
SETTLEMENT PATTERN CORRUPTION PROBLEMS IN RURAL AREAS AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES: EXPERIENCES IN BEYSEHIR - EMEN, TURKEY

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In Turkey, different approaches and models have been developed for rural areas since the earliest years of the republic. These policies have contributed to the social and economic development of rural areas. However, spatial corruption of rural areas could not be prevented even though economic development was created with difference policies and strategies. In this context, the main objective of this study is to examine factors causing the spatial corruption of rural areas. In light of the findings obtained, approaches towards conservation and sustainability of rural areas were discussed.

The most important subject that should be emphasized within the findings obtained as a result of the study is that rural settlements are different from urban areas in terms of their road width and tissues, parcel sizes, floor area ratios and building heights. Another result is that “rural-specific” approaches, which would direct spatial development and construction in rural areas, have not been developed in Turkey. Supervision of spatial development and construction in rural areas with regulations and laws on the development of urban areas has caused corruption in the settlement character/fabric of rural areas. Thus, “rural-specific” approaches should be developed to conserve the settlement fabric/pattern in rural areas to increase resilience against construction pressure.

Keywords

Rural Settlements, Settlement Fabric, Conservation, Emen-Beyşehir

How to Cite

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INTRODUCTION

Population growth, economic activities, economic growth, and the increase and diversification of consumption cause an increase of pressure on the environment and natural resources. Environmental pollution and increasing demand/pressure on cultivated areas, water resources and the deterioration of forests make conservation and planning of rural areas important. Today, the conservation of rural areas either in respect of natural resources or cultural landscape values is more important than in the past. Within this framework new policies and approaches are needed for rural areas regarding sustainable development at the territorial, regional and local level.

Turkey is a country that has had significant experience in the improvement of rural areas. In spite of that, the lack of approaches specific to rural areas and directing spatial development and settlement is an important deficiency. To discuss the different aspects of this problem within the scope of the project, which was commenced in 2010, we aimed to construct alternative approaches and planning tools in spite of current planning aspects that cause the alteration of the characteristics of rural areas. The project was jointly supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey and conducted by Karadeniz Technical University (Trabzon-Turkey) and Selcuk University (Konya-Turkey).

In this article we aimed to share the findings obtained from case studies conducted by Selcuk University. The Emen structural plan, which is one of the important parts of the project completed in 2015, constitutes the main theme of the article. In this context, the main purpose of article was researching the factors that cause the spatial corruption of rural areas, discussing the approaches directed at conserving rural characteristics and suggesting a sustainable situation in the light of the obtained findings.

DEFINITION OF RURAL AREAS AND POLICIES CONCERNING RURAL AREAS

The rural concept means the areas where the dominant economic mainstay is agriculture and there is a lower population density¹. Rural areas are evaluated as extensions of urban areas with these characteristics and potential and considered as regions that provide resources to urban areas. Rural areas are diversified according to accessibility to urban areas, closeness to natural resources, economic tendencies of settlement and density of settlement areas².

Some developments that affect the definition of rural areas have occurred in recent years. Counter urbanization, which actualized different levels in different countries, and developments at the edges of cities and the spatial and social reflections of these developments have blurred the discrimination between urban and rural. Hence, it is expressed in the United Nations population statistics that a standard urban-rural definition was not practical and that a definition of rural areas valid for all countries is not possible due to national differences^{3,4,5}.

The development and planning of rural areas was substantiated with agricultural improvement policies in the past. In other words, it was considered that the development of rural areas was only possible using agricultural based approaches. However, that inadequate approach has changed over time. The main reason behind the change of that approach for rural areas that arose early in the 19th century was technological development and other developments that occurred due to socio-economic factors^{6,7}. This change in rural development paradigms became more pronounced after the Second World War. Ellis and Biggs⁸ argued that changes in development paradigms affected rural development methods too. Rural development, which was identified with modernization in agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s, was focused on the “productive and small farmer” as the engine of development in the 1970s and later. Basic concepts that came to the fore after the 1980s were participation, local democracy and sustainability.

Another issue that should be emphasized within the framework of approaches directed at the development of rural areas is common agricultural policies. With the common agricultural policies that were developed by the European Union, agricultural production that considered natural and environmental factors and targets of rural area development is mentioned under three titles. These are, constituting a competitive agricultural structure, diversifying sources of income in rural areas and improving living standards and conserving environment/natural values, respectively⁹.

