

Enlargement and Cohesion: Implications for Economic and Social Development in Turkey

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Abstract

As a candidate country to join the EU, Turkey has to comply with certain institutional preconditions in order to have access to EU regional assistance with the aim to reduce regional disparities. Given the extreme level of regional disparities, EU assistance in the pre-accession process is highly important for Turkey. The approach to regional development in EU regional policy is underpinned by “new regionalism”, which favours bottom-up, region-specific policy actions, based on regional governance. New regionalism conceptualises regional development policy as a policy of innovation rather than a purely market-driven or welfare-based approach. While this approach may have worked in triggering economic development in the lagging regions of the EU, there is a lack of research about the implications of regional development policy in new regionalism for backward regions. The GDP per capita of the poorest region in Turkey accounts for a mere 9.5 percent of the EU-15 average, and 11.5 percent of the EU-25 average, indicating the significant levels of poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, this paper explores the extent to which the principles and practices of EU regional policy are playing a key role in addressing the development needs of the least developed regions in Turkey.

Keywords: regional policy, cohesion, institutions, governance, Turkey

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1 Introduction

The link between regional development and cohesion is not as straightforward as the EU policy agenda suggests, which uses the terms of “regional policy” and “cohesion policy” interchangeably. It is true that spatial inequalities in terms of economic growth and employment lead to poverty and exclusion, and severe regional disparities constitute major obstacles to poverty reduction. However, it cannot be taken for granted that any regional development policy will automatically lead to cohesion and poverty reduction.

This paper explores the extent to which the principles and practices of EU regional policy, as they apply to Turkey in its accession process, are playing and are capable of playing a key role in addressing the development needs of the least developed regions in Turkey characterised by high levels of poverty and social exclusion. To this end, it firstly discusses the contradictions involved in the objectives of EU regional policy, in particular the relationship between growth, competitiveness and cohesion. This is followed by an examination of how the objectives of cohesion and poverty reduction relate to institutions and governance, and the role EU regional policy can play in this respect. The paper then analyses the actual and potential impact of adapting to the EU in terms of territorial organisation/regional development policy and institutional adaptation both at the national level and at the level of a specific backward region, namely the Southeast Anatolia.

2 Regional Development and Cohesion

The implications for cohesion of a regional development policy can be understood in the context of the theoretical principles that underlie the latter. In contrast to neo-classical growth theory (Solow, 1956), which predicts that inequality in economic development, in response to market integration for instance, will be eventually equalised through an efficient allocation of resources with diminishing marginal returns to factors of production in more developed areas and the flow of capital to poor regions due to higher rents, the EU regional policy is informed by a thinking that the impact of market integration on less developed areas would not be positive. This thinking found its expression in the formation of a regional policy in 1988 at

the European Community level, which complemented the decision to create a Single Market in 1986.

The principles embedded in the new regional policy of the EU reflected the shift in the regional development paradigm that took place during the 1980s in the developed world (Bachtler and Yuill, 2001). Even though the shift has not been complete, the “old” regional development policies of the 1950s and 1960s can be characterised in general as centralised in conception and administration, mostly relying on macroeconomic policy and interventionist measures to divert industrial activity from one region of the country to another. Regional policy remained largely standardised, based on location factors and subsidies to firms.

The emerging paradigm in the mid-1980s, in contrast, is based on an institutionalist perspective on regional development or “new regionalism” (Amin, 1999; Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Scott, 1996). New regionalism sees territorial agglomerations of economic activity as providing the best context for an innovation-based economy (Asheim, 1996) generating dynamic efficiencies in the form of learning and capacity for innovation (Porter, 1996). There is an underlying functional link between agglomeration, urbanisation and development, which emphasises the developmental potential of cities and regions because they are the loci of intense positive externalities in the context of globalisation (Scott and Storper, 2003). It is endogenous endowments, or “untraded interdependencies” that are cultural and institutional which determine how well agglomerations function and contribute to economic development (Storper, 1995).

Informed to a large degree by the principles of new regionalism, EU regional policy seeks to mobilise the endogenous potential of the less developed regions in order to enable more autonomous and less dependent sustainable regional development. It treats regions as systems of innovation and favours bottom-up, region-specific policy actions based on regional governance. Hence, the change in the strategy of development (Bachtler and Yuill, 2001) puts the emphasis on the regional and local levels of government in the formulation and implementation of regional strategies.

