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## **TURKEY'S NATIONAL STRATEGY ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT (2014-2023) AND A CRITICAL VIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CORRIDORS**

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## **NARODOWA STRATEGIA ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO TURCJI NA LATA 2014-2023 A KRYTYCZNE SPOJRZENIE NA KORYTARZE ROZWOJU**

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**Summary:** This paper draws attention to various critical issues on new development corridors introduced in Turkey's National Strategy on Regional Development for 2014-2023 (BGUS) in reference to the debate on functional and normative regions. The synthetic and normative treatment of development corridors in BGUS seems problematic in terms of the conceptualization of functional regions in a dynamic and realistic manner. The structural problems of development planning in Turkey since the 1950s signify the need for redefining development corridors as functional regions addressing the concerns of governance, functional linkages, core and hinterland interactions and the modifiable areal unit problem. What is suggested in this paper is that a holistic and multi-layer approach is more suitable for delineating the development corridors in Turkey rather than a threefold classification in BGUS (development, transportation and tourism corridors).

**Keywords:** Turkey, regional development strategies, development corridors, functional regions.

**Streszczenie:** W niniejszym artykule zwrócono uwagę na wiele istotnych kwestii dotyczących nowych korytarzy rozwojowych wprowadzonych w Tureckiej Narodowej Strategii Rozwoju Regionalnego na lata 2014-2023 (BGUS) w nawiązaniu do debaty na temat regionów funkcjonalnych i normatywnych. Syntetyczne i normatywne traktowanie korytarzy rozwojowych w BGUS wydaje się problematyczne pod względem conceptualizacji rozwoju regionów funkcjonalnych w sposób dynamiczny i realistyczny. Problemy strukturalne planowania rozwoju w Turcji od lat 50. XX wieku wskazują na potrzebę

ponownego zdefiniowania korytarzy rozwoju jako regionów funkcjonalnych, odpowiadających na problemy związane z zarządzaniem, powiązaniem funkcjonalnymi, interakcjami rdzeni ośrodków miejskich z ich strefami zewnętrznymi, a także na problemy związane z modyfikowalną jednostką powierzchniową. W niniejszym artykule zaproponowano holistyczne, wielowarstwowe podejście do wyznaczenia korytarzy rozwoju w Turcji, bardziej właściwe niż trzykrotna klasyfikacja zaproponowana w BGUS (korytarze rozwoju, transportu i turystyki).

**Słowa kluczowe:** Turcja, strategie rozwoju regionalnego, korytarze rozwoju, regiony funkcjonalne.

## 1. Introduction

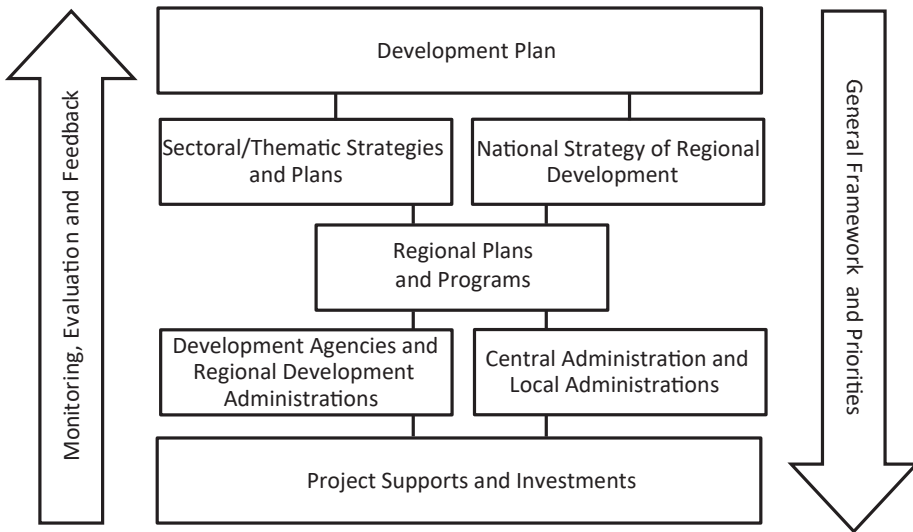
As a type of functional regions, development corridors are areas where the geographic proximity of industrial, commercial, technological and infrastructural investment and knowledge spillovers positively contribute to national and regional economies.

In Turkey, the territorial embeddedness of Istanbul and its agglomeration area can be traced back to the Ottoman period. The Eastern Marmara region situated in the hinterland of Istanbul became a development zone due to intensive industrial growth in the Republican Era of Turkey since 1923. The problems of development planning since the 1950s reveal the need for a critical approach on development corridors in Turkey. Here, the problem is that the notion of a corridor as a spatial unit is mainly defined in a synthetic and normative way instead of a functional and analytical one. The delineation problem of functional regions is most evident with respect to the spatial terminology on the development, transportation and tourism corridors used in Turkey's National Strategy on Regional Development for 2014-2023 (BGUS).

