

Spatial planning system in Turkey

Focus on tourism destinations


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Country profile

Turkey, officially the Republic of Turkey, is a transcontinental country located in Europe and Asia. It is surrounded by eight countries and three seas. It has borders with Greece and Bulgaria to the northwest; Georgia to the northeast; Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran to the east; Iraq to the southeast; and Syria to the south. There is the Black Sea in the north; the Aegean Sea to the west; and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Its size is 783,562 km². With this size, it is the 36th biggest country in the world. Its population is 84.7 million people¹ which makes Turkey the 18th most populated country in the year 2021 (World Population Review, 2022). Ankara is the capital city with a provincial population of approximately 5.7 million people. However, the economic centre of the country is İstanbul with a population of approximately 15.8 million people (TURKSTAT, 2022a).

¹ Turkey hosts approximately 5.5 million immigrants, the largest group of which is the Syrians under temporary protection with a population of 3,561,833 people (08.12.2022) (PoMM, 2022).

Table 1. General country information

Name of country	Republic of Turkey
Capital, population of the capital (TURKSTAT, 2022a)	Ankara
	4,853,936 (2021 – metropolitan area)
	5,747,325 (2021 – province)
Surface area	783,562 km ²
Total population (TURKSTAT, 2022a)	84,680,273 (2021 address-based population registration system)
Population density	110 inhabitants/km ² (2021)
Population growth rate	1.27% (2021); 0.55% (2020); 1.39% (2019); 1.47% (2018)
Degree of urbanisation* (TURKSTAT, 2022a)	93.2% (2021); 93.0% (2020)
Human development index (UNDP, 2022)	0.838 (2021)
GDP (The World Bank, 2022a)	815,27 billion USD (2021)
GDP per capita (The World Bank, 2022b)	9,586.6 USD (2021)
GDP growth (The World Bank, 2022c)	11.0% (2021); 1.8% (2020); 0.9% (2019); 7.5% (2018)
Unemployment rate (The World Bank, 2022d)	13.4% (2021); 13.1% (2020); 13.7% (2019); 10.9% (2018)
Land use (ESA, 2021)	71.52% forests, scrublands, grasslands, wetlands
	25.18% agricultural land
	1.68% inland waters
	1.62% built-up land
Sectoral structure (TURKSTAT, 2022b)	55.3% services and administration (2021)
	27.5% industry and construction (2021)
	17.2% agriculture (2021)

* Villages within the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities are officially categorized as rural neighbourhoods. Although these villages are functionally rural settlements, their populations are considered within the urban populations. Therefore, the degree of urbanisation in Turkey seems quite high.

Source: own elaboration based on data from given references.

“The organization and functions of the administration are based on the principles of centralization and decentralization” (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, article 123). There is a three-tier administrative division in Turkey: provinces, sub-provinces, and villages. It has 81 provinces, 922 sub-provinces,

and 18,288 villages by the year 2022 (MoIA, 2022). These administrative units are "...de-concentrated but centrally appointed (by the central government) branches disseminated on the territory" (CoR, n.d.).

Along with these administrative units, there is a municipal system based on elections. Municipalities are mainly responsible for managing urban development and providing their residents with statutory basic services such as provision of social services and technical infrastructure, management of urban transportation, and public health. The municipal organization has two levels based on urban population. The first level is the metropolitan municipalities of larger cities where the urban population is higher than 750,000 people. The second level covers provincial municipalities for small and midsize cities. Having the same responsibilities assigned, the basic difference is on their responsibility boundaries. The purview of metropolitan municipalities covers the whole province, whereas provincial municipalities have territorial control only in municipal boundaries. Since the territorial control of provincial municipalities does not cover the whole province, there are also special provincial administrations directed by the governorship in such provinces. These administrations are mainly responsible for technical infrastructure and transportation investments in rural areas outside the territorial control of municipalities. In the year 2022, there are 30 metropolitan municipalities (Figure 1), under these, 519 metropolitan district municipalities. There are 51 provincial municipalities, and under these, 403 district municipalities and 388 small-scale town municipalities (MoIA, 2022).

Turkey is one of the members of the Group of Twenty (G20) countries (G20, n.d.). Despite the gradual decrease since 2013, Turkey has a relatively high gross domestic product (GDP) (The World Bank, 2021). The considerable increase in GDP has started in the year 1980, where there was a paradigm change for industrialization, growth, and development policies. Instead of import substitution, export promotion was chosen as the main policy for economic growth and development (Karluk & Küçüksakarya, 2016). It is the result of the Stabilization Decisions of January 24th, 1980, which was a political declaration of the apparent intention for the neoliberal transformation of the Turkish economy (Kolsuz & Yeldan, 2014). The major goals of these measures were to integrate the Turkish economy with the global economy, reduce state intervention in the economy, follow the rules of market economy, and validate pricing methods. Between the years 1980–1998, the main economic sector was the industry, especially the textile industry, while agriculture has been losing its importance in the macroeconomic dimension (Yılmaz et al., 2007). There have been numerous public investments in communication, transportation, and energy (Aktan, 1999 cited in Erdoğan, 2017) all of which were considered as key factors to increase the production capacity and the export levels in industry. After the year 1998, service and construction activities have become more important than the industry. Tourism has considered as one of the most important service activities in this period. The infrastructure investments during this period, especially the transportation investments, were mainly for increasing the accessibility of tourism destinations.

