nations (n.d.) describes poverty both in relative and absolute terms and explains, “*Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society: people are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context*”. Furthermore, the World Bank (2020) defines ‘*extreme poverty*’ as living on less than \$1.90 per person per day and aims to terminate the poverty by the end of 2030 by decreasing the number of people who live less than \$1.90 per day (in PPP 2011).

It is also possible to observe poverty with the help of other parameters, such as the number of slums. According to UN-Habitat (2018), slums are considered the representatives of destitution and exclusion, and a significant factor for the endurance of poverty. The slum areas have also a significant place in the process of the city’s urbanization in the country. In Turkish, ‘*gecekondu*’ term is considered as the equivalent of slums. Turkish Language Association (TDK) defines ‘*gecekondu*’ as “*A shelter or house which is illegally built on somebody else’s or public land without having a permission*”. The term is used for illegal settlements that could also be described as “*A building that landed overnight*” in Turkish (World Bank, 2015). In the original study, Payne (1977) summarises *gecekondu*s as the single term that covers all informal or unauthorised housing processes that are landed by night in the country. He also adds that occupying the public land on the outskirts of the city and building their own shelters were the only way for the urban poor and the migrants in the 1970s in order to meet their urgent housing needs.

In 1970, The General Population Census showed that while the population of Ankara was 1.250.000, 60% of the capital (i.e. 750.000 people) had been living in slums (Karaboran, 1980). However, this situation has significantly been changed over the recent years. Particularly after the Transformation of Areas Under the Risk of Disaster Law No. 6306 (Urban Regeneration Law) (2012), the slum areas have been demolished in order to provide a better physical environment. Moreover, the law brought a new regulation and arrangement system particularly for the illegal properties that are also physically instable and risky for the natural disasters with insufficient infrastructures (Candas, Flacke, & Yomralioglu, 2016). According to the law, there are still a significant number of ongoing projects that aim to transform slums into new residential areas not only in Ankara, but also in the whole country. According to the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality (2017), the number of slums was approximately 30.000 in 2016 and 17.000 of them were demolished until early 2017. Currently, the number of *gecekondu*s is decreasing according to the Law.

As another poverty parameter, GNP (Gross National Product) is elaborated for the country. In the 1960s, the GNP value was around \$6000 per year in Turkey. In 2017, this value increased to \$13.000 on average for the country and became approximately \$13.680 per year for the inhabitants of Ankara (Haberturk, 2019)

According to the main target of SDG 3 (No Poverty), ‘*eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions*’, UNDP Turkey is conducting a number of ongoing projects in the country. Even though there were not many projects ongoing with the stakeholders in Ankara, the performance of the country seems promising. According to the Ministry of Development of the Republic of Turkey (2016), the proportion of the population living under \$1.25 a day, which was 1.1% in 1994 and 0.2% in 2002, was reduced to nil in 2006. Moreover, it was noted that there were no extreme poverty left in the city, but 7.3% of the citizens were facing poverty with less than \$2.50 per day (Ankara Development Agency, 2012). The food poverty ratio, which was 1.35% in 2002, declined to 0.48% in 2009. It is also found that the 10th National Development Plan of Turkey is consistent with the SDGs, which supports ending poverty and hunger and aims to provide healthy lives at all ages (Alarслан, 2018).

As it can be understood, the city and the country are not behind the SDG 1 target and made good progress, particularly in the last century. However, the conditions could be improved more with the help of comprehensive regulations and actions.

2.2 Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)

Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) is described as “*increasing employment opportunities, particularly for young people and reducing informal employment and the gender pay gap and promote safe and secure working environments to create decent work for all*” by the UN Habitat. In order to correlate this aim with the current economic situation of Ankara, it would be beneficial to discover the city’s and the country’s progresses in the last century.

In the 1950s, Turkey was described as an “*agrarian country*” with 25% of urban population living in cities. Today, the situation has become reversed and approximately 75% of the population live in the urban areas in Turkey (World Bank, 2015). Although the governments have tried to establish a new development system in the whole country, the priority was given to the big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir and new investments could not be afforded in the rural areas. As a result of the decline in agricultural production in rural areas and the increase in industrial sector in urban areas, a massive number of people started to migrate from rural to urban areas in the late 1940s (Balamir & Payne, 2001). The change in urban and rural population is demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