BGUS is a strategic document determining the scope of Turkey's regional development policy and it was introduced in 2014 by the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Development. BGUS has four core policy areas: the process of adaptation to the European Union, top-down regional development policy, new spatial planning tools and effective resource allocation. BGUS's approach on development corridors is mainly based on the synthesis of geographic, functional, historical and cultural aspects of regional reality in Turkey. Here, the structural problems of regional development in Turkey reveal a need for the delineation of functional regions in analytical terms [Özbek 2018, p. 95]. These problems are primarily associated with issues of demographic structure, uneven development, administration and recent spatial developments: rural to urban migration, embedded regional disparities and deficiencies of public administration and development problems involving issues of urban renewal, gentrification, urban poor, heavy manufacturing and infrastructure investment in the western part of Anatolia and the new macroeconomic policy orientation of Turkey since the early 1980s.

## 2. Turkey’s new national strategy on regional development

Since the 1950s, Turkey’s regional development policy has been characterized by “public investment” and “regional development projects” with a strong state incentive. The underdeveloped regions in the eastern part of Anatolia, regions with rich natural resources, metropolitan and agglomeration areas and development corridors were the priority implementation areas of this policy. The 1980s, the years of liberalization and deregulation, saw a re-orientation to a policy of development planning for assisted regions [Eraydın 2004, pp. 139-140]. Starting from the 2000s, a new macroeconomic approach, “neoliberalism with a regulatory state component” [Öniş, Şenses 2007, p. 16] shaped the strategic content of development policies in Turkey. The main aspects of this policy were the institutional restructuring and the efficient resource allocation in regional development policies. Turkey’s National Strategy on Regional Development for 2014-2023 (BGUS) addresses the policy concerns regarding this new era. Figure 1 illustrates the elements and their relations of Turkey’s regional development policy expressed in BGUS.



**Figure 1.** A new framework for Turkey’s regional development policy for the 2014-2023 period

Source: translated from [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, p. 141].

BGUS is methodologically based on strategic planning and has two strategic objectives: introducing regional development policies at national level and developing, planning and implementing these policies at regional and local levels. In that sense, BGUS aims at leading development agencies and local administrations in Turkey in determining alternative strategies for spatial planning. It is expected that this framework strategy will enable the adjustment of national, regional and

local development actors to the international programs and will enhance interaction between sectoral, thematic and regional policies. BGUS also emphasizes the role of a national development strategy in the process of adaptation to the European Union. Lastly, it is anticipated that BGUS will improve efficiency in resource allocation for regional development in Turkey [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, p. 2].

The objectives of the National Strategy on Regional Development are threefold: general objectives, objectives particular to settlement types and horizontal objectives (see Table 1). The four general objectives below are key for achieving the development vision of Turkey for 2023, “to create a socio-economically and spatially integrated and evenly developed Turkey through its competitive and prosperous regions”: to achieve an evenly distributed welfare by decreasing regional disparities, to contribute to national development by both activating development potentials and enhancing competitiveness in regions, to strengthen economic and social integration and to create a more balanced nationwide settlement structure [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, p. 99].

**Table 1.** Horizontal objectives in BGUS

1. To improve governance and institutional performance in regional development
2. To enable harmonization of public investments and support practices with regional development objectives
3. To enhance regional competitiveness
a. To promote investment opportunities and investment process
b. To improve entrepreneurial climate and culture
c. To improve production organization and industry clusters
d. To develop regional innovation strategies
e. To make use of tourism potential for local and regional development
f. To increase contributions of universities in their regions
4. To promote cross-border and inter-regional cooperation
5. To promote a sustainable environment and green economy
6. To improve the transport network and accessibility

Source: [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, p. 121].

One can see from Table 1 that the spatial terminology on development, transportation and corridors is most evident with respect to the horizontal objectives 3b (entrepreneurial climate), 3c (industry clusters) and 6 (transport network).

Three important tasks for an entrepreneurial climate are highlighted in BGUS: the creation of an entrepreneur-friendly ecosystem, the introduction of new business incubator models and a regional entrepreneurship index. One further area is Turkey’s industrial cluster policy. Here, establishing a “Cluster Steering Commission”

in a Regional Development Committee, promoting cluster-oriented organized industrial zones (OSB) and small industrial areas (KSS) to OSB conversion appear as key institutional and organizational tasks.

Transport networks and infrastructure are key for development corridors. In BGUS, integrating regional transportation to the national transportation backbone is seen as a precondition for creating new national development corridors in Turkey: improving logistics activities and inter-urban accessibility, establishing new rail connections and break-of-bulk points, connecting the principal ports to the national transport network and promoting new flight destinations [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, pp. 110-137].

