

RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN TURKEY (CURRENT STATUS – PROBLEMS – SOLUTIONS)

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Abstract

Rural settlements are common in countries with economies largely dependent on agriculture and in countries where much of the population is employed in agricultural sector. Such settlements are also quite common in Turkey. Legal regulations on settlement-structuring are practiced exactly in the same fashion throughout the country in Turkey. Social, economic, geographical and environmental issues are not considered. Low life standards in villages due to insufficient social and technical infrastructure force rural people to migrate cities. The migration from rural to urban has still ongoing since 1950s. Certain infrastructural services should be provided to rural settlements to keep them alive and allow them to perform functions and activities expected from them. Basic infrastructural services should be provided to rural people in order to let them to serve for the development of the country in concert with the other sections of the country. In this study, current status of rural settlements of Turkey was assessed, potential problems were identified and solutions were proposed for such problems.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Rural settlement, Turkey, Village.

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

Turkey is a developing country and 26.1% of total population lives in rural sections of the country. Rural people usually deal with agriculture and livestock production activities for living. Income per capita is quite low in rural sections. Therefore, present problems of rural sections of the country should initially be solved for overall development of the country.

Rural settlement planning plays a great role in regional and national development. Proper planning of rural settlements influence economic, social and cultural development of the entire country. In other words, rural settlement planning may provide several benefits in easier and proper supply of social and cultural services and may allow more profitable operation of agricultural activities.

Rural settlements in Turkey have exhibited a dynamic development since the foundation of the republic. Several qualitative and quantitative changes were experienced throughout this development process (Figure 1). The number of village administrations was 39 901 in 1927. The number increased to 34 876 in 1935, to 34 252 in 1950, to 35 638 in 1970 and to 35 152 in 1990. The number then decreased to 18 332 by the year 2015. The remaining 26 000 administrations were converted into highland, farm, hamlet, and etc. smaller settlements http://www.0wikipedia.org/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly90ci53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvVC_VDMYVCQ3JraXlJTI3bmluX2slQzMIQjZ5bGVyaSNjaXRlX25vdGUtMQ (TÜİK, 2015; URL 2017). Rural settlements are generally shaped as commune settlements.



Figure 1. Rural settlements of Turkey (Source: <http://www.eokul-meb.com/turkiyede-kirsal-yerlesme-ozellikleri-nelerdir-74060/>)

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN TURKEY

Settlements generally have different characteristics in different countries based on their specific natural, economic and social conditions of each region. Therefore, rural settlements have also different characteristics in different sections of Turkey. The characteristics of rural settlements should be gathered under present status of the settlements, legal regulations about rural settlements, problems in settlements and proposed solutions for these problems.

The simplest form of rural settlements in Turkey is a single home and attachments. Even some municipalities with couple of villages are also classified as rural settlement. In any case, villages are the most common rural settlements.

The basic characteristics of rural settlements in Turkey can be classified as follows (Okuroğlu and Yağanoğlu, 1998):

- Settlement place is generally pellmell placed,
- The area allocated for settlement place is generally insufficient,
- Infrastructural facilities are generally insufficient,
- There are always risk for natural disasters,
- Distances between the villages are different,
- Economic growth and development is slow because of insufficient economic levels of the facilities,
- There are various classes in villages, like the ones with large lands, the ones without any lands, the ones living outside the village and etc.,
- Rural settlements are generally small places with low population,
- They are close to water resources,
- Some of them are temporary settlements,
- Some of them have scattered patterns,

- Economic activities largely depend on agriculture and livestock. Rural settlements in Turkey have some positive or negative attributes based on the places they settled. These attributes can be classified as follows;
- The settlements established over the hill skirts generally benefit from the positive attributes of the plains and such places are quite available places for settlements. However, construction costs slightly higher because of the rough terrains of hill skirts.
- The settlements established over the plains have quite well advantage of access, but they are under the threat of floods.
- The settlements established over the valleys generally have high risk of disasters, but agricultural lands are quite fertile in valleys.
- The settlements established over the ridges have disadvantages in access, water supply and sewage systems.
- The villages established over the hill slopes have an advantage of scenery, but disadvantage of access.

Geographical conditions, climate, plant cover, geological formations, economic activities, traditions and customs are quite effective on type of dwellings and construction materials used in rural settlements. In this sense, wood structures are dominant in Black Sea region rich in forests, mud-brick structures are common in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, stone structures are dominant in Mediterranean region and volcanic stones are commonly used in constructions built around extinguished volcanos (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Different construction materials used in rural homes (Source: <http://www.koyumuz.net/resimler-2843-Nallihan-Alan-resimleri>)

3. PROBLEMS OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN TURKEY

Present problems of rural settlements in Turkey can be gathered under three broad groups as of: administrative, social and economic problems.