The theoretical underpinnings of the EU regional policy suggest that it is not sufficiently capable of addressing the complex dimensions of poverty and social exclusion that may exist in a less developed region, despite the objective of “harmonious development” of the Community in the Treaty of Rome and the

insertion of the title “Economic and Social Cohesion” in the Single European Act of 1986 through the reduction of regional disparities.

Since the late 1980s, the emphasis of the EU has been on upgrading knowledge and increasing technology diffusion at the regional level as the most efficient route to economic growth (CEC, 2001a). Knowledge-based factors, such as clustering of economic activities, are acknowledged as fostering economic competitiveness and as the main drivers of economic development (CEC, 1999d; 2001a). However, it is not clear how backward regions, suffering from lack of human resources and funding, can foster development based on knowledge and innovation, and how they can update training and education skills, not to mention the difficulty involved in attracting investors to a region with incomplete physical infrastructure (Dulupcu, 2005). It is difficult to identify factors that promote competitiveness in the least developed regions in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe and in the candidate countries including Turkey.

The new Community Strategic Guidelines outlining the priorities for Cohesion policy in 2007-2013 (CEC, 2006a) set a framework for new development programmes to be supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund, which together constitute the Structural Funds, the main instrument of EU regional policy in the new period. Accordingly, the key test for regional policy programmes in the future will be their contribution to growth and jobs in line with the renewed Lisbon agenda originally launched in 2000 to make the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy by the year 2010. Regional policy will be the main instrument in the realisation of the EU’s ambition to become “an area of high growth, competitiveness, and innovation” and “a place of full employment and higher productivity with more and better jobs” (CEC, 2006a).

It is true that the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 included “greater social cohesion” in its objectives (EU, 2005) and the new Constitution includes territorial cohesion in addition to economic and social cohesion as the main objectives of EU regional policy. Moreover, the EU regional policy emphasises investments in health and education and especially investments in human capital through the ESF, which specifically targets disadvantaged groups, such as unemployed youth, women and disabled.

However, it can be argued that “the EU is systematically designed to secure ‘economic efficiency’ ahead of ‘socio-spatial equity’ even if its rhetoric suggests that it affords them parity of esteem” (Morgan, 2004: 878). The Lisbon agenda emphasises the importance of cohesion, yet its ultimate objective - competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy - implies policies that build on existing agglomerations to expand high-tech, knowledge-based economic activity. Moreover, the policies of the ESF lack an explicit social citizenship dimension defining “*eligible* (but not *entitled*) policy beneficiaries” in assisted areas (Anderson, 1995: 127).

In the EU, there is an absence of universally agreed criteria for determining “cohesion” or a lack of it. The problem remains as to who is going to decide what an acceptable or unacceptable degree of disparities is. Such a view clearly depends on one’s political ideology and is subject to change over time. While the progress reports measure economic and social cohesion primarily in terms of convergence between member states and regions mainly with regard to GDP per capita, rates of growth, levels of unemployment and productivity (CEC, 2004a, 2005, 2006b), the Commission’s view on cohesion was provided by Hall et al. (2001: 5) as:

[...] inequalities between countries, and particularly between the so called Cohesion Four (Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain) and the rest of the Union; inequalities between regions within the EU; and inequalities between individuals (“social cohesion”). [...] Greater cohesion implies that incomes, employment, and economic opportunities grow faster for groups in weaker areas with low incomes than for groups in richer areas with high incomes.

From this definition, it can be seen that there are different territorial levels to which cohesion can refer (inter-national, inter-regional and intra-regional), and the objective to achieve cohesion at one territorial level can conflict with the objective of cohesion at a different territorial level. As Eriksson (2005: 30-31) draws attention to the emerging growth poles accompanied by increased regional disparities in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe, “the link between convergence, competitiveness and cohesion is not self-evident”. The Sapir report on EU regional policy (Sapir et al., 2003 cited by Eriksson, 2005: 35) states that regional disparities within countries may emerge at the same time as convergence between countries takes place as a result of EU regional policy and that this can be mitigated by social policies. However, in the EU, the domain of social policies is under member state control.