In brief, it was understood with these developments that rural areas are not simply fields that should be handled only through agricultural policies as in the past. In addition to economic tools for the development of rural areas, approaches that also consider natural, cultural and social values together are needed. While development is being accomplished, rural areas should be conserved in respect of cultural values and landscape existence.

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREA POLICIES IN TURKEY AND PROBLEMS

Different approaches and models have been developed for rural areas in different periods since the first years of the republic in Turkey. These policies under the names of society development, model village, multiple rural area planning, central village, urban village, and agriculture urban played an important role in the development of rural areas in respect of social and economic aspects. The common point of policies about rural area is remaining differences between rural-urban areas, setting the economic and social balance between rural-urban area in long term. It was also aimed to enable rural-urban communities to complete each other and bring them a balanced social structure. It is seen that solutions such as increasing social equipment and forming industrial and service sector related with agricultural production are employed in order to set this balance^{10,11}. Problems which sustain in spite of various policies and strategies formed about rural areas since the establishment of republic result from approaches which do not regard structure and characteristics of different rural areas, disregard participation of public and evaluate rural development only as the increase of agricultural production.

Another problem which forms hindrance in front of rural development in Turkey is ignoring the factor of public in rural area planning and defining villages as a place where people who have nothing to do live/shelter¹². Defining services carried out for villages as minor service naming village road, village school, village community health center is evaluated as the reflection of this misdescription mentioned above¹³. Similarly, in the discrimination of rural-urban area which emerges in the process of modernity, while urban areas which are the output of modernity are regarded as the symbol of development and progression; regarding village and rural life as the symbol of backwardness is another mistake¹⁴.

It should be emphasized that, in the solution of problems mentioned, the process of alteration/transformation which was experienced with the effect of preparation to European Union membership process and other international obligations had an important effect. In this context, recent years, the most important documents that have changed the agenda for rural areas in Turkey are in the National Rural Development strategy. Evaluating local potential and resources, conserving natural and cultural existence, developing rural society's work and living conditions compatible with urban areas and bringing them to a sustainable situation are the aims of this strategy, which came into force in 2006. Concepts on which the National Rural Development strategy are based are spatial susceptibility, collaboration and participation, sustainability, consistency in rural policies and effective monitoring¹⁵.

In spite of strategies and obtained experiences developed for rural areas, the most important problem in Turkey today is the lack of a "specific for rural" approach that will direct spatial development and settlement in rural areas. Rural areas are exposed to different types of pressures due to geographical location, place in the county economy, closeness to urban areas, and their natural and cultural characteristics. Managing that

pressure effectively is important in respect of conserving settlement patterns and the sustainability of the spatial characteristics of rural areas. However, auditing spatial development and settlement in rural areas in Turkey by law and directing the development of urban areas cause the corruption of settlement patterns specific to rural areas. Accordingly, policies and approaches for conserving cultural values, settlement patterns and landscapes in rural areas are required.

PROJECT FOR CONSERVING THE PATTERN OF RURAL AREAS: EMEN STRUCTURAL PLAN STUDY EXPERIENCES

Planning rural areas within the measures for urban area settlement and corruption of rural settlement pattern is one of the important problems facing Turkey. A protocol was signed in 2010 between the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, Karadeniz Technical University (Trabzon-Turkey) and Selcuk University (Konya-Turkey) aiming to discuss that problem and to develop policies for solutions. A project named “Rural Planning Focusing on Conservation: A Proposal Model” that was targeted to develop the collaboration of the three institution was supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey and the project was completed in 2015. The purpose of project was the recommendation of alternative approaches and planning tools in spite of the current planning approach that causes the corruption of rural settlement patterns. The authors of this study played a role in the project team at Selcuk University.

The institution that requested the project was the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. The insufficiency of regulation provisions was emphasized in the process of determining, auditing, conserving and planning the development tendency of rural settlements in justification of the project. In addition, it was mentioned that use of the current planning principals and standards generated for urban areas for rural areas as well caused the corruption of settlement patterns/characteristics of rural areas. The expectation of the institution is the development of planning approaches specific to rural areas with legal and administrative modification recommendations.

With the project “Rural Planning Focusing on Conservation: A Proposal Model” rural areas were handled in three basic planning principle frameworks by considering the differences all around the country; these are:

- Conserving and usage of natural resources / values, cultural landscape (sustainability principle),
- Generating equal living conditions with regards to public service and providing equality of opportunity (equality and democracy principle) and,
- Actualizing planning studies with the persons and groups affected by the planning. (Planning with local-establishing common future principle).