Despite insufficient and uncoordinated infrastructure and education/health services, certain standards have been achieved in rural settlements of Turkey and progress is ongoing in this issue (Çiftçi, 2012). Although legal regulations are available for rural settlement planning, such regulations still are not sufficient for healthy progress of rural settlements. Unplanned systems automatically influence the efficiency of services supplied to rural settlements.

The regulations for settlement-constructions are applied in the same fashion in every part of the country. Social, economic, geographical and environmental conditions are not often taken into consideration. Turkey has a broad range of geography and geology, thus present regulations and legislations generally do not satisfy policy makers, institutions and property owners (Susam and Karaman, 2007).

Turkish rural settlements are mostly composed of villages and family enterprises and majority of them does not comply with relevant settlement principles and construction techniques. Number of villages and enterprises planned by taking agricultural, social, cultural, economic and geographical factors into consideration is quite a few, even almost absent. Since rural settlement sites were selected years ago, they are not able to be sufficient for present populations.

As compared to urban sections of the country, social, cultural and economic services supplied to rural settlements are not sufficient. Agricultural industry has not developed sufficiently because of lack of qualified labor and capital. Agricultural activities are not profitable because of scattered and fragmented agricultural fields. Thus, national income per capita is low and unemployment rates are high in villages. High number and scattered fashion of rural settlements put burdens in front of service supply and quality in these places (Tunçdilek, 1985).

The ambiguity on legal regulations for rural settlements hindered sufficient supply of social and technical infrastructure to villages and ultimately have forced rural people to migrate to large cities. While 75% of the population used to live in villages in the early period of the republic, now only 25% of country population lives in villages. Majority of villagers have already migrated to cities for better life standards and regular jobs and incomes. Such a trend of migration that has been accelerated since 1950s is still going on in Turkey (Anonim, 2010). Just because of these migrations, villages lost their population and functional attributes.

4. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR PRESENT PROBLEMS

Various solutions have been proposed for scattered settlements and for the geographical and geological problems of the villages. Such solutions are mostly composed of uniting small units of settlements, reestablish the villages constructed over improper places, establishment of central villages, uniting fragmented and scattered lands through land consolidation, preparation on new settlement plans and development of agricultural activity centers and family enterprises (Okuroğlu and Yağanoğlu, 1998).

It is quite hard to supply various services to small settlements. Central villages administratively and geographically should be established to ease the supply of these services. Small villages can be brought together to form a central one. Such a union requires quite much investment, but savings in infrastructural costs may compensate such costs. In this way, both a social development can be achieved and efficiency of social services may be improved (Okuroğlu and Yağanoğlu, 1998).

The villages with various negative impacts of the place over which they established can be transferred to another available place close to old location. In this way, people will not be in need of moving to other places and there will then be no need to adapt new places. Such a transfer of

settlements to a new place will facilitate social and economic development of the villages since the problems caused by geographical location have already been eliminated (Okurođlu and Yađanođlu, 1998).

Physical plans should be developed for rural settlements and family enterprises. These plans will facilitate social, cultural and economic development of the villages. To improve such plans, initially current status of these settlements should be determined, potential problems should be identified and modifications and improvements should then be performed accordingly. In this sense, there is a need for researches dealing with current status and problems of the rural settlements.

The problems experienced in rural settlements let them to lose their attraction and thus people have started to migrate from rural parts to urban sections of the country. Such migrations then increased urban sprawl and yielded significant changes in agricultural structure of the country. More profitable opportunities offered to rural settlements may solve this migration problem. In this sense, existing facilities used in production activities can be improved or new ones can be constructed in accordance with the relevant design standards and principles.

A proper planning legislation should be developed primarily to solve most of the above-mentioned problems. In this legislation, village planning and constructions should be included, deficiencies of existing legislation should be eliminated and land arrangement principles should be redefined. The tasks and responsibilities of relevant institutions and organizations about the planning, management and inspection of rural settlements should be well-defined and clarified. A sustainable coordination should be attained among them. In this way, efficiency and sustainability of rural affairs can be improved (Çiftçi, 2012).

5. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the current status, characteristics and potential problems of rural settlements in Turkey. Solutions were also proposed toward to existing problems of the rural settlements. Initially, physical inventory of these settlements should be planned, construction and infrastructural services should be improved for social, cultural and economical development of these settlements. Development of rural settlements can only be achieved through design and planning of settlement units in accordance with the relevant standards and principles. Such standards and principles should be defined in a proper legislation and this legislation should be applied both to already existing settlements and new ones to be established. There is also a need for scientific researches dealing with current status and existing problems of the rural settlements.

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