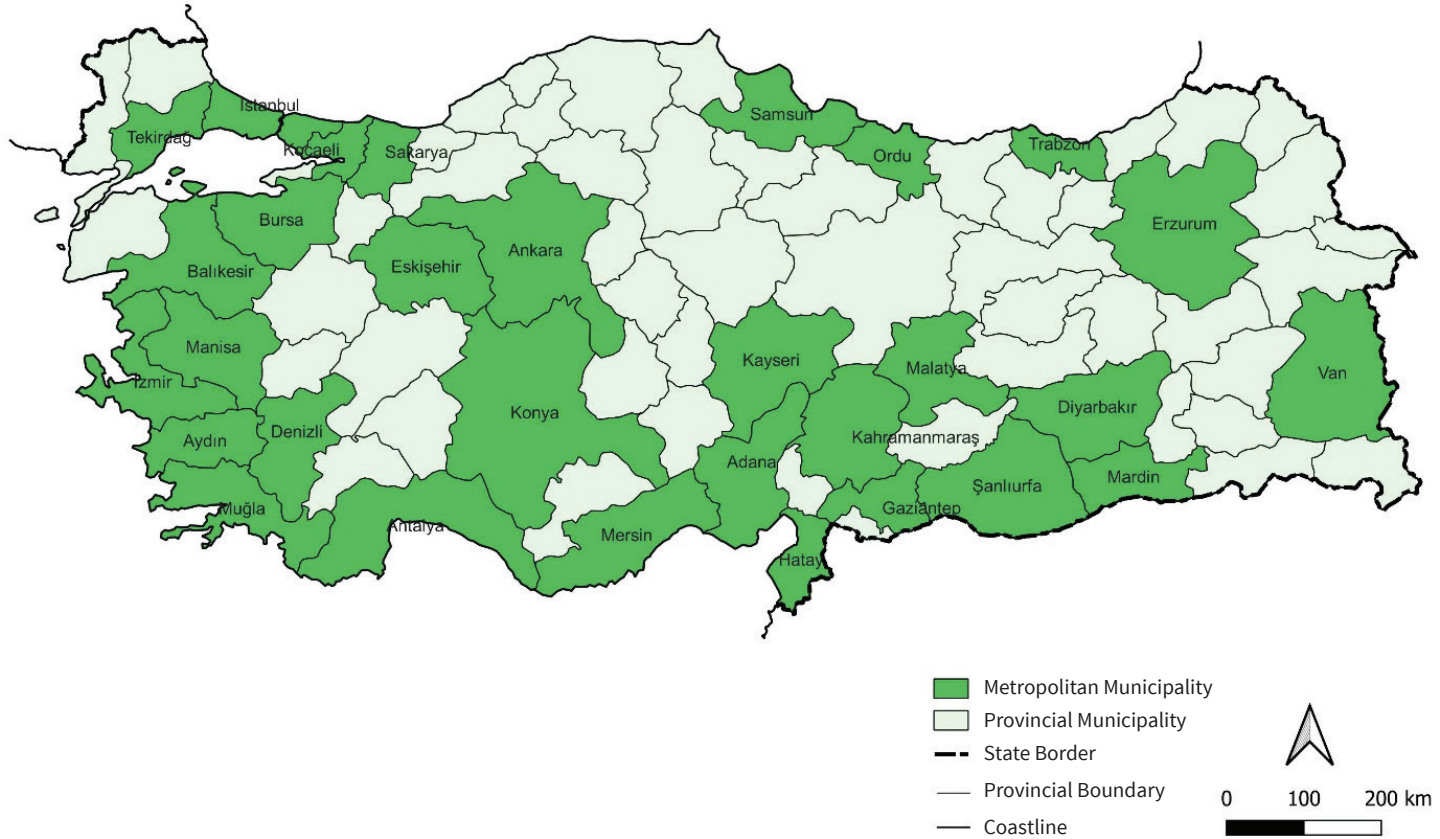


Figure 1. Provincial administrative division of Turkey and the distribution of metropolitan municipalities, 2022

Source: own elaboration based on data from MoIA, 2022.

Such substantial changes in macroeconomic structure must be accompanied by political and legislative transformations, as they appear to be essential for preparing the spatial context of the new economic order and enabling it to function at all spatial scales. The most critical dimension of the political transformation was the decentralization of the public authority, from central level to local level (Eroğlu & Tunç, 2018). Based on subsidiarity idea, it increased the municipal control on land and resulted in a new kind of spatial development in Turkey. Additionally, privatization has resulted in shrinkage of central functions which is quite logical while the nation-state had been losing its financial resources (Yayman, 2000). The legislative transformation has been applied on two dimensions. In the first dimension, there were Law no. 3194 on Spatial Development and Law no. 2981 on Planning Amnesty directly organizing urban development mainly under the control of municipalities. On the other dimension, there were laws such as Law no. 3621 on Coastal Zones, the Law no. on Forest Areas, and Law no. 2634 on Tourism Incentives proposing new ways of spatial development outside the urban areas. With reference to these laws, not only ports, industrial parks, university campuses, mine sites but also tourism investments along the coastal lines and in the forest areas became easily possible.

Turkey was relatively late to develop its tourism industry compared to other destinations in the Mediterranean region. There were minor initiatives mostly envisaged by the public sector as early as the 1960s to benefit from the economic, social, and cultural impact of tourism, yet systematic attempts were conducted to enhance the tourism industry by the enforcement of Law no. 2634 on Tourism Incentives in 1982. The private sector investments were brought to the fore with incentives provided by this Law such as allocation of public lands for private tourism investors, short-, medium-, and long-term supports for construction and operation, and provision of technical infrastructure by the State (Demir, 2004).

Tourism has become a major economic activity for Turkey by the early 1990s, during which more than 5 million tourists have visited Turkey (Yozcu & Gurel, 2019). After the 2000s, the emphasis on diversification of tourism supply and increasing the quality issues has become increasingly apparent. Total number of tourists has increased ten-fold in almost thirty years and reached 52 million visitors in 2019 (TURKSTAT, 2022c). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing economic sectors in Turkey (OECD, 2020). Indicated in OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020 Report, in the year 2018;

- the number of employment in tourism was 2.2 million people, which was 7.7 % of total employment;
- total tourism income represented 3.8 % of GDP;
- Turkey attracted 45.6 million foreign visitors, mostly from Russia, Germany, Bulgaria, United Kingdom and Georgia as top markets for inbound tourism;
- domestic tourism was 126.4 million trips (OECD, 2020).

Turkey was the 6th most visited country in the world in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020) and obtained 38.9 billion dollars from the tourists who have visited the

country (TURKSTAT, 2022c). Although these numbers seem quite high and there observed an increase on annual base, it is difficult to claim that there has been a steady increase in tourism numbers (Table 2). Due to the vulnerability of tourism sector to political issues, significant fluctuations between the years 2015 and 2018 have been observed, and a sharp decrease in 2020 was inevitable due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Table 2. Annual tourism income, number of tourists, and average expenditure per capita

Year	Annual Tourism Income (1,000 \$)	Annual Number of Tourists	Average Expenditure per Capita (\$)
2012	29,689,249	36,463,921	814
2013	33,073,502	39,226,226	843
2014	35,137,949	41,415,070	848
2015	32,494,212	41,617,530	781
2016	22,839,468	31,365,330	728
2017	27,044,542	38,620,346	700
2018	30,545,924	45,628,673	669
2019	38,930,474	51,860,042	751
2020	14,817,273	15,826,266	936
2021	30,173,587	29,357,463	1,028

Source: own elaboration based on data from TURKSTAT, 2022c.

This tremendous growth in the visitor numbers and income on annual basis has caused major problems, especially in specific tourism destinations, resulting in heavy traffic problems, air and noise pollution, aggressive construction investments, and incompatible land uses (İçöz et al., 2009). Some of the most populated tourism destinations in Turkey are highlighted in Figure 2. Antalya, Muğla and Nevşehir have the highest tourist densities regarding the provincial population. In 2018, there were approximately 11.2 million tourists visited Antalya compared to the provincial population of 2.4 million people; approximately 2.2 million visitors to Muğla, compared to its slightly less than 1 million people as the provincial population; and approximately 615 thousand tourists visited Nevşehir compared to the provincial population of almost 300 thousands people.