As Morgan (2004) argues, “new regionalism” and the Lisbon process set a too “economistic” and “narrow” agenda for economic development when compared to the Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000 by the United Nations (UN) focusing on quality of life considerations in the poorest countries of the world. Based on an observance of the regional economic development taking place in Wales for the last 50 years, which did not improve the state of public health, Morgan (2004: 884) argues that goals such as jobs and income should become “*instrumentally*” significant while health, well-being and education should become “*intrinsically*” significant.

A growth-led paradigm cannot in itself address complex forms of poverty and social exclusion. Such efforts usually concentrate on the most productive forces within a region with some group of people disproportionately benefiting from the process at the expense of another group of people who suffer from poverty, social exclusion and de-skilling of the labour force. Many of the poor are excluded from directly sharing in the benefits of growth through lack of labour or other assets (Cook, 2006). In order to achieve social cohesion, defined as reducing inequalities between individuals, “fixing the economy” in itself cannot be sufficient; it is more important to get the “social fundamentals right” (Beauvais and Jenson, 2002).

3 Institutions and Governance

The causes of poverty are complex and have multiple dimensions in the form of “social, political and cultural disempowerment” (Prakash, 2002: 53). It is, therefore, not enough to address issues of income. The notion of social exclusion refers to a shift in the meaning of the term from class inequality and lack of resources to “a broader insider/outsider problem” (Andersen and Siim, 2004). While the term poverty only refers to the material elements and aspects, social exclusion is a more encompassing multidimensional term that not only includes material elements but also social and political elements in the form of “inadequate participation, lack of social integration and lack of power” (Room, 1995). Lack of participation in political and civic life is part of political poverty, which is very closely connected with other forms of poverty. Therefore, for living conditions of the socially excluded to change their mobilisation is required (Oyen, 2002).

Social exclusion is increasingly couched in terms of human and citizenship rights. Extreme poverty is a violation of human rights in that it prevents the implementation

of all other human rights (Fournier, 2002). The rights based approach emphasises both economic and social rights, i.e. rights to freedom from want and civil and political rights. Freedom from want cannot be separated from people's right to make their voices heard and their right to participate (Fournier, 2002). The inclusion of the poor and their participation is also "part of the broader issue of addressing the restricted citizenship of people who are poor. It also signifies respect for people; [...] recognition of their expertise in their own experience" (Beresford et al., 1999: 27). That is why the Human Development Report 2000 identifies "a life of respect and value" as a key aim of human development (UNDP, 2000). In the rights based approach, poor people have to be empowered to demand services and participate in the design, provision, and evaluation of these services, which requires an abandonment of paternalistic practices and social accountability from the authorities (Solimano, 2005).

Therefore, social assistance and protection programmes may not be sufficient in addressing these complex dimensions of social exclusion. What is required is the adoption of policy approaches that go beyond "alleviation of economic deprivation to overcoming discrimination, protecting the rights of all citizens, and guaranteeing them meaningful voice and participation in economic, social and political life" (Cook, 2006: 69). Decentralisation of governance and access to participatory political institutions form part of the answer (Prakash, 2002). Citizen participation is not an alternative to state programmes and policies, but rather a prerequisite for their implementation in a more efficient and equitable manner (de Oliveira, 2002). The World Bank stated in 2002 that one lesson they learnt from their experience was that "without strong local ownership" programmes could not be successful (World Bank, 2002). This draws attention to the constellation of institutions, the issue of governance and the participation of stakeholders.

The challenge for development practitioners and policymakers is to design political institutions that enable the political empowerment of the poor and allow them to collectively organise for themselves (Prakash, 2002; UNDP, 1997). A key task in this sense is to make sure that the activities of the poor not only "reach out" but are also "scaled up", i.e. linkages are built between the poor and the powerful in formal institutions (Woolcock, 2002). If we accept that the involvement and commitment of the poor is necessary for the success of development policy, then building democratic processes in which public officials and the most marginalised and the poor engage in interaction and co-operation acquires significance.