### **3. A critical view of development corridors in BGUS**

The key characteristics of a functional region are summarized as functional relationship, hierarchy and complementarity between sub-regional units. On one level, functional regions can be identified by territorial embeddedness in transportation, production, socio-economic structure and historical geography [Özbek 2018, p. 96]. At this point, Prodromidis [2006] was concerned to show how “functional economies” defined by development corridors, transport routes, special economic regions and underdeveloped regions give a realistic portrait of regional development in comparison with administrative and symbolic regions. Typical examples of functional regions are transportation corridors, micro regions, underdeveloped regions and areas exposed to migration. Here, a regional delineation based on the spatial distribution of income and wealth is of utmost importance in the evaluation of regional economic performance [Prodromidis 2006].

The concept and classification of development corridors in BGUS reveals the priorities of a regional development policy in Turkey. BGUS conceptualizes three types of regional corridors: development corridors, transportation corridors and tourism corridors.

First, the three development corridors will be created, primarily facilitating integration between the eastern and western regions in Turkey and building bridges with foreign countries: the north-eastern (Ankara–Samsun–Artvin), the eastern (Ankara–Sivas–Erzurum–Van) and the south-eastern (Adana–Gaziantep–Şanlıurfa–Şırnak) development corridors. It is expected that these corridors will play a major role in improving international trade opportunities for the eastern and southeastern Anatolia regions. Transport links between settlements in these priority development regions and major ports, metropolises and tourism areas in Turkey will be strengthened [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, p. 136].

Second, the metropolitan centers along the Istanbul–Ankara transportation corridor will be connected to neighbouring tourist regions via high-quality railways. The transit rail connections between northeastern and southeastern Anatolia will

be developed. Making Ankara a transit center for high-speed railway lines, transit connections between the main metropolitan centers in Turkey will be prioritized. The principal ports of Turkey such as Çandarlı in Izmir (the northern Aegean hinterland) and Filyos in Zonguldak (the western Black Sea hinterland) will be integrated into the national transport network [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, pp. 136-137].

Third, new tourism corridors and special tourism areas will be created for thematic tourism development. Here, tourism corridors include the flatland tourism development belt, the winter tourism development corridor and centers, the olive corridor, the religious tourism corridor, the Silk Road tourism corridor, the Western Black Sea coastal corridor and the Thracian culture corridor. Special tourism areas proposed by BGUS are culture tourism destinations and development zones, tourism cities, eco-tourism zones, congress tourism, expo tourism, medical and thermal tourism and sea tourism [Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development 2014, pp. 132-133].

The thematic classification of tourism areas neglects the social, political and economic realities creating a growth pattern for urban and rural development in Turkey. New socio-spatial processes in tourism areas like urban renewal and gentrification stemmed from intensive tourism investment and capital accumulation since the introduction of Tourism Promotion Law in 1982 necessitate the formation of functional tourism regions through the synthesis of additional socio-economic layers (analytical maps). Another important point is that the multiplicity of strategic documents for national and regional tourism development in Turkey undermines the strategic power of BGUS as a strategic framework. For example, in addition to the national tourism strategies of central government institutions (ministries and governorships) in Turkey, local government units and development agencies develop their own tourism strategies. Here, a multi-layer approach is required for delineating functional regions rather than an idiosyncratic treatment of geographic, administrative, cultural and historical regions for each tourism corridor and tourism area. This approach is another expression of the boundary and modifiable areal unit problem (the distortion effect of statistical bias in the delineation of spatial units) in spatial analysis [Özbek 2018, p. 97]. In particular, the fragmented administration of regional areas based on the Turkish public administration system (inclusive governorship system) brings a statistical-geographic bias in the delineation of special development areas (corridors, agglomerations and clusters) in Turkey.

In conclusion, BGUS's approach on development, transportation and tourism corridors are mainly based on the synthesis of geographic, historical and cultural aspects (layers) of regional reality. However, this synthetic approach does not take into consideration the alternative realities of a regional area like functional regions [Özbek 2018, p. 97]. A thematic and sectoral classification of development corridors in BGUS neglects to address the structural problems of development planning in Turkey. This strategic approach also fails to take into account the implications of

functional regions, functional links, strategic governance, core-periphery interaction and the modifiable areal unit problem.

#### 4. Conclusion

In Turkey, the conceptualization of development corridors appears to be problematic in terms of sectoral functional linkages and strategic governance. In the latest national development strategy of Turkey (BGUS), the threefold classification of corridors (development, transportation and tourism) does not clarify the issue of what constitutes a development corridor in functional terms. The second question is how to formulate a development strategy in a development corridor defined in a normative way (the provincial system of administration). Here, a discussion of how development corridors can be used as a policy tool for development planning is expected to focus on the debate on the functional and normative regions.

The problem of delineating regions in Turkey since the Planned Era (after 1963) signifies the need for forming new functional regions. The spatial terminology on development planning used in Turkey's National Strategy on Regional Development for 2014-2023 reveals the fact that a multi-layer approach is key for delineating functional regions. This multi-layer approach means a holistic delineation of corridors as special development zones. In addition, the simplification of the institutional structure (spatial planning system and administrative bureaucracy) in Turkey can positively contribute to the implementation efficiency of regional development strategies.

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