Current trends indicate that Turkey's tourism industry will continue to expand in the near future. However, the Covid-19 pandemic changed all the previous predictions dramatically. Even though the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has foreseen a very strong growth in the global tourism market and expected the international travel to reach a record number of 1.8 billion people by the year 2030 (UN, 2017), it would be extremely difficult to regain the previous high levels of international travels, which would also affect the number of visitors to Turkey.

Turkey would like to increase its share from global tourism income by offering diverse opportunities to international markets alongside the sea, sun and sand. Consequently, Turkey has taken significant steps toward alternative tourism investments, including health tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism, and congress tourism.

Being the crossroad of civilizations and hosting the traces of more than 3,000 ancient cities makes Turkey one of the most desired destinations to visit for all the travellers. The exploration of *Göbeklitepe* for example, which is widely regarded as the zero-point of history by the scholars, has triggered a very strong touristic demand to the South-eastern Anatolia and stimulated new tourism investments in the region. In fact, the growth of the tourism industry in Turkey has been resulted in rapid development of tourism infrastructure including thousands of hotels in the country. The tourism infrastructure in Turkey is relatively developed (Table 3). Total touristic hotel bed capacity, which was 250,000 in 1990 all over the country, has reached to more than 1.8 million in 2021 (MoCT, 2021a; MoCT, 2021b).

Table 3. Ministry and municipality licenced tourism accommodation establishments in Turkey, 2021

		Number of Facilities	Number of Rooms	Number of Beds
Ministry Licenced Tourism Establishments	Operation Licence	4,801	508,511	1,065,537
	Investment Licence	585	64,002	139,703
Municipality Licenced Tourism Establishments		9,445	276,150	620,349
TOTAL		14,831	848,663	1,825,589

Source: own elaboration based on data from MoCT, 2021a and MoCT, 2021b.

Legal regulations of spatial planning

Spatial Planning System in Turkey

The Turkish planning hierarchy consists of six basic spatial plan categories for different scales (Figure 3). On top of the hierarchy, there are national development plans prepared by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget of the Presidency of the Turkish Republic, through coordination with other ministries. These plans depend on the Law no. 3067 on the Enforcement of the National Development Plans and

the Preservation of their Integrity. National development plans are prepared over a period of five years. The basic aim of these plans is to achieve a long term growth and development concerning the basic dimensions of the society such as economy, health, education, transportation, social security, and justice. These plans analyse existing situations, determine development targets and contain all the principles and tools in order to reach these targets (Büyükşalvarcı et al., 2016). By referring to all these components of the planning process, they set the priorities for the public policy. Moreover, they have strong influences on the private sector as they determine economic sectors to be supported by subsidies and to be developed in the future (Takım, 2011). Although they have emphasis on public and private sectors, they do not propose any location for the development, which makes the spatial dimension of these plans relatively limited.

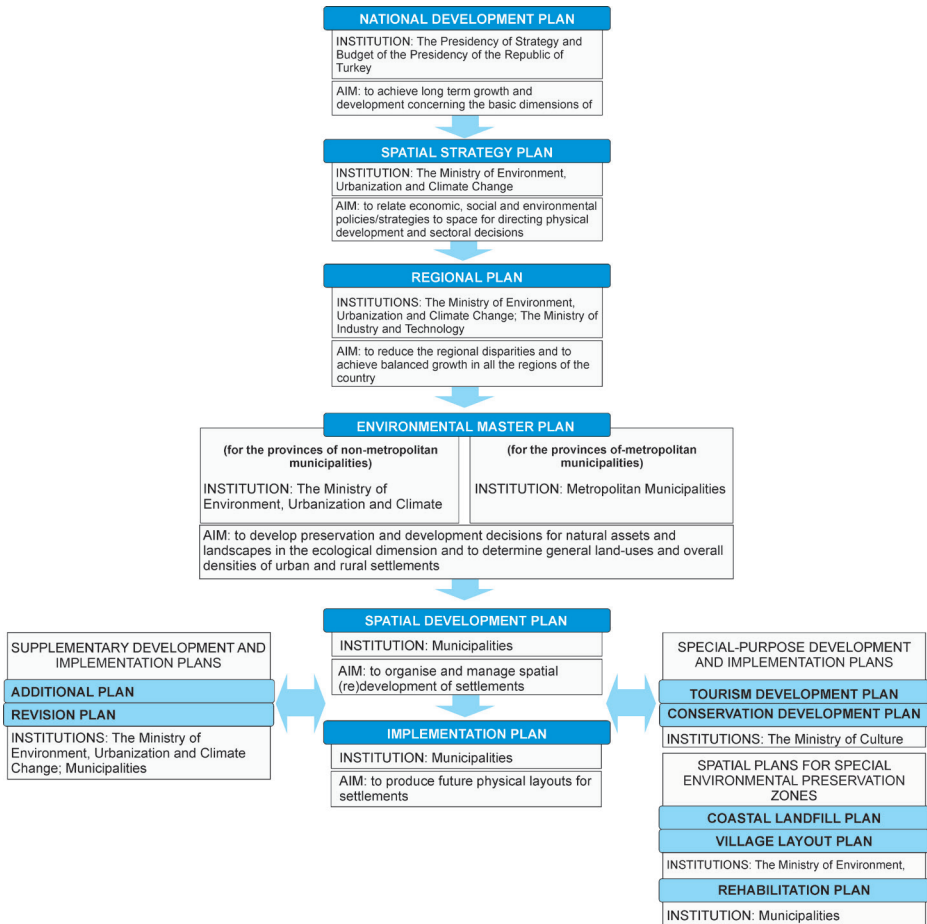


Figure 3. Spatial planning system in Turkey
Source: own elaboration.

The national development plan in effect is the Eleventh Development Plan (2019–2023) which was prepared in a context where international collaboration and cooperation is developed and the level of uncertainty is increased. The two basic strategic targets of the Eleventh Development Plan are to develop human capital through the improvements in education and to increase innovation capacity through the national technological improvements (PoSB, 2019). These strategic targets are considered as the key factors of the main course of the action for the long term national development.

The main focus of the Eleventh Development Plan is to increase the competitive advantages and the level of efficiency in most of the economic sectors, but mainly manufacturing industry, agriculture, tourism, and defence industry (PoSB, 2019). The quantitative growth in the tourism industry has been one of the basic priorities of the central governments within the last decades. Concurrently, the Eleventh Development Plan intends to increase the share of the tourism industry in the national economy (PoSB, 2019). The strategic aims within this context are the introduction of new tourism types and the increase in the quality of tourism services, which could have positive impacts on the number of high-income visitors, the duration of their visits, and non-accommodational expenditures (PoSB, 2019).