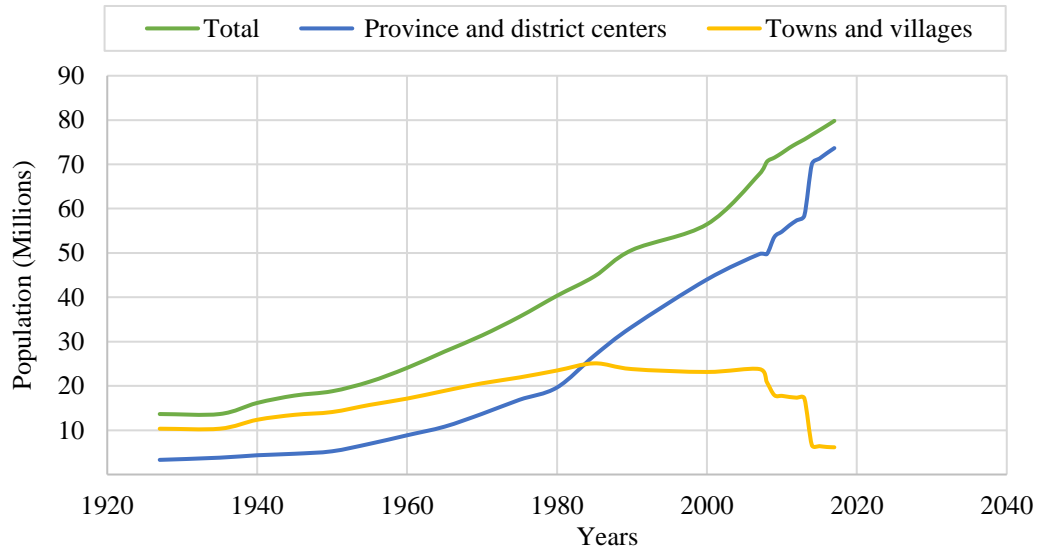


Figure 1: Population changes in Turkey (TUIK [Turkish Statistical Institute], 2019).

As it is represented in Figure 1, the rural population of the country has dramatically decreased particularly after the 1980s and a rapid increase in urban population has been experienced.

In the original study, Payne (1977) refers to the employment tendencies depending on the urban and rural population changes in the country. He emphasises that despite the investment priorities that were given to the industry and manufacturing sectors in the urban areas, these were not successful at creating a productive employment for the urban population. Parallel to this situation, the agricultural activities remained as the main sector in the country until late 1970s. The sectoral distribution of the working population in country is shown in Table 1.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Working Population in Turkey in 1970 (Payne, 1977)

Sectors	Percentage (%)
Agriculture	66.41
Mining and manufacturing	9.55
Construction	2.90
Trade	5.06
Transportation	2.73
Financial institutions	1.23
Public services	12.12
Total	100.00

Besides, it was discovered that only 27% of the employees were skilled and 73% were consisted of labourers, traders etc. in 1962, according to a survey by the government (Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement, 1966). The proportion of women in the non-agricultural activities among economically active women aged 15 and over was only 10% in 1970. It was

also noted that 3.9% of women were in industry and 7.7% were in services in 1975 (Gülay Toksöz, 2012).

Similarly, Keles (1976) also states that while 25% of the Ankara population was working for industrial sectors, 70% of them were still working for services in 1965.

When it comes to 2000s, it was seen that the dominance of the services was not changed among the other economic sectors, even though the percentage of qualified employees have significantly increased. The distributions of the sectors in Ankara in 2016 are represented in Figure 2.

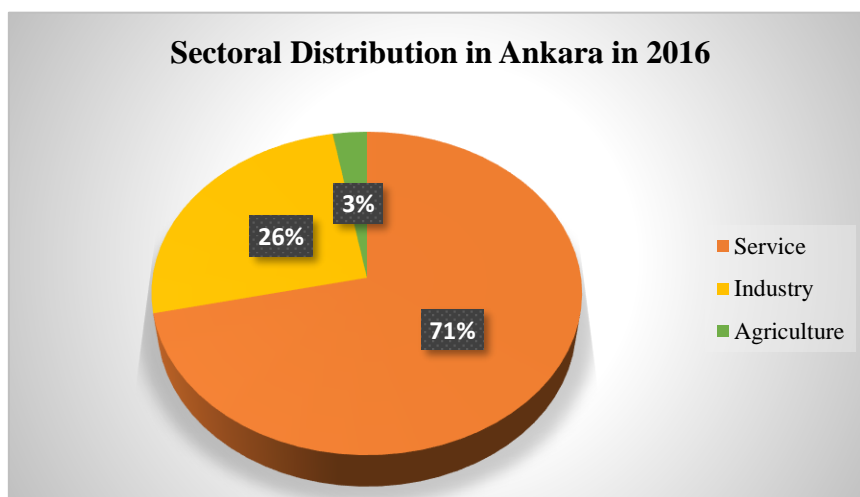


Figure 1: Sectoral Distribution of Employees in Ankara in 2016 (Ankara Development Agency, 2017)

Currently Ankara is the second largest city of Turkey in 2018 by population with its 5.503.985 people (TUIK, 2018). The population is equally distributed between male and female and the rate of the working age (15-64) population is 71% (TUIK, 2013).

