

Ceren Berzenc, Turkey



Decentralization in Urban Planning: The Case of Istanbul, Turkey

The globalization process urges cities to be more competitive and integrated in the new world system. Today, nations as well as cities are represented in the global arena by their authorities, NGOs and other non-profit organizations. Influenced by the global trend, transparent administration, equal and easy access to knowledge, efficient procedures and sustainable development are understood as key factors to attain a better governance, a better environment and a better quality of life. Not only officials and experts, ordinary people are also aware of these concepts and they claim their rights referring to universal human rights. National and local unions are trying to create common values as well. Regional integration also plays a major role in the adoption of global values and concepts. For many countries, these “forced” changes - initiated by globalization - currently represent a major challenge. For instance, in the process of integration into the EU, Turkey is revising its legal structure in order to meet with the European requirements and the needs of its citizens.

The changing global, national and local frame conditions together with the current (global) concepts of good governance is also challenging and questioning traditional (urban) planning theory and practice to make better plans responding to future requirements. The ancient structure of the traditional urban planning process can not last longer: Local authorities need to have much more autonomy and power to cope with the problems and to create new solutions. In this regard, the study aims to identify how decentralization principles can be integrated in urban planning processes.

The literature review discusses the basic components of decentralization. The planning approach of the 21st century overlaps with these principles in many points. After defining the theoretical background of the subject, the situation in Istanbul has been studied in order to investigate the existence of decentralized structures in the current urban planning system. In this study, inquiries of the municipalities give the opportunity to better understand the obstacles to decentralized planning. Recommendations were given to overcome them.

Key words: Urban planning, decentralization, good governance, globalisation, Istanbul, Turkey.