Spatial strategy plans, that were introduced by the Presidential Decree no. 644 enacted in 2011, are in the second rank of the planning hierarchy following the national development plans (MoEUCC, n.d.). Spatial strategy plans are prepared by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change to relate economic, social and environmental policies/strategies of the national development plans with the space so that they could direct physical development and sectoral decisions all over the country or in certain regions where there appears a necessity (Taşmektepligil & Polat, 2021). These plans are abstract and schematic; yet their reports include detailed descriptions of national strategies of spatial development.

Defined by the Law no. 3194 on of Spatial Development, regional plans follow both the national development plans and the spatial strategy plans in the planning hierarchy. Regional plans stand at the intermediary level between social/economic and physical/spatial plans. There are two responsible public institutions preparing/proposing regional plans: the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and the Ministry of Industry and Technology. Despite the unclear division of labour between these two ministries, they are expected to produce regional plans in coordination and cooperation. The basic aims of these plans are to reduce the regional disparities and to achieve a balanced growth in all regions of the country (Tutar & Öztürk, 2003). They mainly translate national policies, plans, and strategies to local demands and actions on a spatial basis to create a local capacity where local resources and the potentials could be used in a sustainable way. In other words, they reconsider the economic/sectoral decisions of the national development plans within a regional spatial organization. Regional plans do not only concentrate on the determination of the optimum location of public

or private investments through a scenario, but also consider direct and indirect socio-spatial impacts of these investments.

Regional plans propose various strategic aims some of which are understanding socio-economic and physical conditions of regions, evaluating local dynamics and internal potentials, increasing participation and collaboration, promoting local development, rehabilitating the quality of life conditions, integrating development plans and environmental master plans in a coherent way, developing a collective regional vision, providing suitable conditions for raising competitive advantages of the region, and guiding the actors and stakeholders by reaching the future targets (Law no. 3194, article 8).

As the fourth category in the planning hierarchy, environmental master plans are upper scale spatial plans prepared in 1:50,000 and 1:100,000 scales depending on the size of the planning boundary. These plans have to follow the policies, strategies, and planning decisions already proposed by the national development plans, spatial strategy plans and regional plans; yet, they should also consider the local/regional dynamics within the framework of sustainable development (Law no. 3194, article 5). There are two institutions having the right to produce environmental master plans: the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, and the metropolitan municipalities. The environmental master plans in regional scale and/or for non-metropolitan cities are produced by the Ministry, whereas for metropolitan cities, the plan is produced by metropolitan municipalities by considering the provincial boundaries (Presidential Decree no. 1, article 102).

There are two basic dimensions of environmental master plans: the ecological and the economic dimensions. In the ecological dimension, these plans develop preservation and development decisions for natural assets and landscapes such as forests, agricultural lands, water resources, and coastal zones, which might be critical for the continuation of ecological balance and the ecosystem permanence. The preventive strategies and policies for different types of pollution should also be considered in this dimension. In the economic dimension, the main decisions are the general land-uses and the overall densities for single cities or a group of cities by concerning also their rural surroundings. With the general land-use and transportation decisions represented by a schematic/conceptual graphic language, they guide the spatial development plans and implementation plans in lower scales (Regulation on the Preparation of Spatial Plans, articles 19–21).

The next plan category in the Turkish planning hierarchy includes the spatial development plans defined in the Law no. 3194 on Spatial Development. These plans are mainly produced to organize and manage the spatial (re)development of the cities. They decide the direction and the size of urban growth along with the future land-uses, densities, transportation and infrastructures (Law no. 3194, article 5). The planning process of spatial development plans is under the control of municipalities. Therefore, they could be considered as local level spatial plans.

The implementation plans as the last category in the planning hierarchy could also be considered as local level spatial plans prepared by the municipalities. Similar to the spatial development plans, the content of these plans is defined by Law no. 3194 on Spatial Development. Following the strategic and spatial planning decisions of spatial development plans, they tend to produce concrete and detailed spatial decisions for the future physical layouts for the settlements. These plans are produced at 1:1,000 scale. In relation to their scale, the decisions of these plans are mainly on urban blocks, their densities and configurations, and the street network. They also present the implementation stages as the basis of development programs for implementation (Regulation on the Preparation of Spatial Plans, section 7).

Besides these basic types of plans, there are two sets of spatial plans in relation to spatial development and implementation plans. The first set of spatial plans includes supplementary development and implementation plans, namely additional plans and revision plans (Regulation on the Preparation of Spatial Plans, articles 25–26). Additional plans are proposed when the existing spatial plans become insufficient to contain new developments. They extend the planning boundaries of existing plans harmoniously. As the name implies, revision plans focus on the modification of the existing planning decisions. The second set contains special-purpose spatial plans for specific contents or settlements either urban or rural. Two of these special-purpose plans, namely tourism development plans and conservation development plans, are under the control and guidance of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Tourism development plans are spatial plans for both culture and tourism conservation and development zones and tourism centres (Regulation on the Planning and Implementation of Culture and Tourism Conservation and Development Zones and Tourism Centres, article 4) and conservation development plans are prepared for designated cultural and natural heritage areas (Regulation on the Preparation of Spatial Plans, article 25). Additionally, there are three types of special-purpose spatial plans under the control and guidance of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Spatial plans for special environmental preservation zones are prepared for ecologically sensitive areas (Statutory Decree no. 648). Coastal landfill plans develop planning decisions for coastal landfill areas as interfaces between urban settlements and seas (Official Statement, 2011). Village layout plans aim to organize spatial development in villages (Regulation on the Implementations in Village Settlement Area, article 5). Lastly, rehabilitation plans are prepared for informal built-up areas such as squatter areas and/or the areas developed with shared title deeds (Law no. 2981).

Tourism Planning in Turkey

Tourism planning has a long history in Turkey. Since the 1960s, the country has been trying to develop its suitable destinations as hot tourism spots. At the centre of these efforts, there is the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as the public authority in charge

of tourism and travel activities and responsible for scrutinizing the effectiveness of private sector. The Ministry is appointed the role of a higher supervisory body that sets out, plans and coordinates standards applicable to local and professional organizations, devised with a sound mechanism of inspection and supervision. Aiming to increase the rate of involvement and functionalities, local governments are strengthened in their current structures as project operator. All spatial plans, strategies and actions that are related to the tourism industry are governed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The Ministry determines, declares and plans tourism areas at urban and regional levels.