Within the scope of the project, two case studies in different regions of Turkey were carried out by Karadeniz Technical University and Selcuk University. The patterns of rural settlements were determined by case studies; these findings were used as inputs for planning work carried out in the two model settlements that were selected (see figure 1).

The sample field research for this project was carried out in Emen within the Beyşehir Lake basin, as this area is the most important fresh-water resource. The reason for selecting Emen within the scope of the project is Emen’s recognized importance with regard to the cultural or natural landscape. In this sense, the principal emphasis of the structural plan is conserving the traditional stone houses that remain today without corruption as a cultural landscape value and ensuring the sustainability of Yazı brook, which maintains Lake Beyşehir as the largest fresh-water basin, and the agricultural areas around the brook.

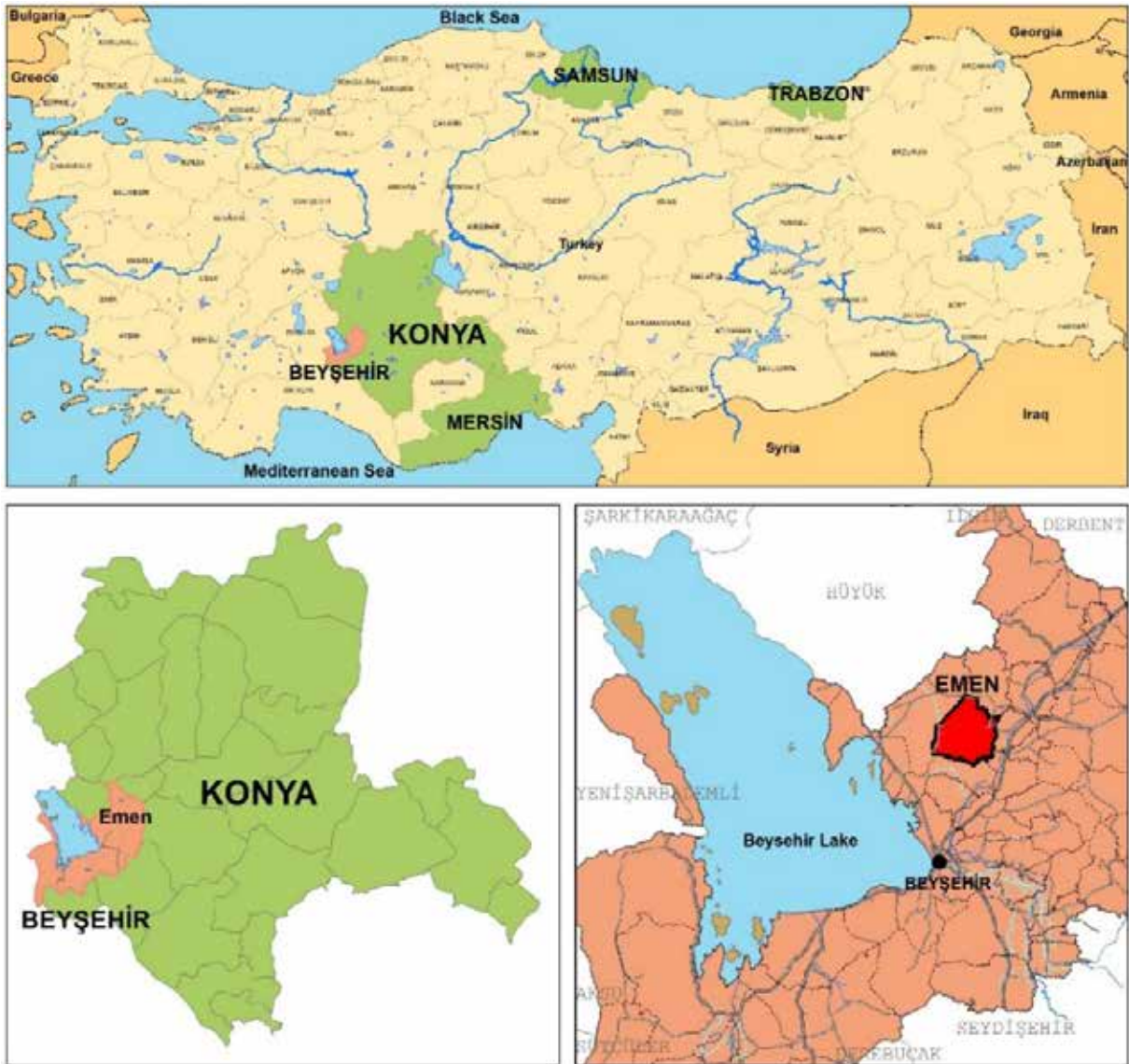


FIGURE 1 Case study carried out by Karadeniz Technical University in Trabzon and Samsun Provinces; Case studies carried out by Selcuk University in rural areas of Konya and Mersin provinces. Konya, which is a province in the middle section of Turkey, is an important agricultural basin. Beyşehir is one of the districts of Konya with a population of 35,000. Beyşehir Lake is the most important fresh-water resource of Turkey. Emen is a rural settlement 20 km away.