In 2010, while the labour force participation of men was 70.8%, the same rate was 27.6% for women for the country. Moreover, the unemployment rates were calculated as 11.4% and 13% for men and women respectively for the same year (Memiş, 2016). Similar to these results, it is noted that 68.7% of men and 25.3% of women participated to labour force in Ankara in 2010. Even though the unemployment rate was the same (13%) for the men in the city, this value increased to 16% for women (Memiş, 2016).

As it is seen from the statistics, even though employment rates and the participation to labour force have been amended, there is still a need for providing gender equality in working system of the city. In addition, the investments to train and educate the staff for the different sectors would be supportive to improve the economy in the city in order to meet the targets of SDG 8 well deservedly.

2.3 Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)

Sustainable Cities and Communities Goal 11 is primarily aimed at decreasing the number of people that live in slums in the urban areas globally. Currently over 1 billion people are living in slums that needs to create urgent actions. In addition to unsatisfactory physical conditions of the houses, having no good-quality air, limited accessibility to the transportation facilities and lack of open spaces are the main focuses of this goal to be improved (UN-Habitat, 2019).

As mentioned above, Turkey has experienced a rapid urbanization process particularly after the 1940s. Parallel to this situation, Ankara has been one of the leading examples that had to face the problems caused by urbanization and slums (*gecekondu*), as the capital city (Payne, 1977). The population of the city went beyond the projections of the plans and the growth of the city could not be taken under control because of the huge number of people migrating from rural areas and the increasing housing demand in the city, particularly in the early 1950s. Ercoskun (2013) states that the borders of Ankara has grown 30 times more than according to the master plans between 1924 and 2023, and the population of the city went up almost 73 times between 1927 and 2018 (TUIK, 2018). The growth of the city with the effect of *gecekondu* were shown below in Figure 3 below.

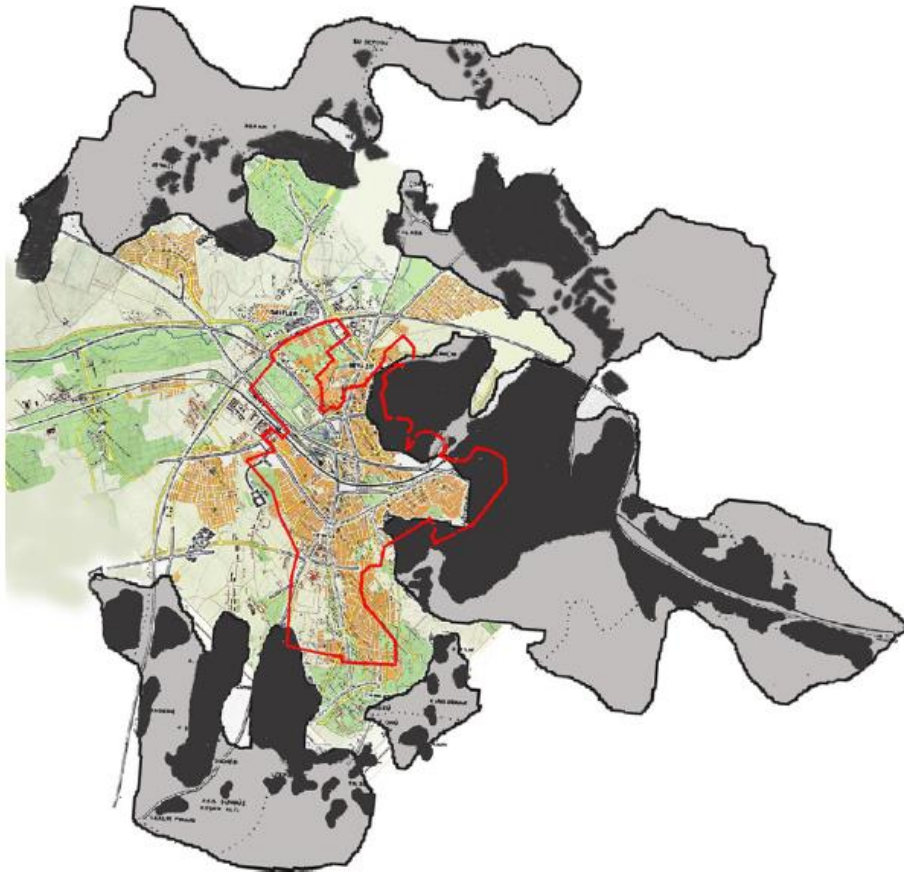


Figure 3: Ankara's *gecekondu* areas in 1965 (in dark grey) and in 1990 (in light grey) and the plan borders in 1928 (in red) (Batuman, 2013).