Historically tourism planning activities started during the 1960s when Turkey has initiated a planning era for regulating economic life in 1963 (Yolal, 2016). Tourism was considered as a subsector in the national development plans with objectives to utilize tourism potentials to obtain tourism income, to provide tourism infrastructure for visitors and to maintain a balance between preservation and development in and around tourism destinations (Tarhan, 1999). In this period, the tourism policy was designed to promote an efficient tourism sector with a high international competitive advantage for fulfilling the expectations of domestic and international tourists, to obtain a balanced economic and spatial development considering the preservation of natural and cultural assets, and to invest and improve spatial and social tourism infrastructure for local communities (Tavmergen & Oral, 1999). Aiming to realize these tourism policies, mass tourism and coastal tourism activities were promoted through large-scale investments in tourism regions. In 1960, the Council of Ministers has identified ten tourism regions, which was reduced to eight in 1973. The main criterion for establishing tourism regions is the potential to attract maximum numbers of tourists for higher sectoral income (Tosun & Jenkins, 1996). Based on the Law no. 2634 on Tourism Incentives, 'tourism zones' and 'tourism centres' were identified. Tourism zones are appointed as the places with high priority for tourism development in tourism regions, whereas tourism centres are defined as specific locations in or out of tourism regions and zones. Tourism centres having the highest priority in terms of tourism development are supposed to be kept strictly under control. Tourism centres and zones were determined by the Council of Ministers by considering suggestions of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture. Later in 2003, tourism regions were revoked, and together with tourism zones, these areas are renamed as culture and tourism conservation and development zones by the amendment in Law no. 2634. The responsibility of preparing spatial plans for these culture and tourism conservation and development zones and tourism centres is appointed to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. By the year 2022, there are 60 culture and tourism conservation and development zones and 173 tourism centres identified and approved by the Ministry in compliance with the Law no. 2634 (MoCT, 2022).

The Ministry has been tasked with the protection, perseverance and promotion of Turkish culture and tourism, the establishment of related policies and the

administration of all tourism related activities in Turkey. For Turkey as a destination, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism acts as the Destination Management Organisation with its legal regulations and applications. The Ministry is actively participating in almost all the international tourism fairs in the most important markets for Turkey including Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria, Iran, and Ukraine. The Ministry acts as the sole controller of the hotels and similar accommodation facilities and closely monitor them to ensure service quality. And recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry acted as the major entity to organise and control safety measures of the accommodation facilities.

As an effort aiming to provide extensions to management and implementation of strategic planning efforts and to boost the cooperation between public and private sectors of tourism with reference to the principle of governance, “Tourism Strategy of Turkey – 2023 and Activity Plan for Tourism Strategy of Turkey 2007–2013” has been put into force after its publication in the Official Gazette no. 26450 dated on 02.03.2007 (MoCT, 2007). Aiming to coordinate the tourism activities and to guide the tourism and travel industry at production, management and implementation phases, the Ministry acted as the coordinator among all the stakeholders with a participatory planning perspective. The Tourism Strategy Plan was prepared in line with the objectives of the Ninth Development Plan (2007–2013) which has indicated that a tourism industry master plan shall be drafted down to ensure sustainable and healthy development of the tourism industry (SPO, 2006).

The vision of the Tourism Strategy Plan is set as “with the adaptation of sustainable tourism approach tourism and industry will be brought to a leading position for leveraging rates of employment and regional development and it will be ensured that Turkey becomes a world brand in tourism and a major destination in the list of the top five countries receiving the highest number of tourist and highest tourism revenues by 2023” (MoCT, 2007, p. 4). Key actions to realize the vision are listed as (MoCT, 2007, pp. 5–6);

- eliminating the interregional differences;
- increasing the competitiveness through creating regional tourism brands;
- reconsidering and planning the existing tourism sites with sustainability perspective;
- supporting tourism development with sustainable environmental policies;
- strengthening international cooperation;
- extending the season throughout the year by diversifying tourism products;
- promoting tourism and raising awareness in public, private companies and NGOs especially on ecotourism, mountain and agricultural tourism;
- making both domestic and international promotions and marketing efforts effective;
- ensuring integration of various tourism types specific to region or locality;

- using tourism as an effective tool for fostering social and economic development;
- ensuring coordination between central and local governments;
- ensuring governance mechanism in which central and local governments and civil actors can collaborate and cooperate in decision-making processes;
- enhancing labour quality;
- focusing on infrastructure related or environmental problems occurring at locations where tourism activities get denser.

Other than internationally recognized coastal tourism infrastructure and capacity, Turkey has several unique opportunities for different types of tourism compiled under the category of alternative tourism which includes health and thermal tourism, sports tourism, adventure tourism, mountain tourism, ecotourism, conference and expo tourism, cruise tourism and yachting, golf tourism. Recognizing that the actual potential of alternative tourism has been underused, the Tourism Strategy Plan collectively targets wiser use of natural, cultural, historical and geographical assets of Turkey with a balanced perspective addressing both conservation and utilization in an equitable sense and hence leveraging the share of the country from global tourism industry (MoCT, 2007).

The Tourism Strategy Plan indicates specific locations as tourism corridors, cities and ecotourism areas alongside the development corridors rather than planning them on a plot scale, and promotes these assets and determines the criteria applicable to their utilization. Besides, the Tourism Strategy Plan proposes specific policies for the rehabilitation of regions which have been inversely affected by previous particularistic approaches promoted mass tourism applications resulted in specific problems, such as mass tourism concentration along Mediterranean and Aegean Coastlines, distorted urban development and construction activities in back-shore and adjacent areas, and deficient infrastructure and environmental problems (MoCT, 2007). Aiming to convert this adverse structure into a positive, sustainable one, an integrated policy and strategy has been set within the scope of the Tourism Strategy Plan that proposes a variety of long term strategies in the realms of planning, investment, organization, research and development, education promotion, branding, and marketing in order to strengthen transportation and infrastructure, diversify tourism products, and reorganise existing tourism areas and develop the destinations.