Conserving the stone buildings that constitute the most important values of Emen and sustaining the morphological structure of the settlement are necessary with regards to building material and architecture.

Yazı Brook, which is the most important landscape value of the region where Emen is located, is another important issue in structural planning decisions. The brook, which is home to specific flora and fauna of the region, also vitalizes the agricultural activities that are conducted in the immediate environment. In addition to ecological agricultural activities, the region has significant potential for agricultural tourism. However, discharging drains from some towns and villages in addition to Emen constitutes the most important environmental threat today. This problem, which affects the Lake Beyşehir basin radically, should be solved in the shortest possible period (see figure 2).



FIGURE 2 Stone buildings constitute the most important values of Emen and Yazı Brook

COMPARISON OF STRUCTURAL PLANNING WITH THE EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Emen structural plan that was generated within the scope of the project and the existing development plan are compared in this section of article. The development plan of Emen that was confirmed in 2001 is important in the sense of emphasizing the problems within the scope of the study. The plan includes decisions that disregard traditional settlement patterns and will cause corruption of the whole settlement pattern of Emen. In addition, pastures and cultivated areas where the most important natural resources of the region exist are not considered.

The Emen settlement was divided into four sub-regional groups within the scope of comparative analysis. In these sub-regional groups are shown the existing development plan and the Emen structural plan.

The existing development was based on urban area criteria. 10-12 meter width roads constructed within the plan are typical examples of that approach despite the rural pattern of the settlement. Substantial parts of buildings that were recommended for conservation due to their concordance with traditional and specific patterns in the structural plan are included within the 10-12 meter road tracks of the application development plan. This situation means destroying the buildings seen in figure 3 and figure 4 in the event that the aforementioned planning decision is applied.



FIGURE 3 Pedestrian paths should be at least 10 meters in width and carriageways should be at least 12 meters according to legal regulations in Turkey. This arrangement/rule concerning road widths is one of the most important reasons behind the corruption of settlement patterns in rural areas.



FIGURE 4 Typical example of stone buildings and settlement pattern.