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After the 1990s, the city carried on sprawling until the early 2000s with a growing number of *gecekondu*.. *Gecekondu* are mostly considered as a ‘way-out’, rather than being a problem for a long time, not only for the governments but also for the inhabitants. A prestigious academician Ilhan Tekeli explains this situation by sentences: “*Gecekondu not only provided cheap labour for industry, but also reduced the resources allocated to urbanization, which could now be transferred to industrialization. Gecekondu, which was a problem from an urban planner’s viewpoint, could hence be seen by an industrialist as a solution*” (Bozdogan & Akcan, 2012).

Lately, UN-Habitat Turkey (2019) published a progress report and a SWOT analysis was undertaken considering short, medium and long-term targets for the country, regarding to the SDG 11. In the analysis, having ongoing rapid urbanization processes, satisfactory number of personnel and instrument capacity and decreasing number of slums (*gecekondu*) particularly after the 1990s and the Urban Transformation Law (2012) that speeded up the transformation of the slum areas were noted as the strongest points of the country.

Besides, the most critical weak points of the country were also underlined. Firstly, it is mentioned that there was no nationwide strategy or plan settled yet in order to meet the SDG 11 targets. Secondly, it is emphasised that a large-scale integrated plan that covers urban and urban areas is still needed as well as disaster plans, real estate assessment and housing market regulations. Lastly, prior challenges of rapid urbanization such as unemployment, migration issues, high housing demand, recycling and environmental problems are noted as the critical points to be solved.

Although having weak points, the country has still a number of opportunities that could be used as effective instruments to reach to the SDG 11 targets. In the SWOT analysis, the potential of the country’s urban areas to apply new projects, being in cooperation with the international organizations (EU, UN etc.) and having ongoing projects such as *Zero Waste*, *Sustainable Environmental Management Systems* and *Energy Efficiency* are noted as the valuable opportunities.

As the last point, threats facing the country were analysed. Therefore, rapid changes in the institutional system, including a poorly integrated regulative structure and setbacks in control mechanisms for the sustainable development are seen as the threats in the country (Alarslan, 2018).

To sum up, it is obvious that both the city and the country have experienced an enormous urbanization growth over the last decades, which is hard to tackle. However, the boost of the ongoing urban regeneration projects, using the potentials and strengths with sound policies and a comprehensive planning approach could help the city and the country to reach to the targets of SDG 11. Moreover, the country could make a step on environmental issues that are needed to be improved in order to provide more sustainable cities and communities not only for the country itself, but also for the rest of the world. This could be conducted via many serious climate-actions, such as signing the Paris Agreement and creating new environmentally-friendly policies that consider the global climate crisis.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the presented study, the current situations of the country's and the capital city Ankara's related to the three of the SDGs [No Poverty (SDG 1), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)] are elaborated with the help of the original study undertaken by Geoffrey Payne and the literature reviews. It is seen that the country and the city have improved their profiles in all the aspects over the last four decades and Ankara has become a successful representative for the country, considering its experiences in rapid urbanization that would be difficult for any city in the world.

As understood from the study, these three SDGs are closely related to each other and one may easily affect the opportunities to development the others. Even though the selected SDGs are presented under the different titles, the issues that boost the current situation of the SDGs in Ankara and the country could be very similar. For instance, the slums (*gecekondu*) emerged as a result of the migration from the rural areas to the city and it was accepted as a 'self-solution' of the newcomers. However, the issue is currently considered not only as an indicator of poverty and limited economic conditions, but also as an obstacle to sustain the city's urban development. Therefore, any improvements in the slum issue could affect the others positively.

According to the study, it is also seen that the city and the country need to have efficient regulation with a more holistic approach. It is obvious that the legislative regulations would be a key factor in order meeting the SDGs by 2030. As Payne (1977) stated in the original study, the approaches of the politicians should have been more objective to make the inhabitants feel free to discuss the issues with them. Therefore, sustainability of the policies could be provided for a longer time.

All in all, the developments of rapidly urbanized capital cities are considered as a reflection of the countries' potentials and the planning approaches. Therefore, it should be noted that better development in the country could be obtained with the coordination and the help of the successful applications in the cities with the support of the public.

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