The Tourism Strategy Plan developed objectives for different tourism types, namely health and thermal tourism, winter tourism, golf tourism, sea tourism, ecotourism, congress and expo tourism. The Plan also sets strategies and objectives for regions which require rehabilitation efforts from negative impacts of mass tourism, especially in the coastal regions of Antalya, Muğla and Aydın provinces where mass tourism has reached a saturation level. The Plan proposes tourism development zones and thematic regional destinations, along predetermined development axes as listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Main strategies and tourism types in the Tourism Strategy of Turkey – 2023

Strategy	Tourism Type	Location
1	2	3
To manage branding of cities rich of cultural and natural heritage and thereby convert them into a point of attraction for travellers	City tourism	Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Antalya
	Culture tourism	Adıyaman, Amasya, Bursa, Edirne, Gaziantep, Hatay, Konya, Kütahya, Manisa, Nevşehir, Kars, Mardin, Sivas, Şanlıurfa, Trabzon
To develop means for alternative tourism types led particularly by health, thermal, winter, golf, sea tourism, ecotourism and plateau tourism, conference and expo tourism activities.	Health tourism and thermal tourism	Balıkesir, Çanakkale, Yalova, Aydın, Denizli, Manisa, İzmir, Afyonkarahisar, Ankara, Uşak, Eskişehir, Kütahya, Aksaray, Kırşehir, Niğde, Nevşehir, Yozgat
	Winter tourism	–
	Golf tourism	–
	Sea tourism	Trabzon, Kuşadası, Samsun, İzmir, Antalya, Mersin, İstanbul
	Ecotourism	–
	Conference and expo tourism	İstanbul, Ankara, Antalya, İzmir, Konya, Bursa, Mersin, Adana, Gaziantep, Trabzon
To use tourism as a key tool for local and regional development in tourism development areas encompassing more than one cities to be transformed into destinations <i>9 Tourism Development Zones</i>	PHRYG Culture and Thermal Tourism Zone	Eskişehir, Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya, Uşak
	TROY Culture and Thermal Tourism Development Zone	Çanakkale, Balıkesir
	APHRODISIA Culture and Thermal Tourism Development Zone	Aydın, Denizli
	SÖĞÜT Culture Tourism Development Zone	Bursa, İznik, Bilecik
	CAPPADOCIA Culture Tourism Development Zone	Aksaray, Kayseri, Kırşehir, Nevşehir
	TERRA MERE Ecotourism Development Zone	Konya, Isparta, Ayfon, Burdur
	HITTITE Culture Tourism Development Zone	Çorum, Yozgat
	URARTU Culture Tourism Development Zone	Van, Bitlis
	GAP Culture Tourism Development Zone	Adıyaman, Batman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kilis, Mardin, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak

Table 4 (cont.)

1	2	3
<p>To develop a certain route for tourism on definite themes, by rehabilitating historical and natural texture <i>7 Tourism Development Corridors</i></p>	Olive Corridor of South Marmara – health and gastronomy tourism	Gemlik and Mudanya Districts (Bursa), Gönen, Bandırma and Erdek Districts (Balıkesir), Coastline towards Ezine District (Çanakkale), Kapıdağ Peninsula, Dardanelles and Avşa, Paşalimanı and Ekinli Isles and Marmara Isle
	Winter Corridor – winter tourism	Erzincan, Erzurum, Ağrı, Kars, Ardahan
	Faith tourism Corridor – culture tourism	Starting by Tarsus District (Mersin) towards South-eastern Anatolia including Hatay, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mardin
	Silk Road tourism Corridor – nature tourism and ecotourism, culture tourism	Ayaş-Sapanca Segmental Corridor reaching European Continent through İstanbul, and Adapazarı, Bolu, Ankara
	Black Sea Coastal Corridor – culture, coastal and nature tourism	Black Sea coastline starting from Şile District (İstanbul) to Sinop with an approximately length of 500 km
	Mountain Corridor – plateau and nature tourism	Northern Black Sea Region from Samsun to Hopa District (Artvin)
	Thrace Culture Corridor – culture tourism and ecotourism	Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ
<p>To plan tourism settlements capable of competing the world examples by becoming a global brand <i>10 new tourism cities</i></p>	İğneada-Kıyıköy Ecotourism City	
	Kilyos Tourism City	
	Kapıdağ Peninsula, Avşa and Marmara Isles Tourism City	
	Datça Ecotourism City	
	Kaş-Finike Tourism City	
	Anamur Coastline Tourism City	
	Samandağ Tourism City	
	Maka Tourism City Kahta Tourism City	

Table 4 (cont.)

1	2	3
To develop nature tourism with reference to development plans <i>Ecotourism Zones</i>	Ecotourism	Black Sea Region including Bolu, Zonguldak, Bartın, Kastamonu, Sinop
		Taurus Mountains – inlands of East Antalya towards Mersin
		GAP Ecotourism Corridor intersection with Winter Corridor

Source: own elaboration based on information from MoCT, 2007.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is the work related to ensure the protection and sustainability of tourism destinations as indicated in the Tourism Strategy Plan. The spatial and temporal concentration of tourism demand and spatial concentration of tourism supply create major problems related to crowds, congestion in traffic, environmental damage and pressure on the infrastructure (İçöz et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the current conditions do not show an acceptable achievement on protecting and keeping the tourist destinations in a sustainable way. Almost all the destinations are heavily/negatively impacted from incompatible land uses, high density accommodation and related urban development. These incompatible land uses in the tourism destinations are largely due to wrong political decisions, and in the short run, it is not easy to reverse these applications unless the political decision makers take a strong stand against unacceptable applications and decide to protect the natural and cultural assets at the touristic destinations (Tosun & Timothy, 2001; Hatipoğlu et al., 2016).

Long-term strategy for spatial planning

In Turkey, long-term strategy for spatial planning depends on the National Strategy for Regional Development (MoD, 2014). The document was prepared by the Ministry of Development for the period between the years 2014 and 2023. The main statement declared in this strategy is “the total and more balanced development” for Turkey. This Strategy was produced with a participatory approach. Different actors and stakeholders such as public institutions, development agencies, NGOs, and the representatives of the private sector took part in the participatory practices of this strategy, so that the Strategy became multi-sectoral and proposed well-formulated policies.

In this Strategy, regional development is conceptualized as a process where the regional and urban resources and internal potentials are considered as the key factors for development. By using these resources/potentials, the main policy for regional development depends on a balance between decreasing the regional disparities and increasing the competitiveness of the regions. Within this balance, each settlement – from rural settlements to metropolitan cities- is considered with their unique features (MoD, 2014; Peker, 2015).

The major specific spatial aim of this Strategy is to achieve a balanced settlement system by developing the cities located in relatively-underdeveloped eastern part of Turkey (Figure 4). With this aim, not only the emergence of the additional problems related to the urban agglomeration in the metropolitan cities of the north-western part of Turkey, but also the ones related to the regional disparities in the cities of the eastern part of Turkey could be prevented. According to the Strategy, these cities should serve high quality workplaces and residential areas in order to pull qualified labour force which is vital for competitive production. Such development has a potential to reduce the regional disparities (MoD, 2014).