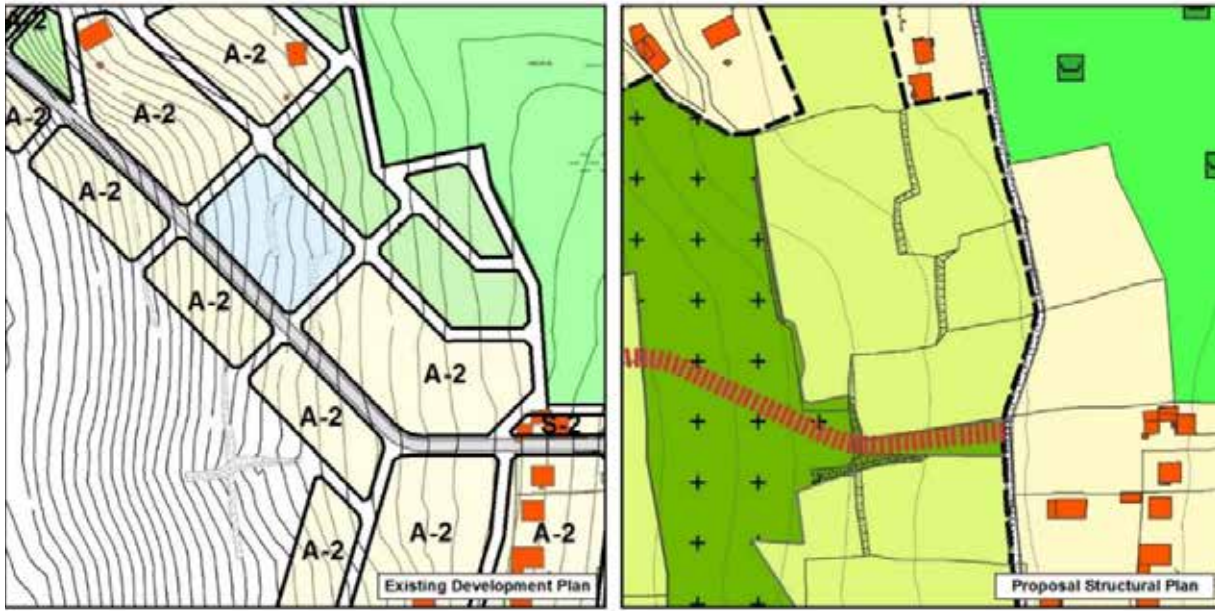


FIGURE 5 Emen is a settlement where the population has decreased. The population, which was 1498 in 1990, decreased to 679 in 2010. In spite of that, several development areas were proposed in the existing plan. In addition, its natural and topographical structures were not considered. These areas are pastures and productive cultivated fields. Conserving these areas, which are important either for husbandry or agricultural production, was targeted.



FIGURE 6 Settlement morphology was developed as enabling sustained agricultural production. An approach for conserving cadastral roads and ownership patterns was adopted in the structural plan, unlike the development plan.



FIGURE 7 Open areas in the settlement function as gathering places. These areas are used for weddings, entertainment and activities, especially in summer months. They are important parts of the settlement pattern from either spatial or social aspects.

The second accentuated issue within the comparative analysis is the decreasing population of Emen in recent years. Decreasing populations in rural areas is a situation observed in Turkey generally. However, there is a contradictory situation such as constituting new development areas in the settlements of rural areas where the population has decreased. This situation, which causes remaining inhabitants to expect income from sources other than agricultural production or the loss of productive cultivated areas are the other reasons for corruption of rural areas in respect of natural sources (see figure 5).

The third particular that should be scrutinized within the framework of comparative analysis of the existing development plan and the structural plan is the open-mass ratio in rural areas. One of the important factors that reflect the morphological characteristics of settlement is the built-up area/open-air space ratio. This is mentioned by floor area ratio in the planning regulations of Turkey. While this ratio is higher in urban areas, it is lower in rural areas. This situation is necessary to meet the demands that occur in a rural area life style (storage of materials and products, small size agricultural activities etc.). The floor area ratio concerning the cultivated areas of Emen is 8-10% but the determined ratio in the existing development plan is 20%. The recommended roads and building lands in the existing development plan are mostly designed for urban areas instead of rural areas. Conserving the shape of cadastral parcels and morphological elements is recommended in the structural plan generated by project (see figure 6).

The last areas scrutinized in respect of the development plan in force were decisions concerning gathering places/squares that reflect the specific character of the settlement. These squares and other such semi-public places are the points used for strengthening social relations and for different activities. These places, which are a significant part of the settlement pattern, were included in land designated for building in the existing development plan. Conserving these places that were not considered in the existing development plan is one of the targets of structural planning (see figure 7).

CONCLUSION

Residents of rural areas earn their livelihood from economic activities that depend on soil and nature such as agriculture, husbandry and woodcraft. Added value of urban areas generates differences in respect of relatively higher non-agricultural income, distribution of income and standards of living. Accordingly, providing either social justice or the sustainability of rural life where lives depend on the natural structure is important for development of the country.

While the development of rural areas was being evaluated only with agricultural improvement policies in the past, this approach has changed over time. Today, policies and approaches that consider natural, cultural and social characteristics of rural areas integrally are dominant. In our day, there is consensus regarding the necessity of conserving rural areas as cultural heritage.

The fallacy that agricultural development means rural development was dominant in Turkey for many years. Considering the differences of rural areas, supporting economic base policies with social and spatial tools took some time. In this transition period, the National Rural Development Strategy was an important milestone. In particular, emphasis on spatial sensitivity for rural areas could spark discussions today.

Today awareness has developed in respect of evaluating rural areas differently from urban areas in Turkey. But tools that will direct spatial development specifically for rural areas are insufficient. Usage of standards that were generated for urban areas for rural areas as well caused corruption of the settlement patterns of rural areas.

The first finding that should be emphasized within the results obtained from the research is the development plan prepared for urban areas and currently in force. In the event of application of these plans, there is danger of the corruption of rural areas and even the possibility that they will disappear completely. Hence, these development plans should be halted until preparation of spatial structural plans specific to rural areas. The second important issue of research in respect of the findings of study is the difference in road widths and patterns, parcel sizes, floor area ratios and building heights from urban areas. Conserving the settlement patterns of rural areas and increasing resilience against settlement pressure is only possible with sustainability of the aforementioned differences. In this context, design guides for determining settlement conditions in rural areas and rural area norms and legal aspects should be created.

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