The Strategy is constructed based on an understanding in which the cities are not considered as isolated entities, but as relational phenomena on networks. This understanding assumes strong relationships among urban and rural settlements. To understand the settlements, it firstly classifies them. There are six groups of settlements, four of which focus on urban settlements; one of which focuses on provinces; and the last one on rural areas. The first group includes the **metropolitan cities**. They are considered as the main centres for competitive advantages at the global level by having infrastructure for human and social capital. The second group of cities are the **growth poles** with the basic functions to distribute development in a more balanced way and to use the internal potential in a more efficient way. The third group of cities are the **regional attraction centres**. These cities are determined mainly in underdeveloped regions of the country to attract economic investments and skilled labour for development. As the fourth group, there are the **cities of structural transformation** in the regions developed moderately. The main strategy for these cities is to support the existing production capacities and service provisions. The fifth group includes the **provinces with development priority** consisting both urban and rural settlements concurrently. The major goal in these provinces is to achieve a multi-sectoral development as a tool to improve quality of life conditions. This multi-sectoral development includes not only the financial support and subsidies to sectors such as industry, construction, and tourism in the urban centres; but also the improvements of the production in agriculture and husbandry in rural parts of these provinces. The last group focuses solely on **rural areas**. This group considers rural settlements with reference to their locational characteristics under two subgroups as the rural settlement in the close vicinity of urban fringes and the distant rural settlements. For both of these subgroups, the development of the rural economy is the priority (MoD, 2014).

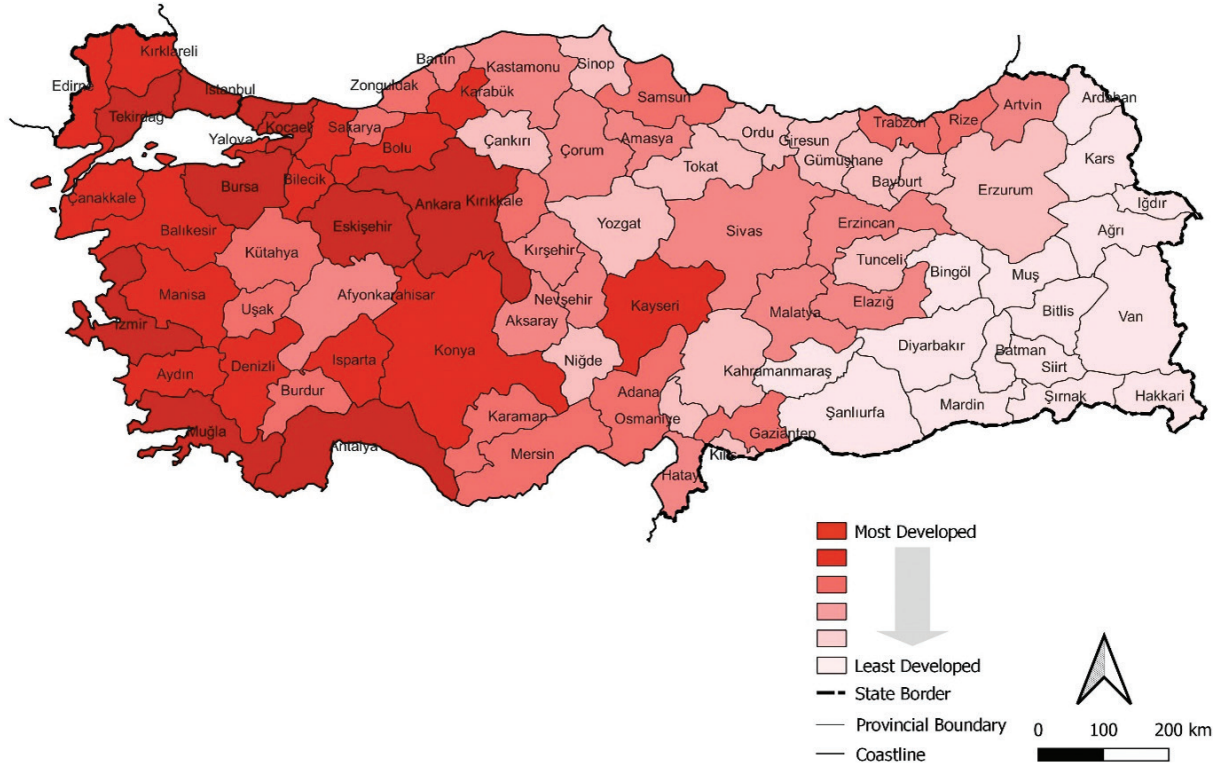


Figure 4. Regional disparities in Turkey based on SEGE-2017² indicators

Source: own elaboration based on data from MoIT, 2019.

² SEGE-2017 study ranks provinces and regions with reference to their development levels by examining demographic, employment, education, health, financial, innovation, accessibility and quality of life variables (MoIT, 2019).

Public participation in spatial planning

In the last decades, spatial planning in Turkey has started to change structurally under the influence of globalization and neoliberal policies. One of the basic dimensions of this shift is the private sector which has gradually involved into planning processes and determined these processes with reference to its own interests and expectations. Accordingly, it is not possible to argue that the demands and expectations of different social groups and individuals are met within the planning process. The gap between planning decisions and the demands and expectations of social groups and individuals produces a resistance towards spatial planning and its implementation. At this point, public participation becomes increasingly important and necessary. However, there are no legal regulations obliging active participation in the preparation and/or implementation processes of spatial plans in Turkey. Participatory practices have been mostly carried out depending on the institutional attitudes of the ministries and municipalities.

Public participation in spatial planning processes is often achieved through city councils and municipal councils. Although the discussions about spatial plans are open to the public on these platforms, the level of participation is controversial because participation processes are conducted and directed by ministries and municipalities. Since the bureaucrats/managers of these institutions think that the opportunity of participation (given to relevant stakeholders) always lead to a kind of taking advantage of this opportunity by fulfilling their expectations and maximizing their private interests (Tekeli, 2017), the demands and expectations declared during the participatory processes do not find response in the planning decisions in many cases. Within this framework, participatory practices do not have positive/constructive impacts on planning decisions and are based on the application to judicial processes so that the social groups and individuals who have suffered by the decisions of spatial plans might have a chance to protect their personal/public interests. Therefore, it is possible to claim that there is a negative participation in Turkey rather than a positive/constructive participation (Keleş, 2015).

Public participation has accelerated in Turkey since the execution of the “Local Agenda 21” documents and processes in the year 1996. With the Local Agenda 21, principles such as citizen participation, governance and transparency have been tried to be activated in urban planning and management. The city councils established in this process took a legal form with the Law no. 5393 on Municipality (Dolu, 2014; Keleş & Mengi, 2017); yet, these councils depending on multi-actor relations in their structure and undertaking the task of coordination have been inactive except for a few examples. They have generally conducted inadequate, routine, and ineffective studies in the name of participation.

Having not achieved/experienced at expected levels, participation has been set as a legal principle in the development plans (Esengil, 2010). Since the 2000s, all

the national plans have included statements promoting public participation by the preparation of the spatial development plans. Yet, their impacts are limited since democracy/participation is an individual culture and necessitates time to change spatial planning and urban management (Tekeli, 2017).

In the existing Turkish practice, there is no legal regulation preventing public participation in spatial planning. On the other hand, there is also no legal regulation that directly/clearly makes the participation process obligatory. There are only a limited number of legal regulations mentioning public participation as an intention or principle; such as Law no. 5393 on Municipality, Law no. 4982 on the Right to Obtain Information, Law no. 5302 on the Special Provincial Administration, and Law no. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipality (Ruige et al., 2014). In this context, it is convenient to claim that public participation is legally and formally possible, yet it is not an obligatory process and its realization strictly depends on the comprehensive attitudes of the ministries and municipalities (Keleş, 2015).

The general reasons for the failures in the participatory processes in Turkey can be listed as follows (Tekeli, 2017);

- the consideration of the participatory practices as if they are legal obligations which produces the perception of “compulsory ceremony” for public participation;
- the inability to adjust the budgeting and timing of the participatory processes which makes them meaningless and boring activities for the participants;
- the widespread public acceptance that participation could not produce successful results;
- the disappointment of the spatial planners when participatory processes fail;
- the treatment of participation as an aim rather than a tool;
- the failure of public participation due to the dominance of conflicting societal relations in the public realm;
- the lack of local platforms that foster participatory governance through NGOs.

Main challenges of spatial planning of tourism destinations

Turkey is one of the most important tourism destinations in the world. Due to its great geographical, cultural and natural attractions and its numerous historical and archaeological sites, Turkey has a rich blend of less discovered, diverse and unique natural and cultural assets (Yolal, 2016). As stated in the Tourism Strategy Plan, there are challenges to diversify tourism activities and increase tourism income

by activating underused tourism potentials of the country to be explored by the globalized tourist markets. The main challenges of the spatial planning of tourism destinations in Turkey could be categorized under four headings.

The first challenge is related to **the spatial planning system**. The spatial planning system in Turkey is very complex and complicated. Different public institutions have the authority to produce spatial plans for the same spatial setting. However, the fact that the plans produced by different institutions have different priorities prevents the integration of these fragmented spatial plans. The lack of integration results in the deterioration of public continuities, the disappearance of the coherency in land use decisions, and the weakening of spatial structures. The coexistence of these fragmented spatial plans for the same setting transforms spatial planning into a technical collage producing urban patchworks, undermines the autonomy of planning system, and creates a pressure on spatial planning directed by different actors and stakeholders.

Similar problems also appear within the spatial planning processes of tourism destinations. Sometimes inconsistencies arise between the spatial plans commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the spatial development plans under the control of municipalities. These inconsistencies are especially observable for planning decisions supporting mass tourism that do not create a value added for local communities, adversely impact existing agricultural areas/production, and directly or indirectly damage cultural and natural assets.

The second challenge is related to **the ambiguity of legal frameworks** regulating the spatial planning practices. The judicial boundaries of these legal frameworks are not very clear and they sometimes delegate/distribute the planning authority to different institutions, which creates a confusion of powers. Additionally, the purviews of these legal frameworks are vague and ambiguous which eliminates the standardization of planning practices and the establishment of precedents. There is an apparent need for a new planning legislation that should reorganize the planning processes/practices. The ambiguity of legal framework could also result in administrative problems due to overlapping responsibility areas of different public institutions. Those overlapping responsibilities could cause conflicting situations between public institutions or lack of authority when the institutions are unwilling to cooperate or take the responsibility.

The lack of public participation is the third challenge. Public participation allows spatial planning to be defined as an interactive decision-making process (Gedikli, 2004). With this quality, it is a concept embraced by the majority of urban and regional planners. However, the implementation of public participation in Turkey is problematic to some extent. It is possible to examine these problematic dimensions under four subcategories.

The first subcategory is *the uncertainty and ambiguity by determining the spatial planning processes to participate in*. The fact that different public institutions have the authority to make spatial plans and produce spatial plans/plan amendments

brings up the idea that multiple plans simultaneously exist within the same spatial settings. It is not realistic to expect proper public participation in these conditions even where urban and regional planners have difficulties to follow these planning processes. The second subcategory that makes participation difficult is *the scale*. As the scale of and content of spatial plans increase, participation levels decrease (Tekeli, 2007) due to the fact that private interests cannot be met in upper scale plans. The third subcategory is *the inconvenience of public participation for every spatial planning decision*. Within the domain of spatial planning, there are three areas where decisions must be taken within instrumental rationality based on scientific knowledge (Tekeli, 2007). The first of these areas is natural and cultural heritage areas that cannot be left to the private interests of the people. The second area includes large-scale urban infrastructure systems that require huge financial investments and must be based on scientific predictions and technical reasoning. The third area contains the necessary spatial arrangements for the continuation of the spatial systems (Tekeli, 2007). The fourth subcategory that complicates public participation is *the lack of autonomy of the spatial planning function*. In such circumstances, spatial planning is less likely to distribute urban services in a just way, because those who do not want to share these urban services with other social/interest groups may attempt to suppress or prevent public participation mechanisms.

The fourth challenge is directly related to **the qualities of tourism destinations**, which can be examined into two dimensions. In the first dimension, there is *excessive concentration/agglomeration of tourism infrastructure* in certain regions – especially in Antalya, Muğla and Aydın provinces due to mass tourism activities as mentioned in the Tourism Strategy Plan (MoCT, 2007). For this situation, which is especially valid for Southwest Anatolia, it can be said that the agglomeration economy associated with this mass tourism creates negative externalities and they adversely affect the optimum use of the existing tourism potential. In the second dimension, there is *the under-use of tourism potential* due to the lack of physical, human, and social capital. Physical capital refers to tourism infrastructure such as hotels and other accommodation facilities. Human capital refers to tourism professionals; while social capital means supplementary and complementary relations among stakeholders enhancing the quality of tourism services. Due to a lack of physical, human, and social capitals, Turkey is unable to offer the richness of its cultural and natural resources to the tourism industry.

Summary

As to summarize, the major challenges of the spatial planning of tourism destinations in Turkey are:

- the complex and complicated character of the planning system that causes fragmentation and might create spatial incoherency and functional inconvenience for the same spatial settings;
- the ambiguity of legal frameworks regulating the spatial planning practices that creates a confusion of powers within the domain of spatial planning and eliminates the standardization of planning practices and the establishment of precedents;
- the lack of public participation;
- the over- and under-use of tourism potentials both of which creates negative externalities for their regions.

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