In designing political institutions that aim to empower the poor and solicit their partnership in overcoming poverty and social exclusion, theories of deliberative democracy can provide a framework in which to address the issue of the increasing exclusion of the poor from the democratic process. Deliberative democracy perceives the democratic process as the “creation of common understandings and values through communicative dialogue” (Ulrich, 2004: 52). For Habermas (1996), “the central element of the democratic process resides in the procedure of deliberative politics”. Deliberation takes place under circumstances of reasoned reflection and mutual willingness to understand the values, perspectives and interests of others, which introduces the possibility of reframing interests and perspectives in the light of such deliberation. Dryzek and Braithwaite (2000) emphasise that it is “authentic deliberation” that provides democratic legitimacy and, hence, ensures broader support for political outcomes, which are more rational. A key characteristic of deliberative democracy is participation by citizens on an equal basis, and a key aspect of the process is that decision-making is “talk-centric” rather than “voting-centric” (Steiner et al., 2004).

Based on arguments that the conditions under which deliberation takes place in the theory of deliberative democracy refer rather to an ideal world, the extent in which the poor can meaningfully participate in deliberative processes has been questioned. It has been argued that by not taking into account “the structures of power” and “structural inequalities” democratic processes may actually favour the interests of more powerful agents (Levitas, 1998; Young, 2001). Lister (2004: 132), for instance, refers to participatory initiatives in the UK with the aim of fighting poverty where participation consisted of “superficial consultation exercises” or meetings in which politicians would leave as soon as making their speeches, which left people exploited rather than empowered.

These criticisms point to the need to understand the less visible dimensions of power in the form of the ability to draw up agendas and constrain the range of alternatives to be considered and the ability to define the terms of debate (Lukes, 1974). Authentic deliberation, in contrast, implies being “able to follow a discussion where it leads rather than being artificially constrained by rules about what can be discussed or what cannot be changed”, and being able to challenge assumptions and the status quo (Innes and Booher, 2003: 38). Thus, deliberative processes are not just about outcomes but equally about finding institutional designs that “generate trust” among mutually interdependent actors (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 12). Active participation in

deliberative processes and problem solving increases the capacities of individuals and engenders trust.

Forester (1999: 218) argues that Habermas can help better understand these processes through his notion of political and communicative interaction, which draws attention to its vulnerabilities and its socially constructed character. He stresses the need to design deliberative processes that attend systematically to citizens' needs for recognition and support, and then public interaction and action, processes in which each person appreciates the histories (or in other words the suffering) of others (Forester, 1999: 217). The work edited by Fung and Wright (2003) explores the success of five innovative experiments in different parts of the world in "empowered deliberative democracy", which shows the possibility that people in the lowest strata of society can influence policies by engaging in deliberative processes. However, institutional design is no simple task. Baiocchi (2003) in the same volume shows how different aspects of deliberative democracy, pertaining to the interface with civil society and the capacity of municipal authorities to carry out this experiment, have been under theorised.

While a comprehensive assessment of the theory of deliberative democracy is beyond the scope of this paper, deliberative processes provide a useful framework within which to evaluate the governance impact of EU regional policy on centralised candidate countries. A key element of both new regionalism and EU regional policy is the emphasis placed on the regional and local levels in the formulation and implementation of development policies. In the EU, this has led to innovative approaches in the policy process based on multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Multi-level governance is both a concept and a requirement on the part of the EU based on the participation of a variety of actors including different territorial levels (local, regional, national and the EU) and socio-economic groups and voluntary organisations with the aim of mobilising civil society in the development process (CEC, 2001b).

Since regional development plans have to be tailored to the unique circumstances of each region, their formulation requires the involvement of local stakeholders in a collaborative process. At least in theory, therefore, there is a possibility that in centralised countries, where they are introduced, these processes may lead to "experiments in deliberative democracy" at the local and regional levels with the participation of the most disadvantaged and the poor, targeting their needs. Thus, the

trend towards multi-level governance can change the “power matrix” through the mobilisation of new actors and create pressure for the political participation of the socially excluded (Andersen and Siim, 2004: 2).

The shift from government to governance is related to the fact that many pressing problems in today’s globalising world are too complicated and contested to be addressed by centralised control and administration. Deliberative processes, on the other hand, offer participatory and pragmatic problem-solving approaches to these complex issues. The implication of this shift to governance, and the socially constructed nature of deliberative processes as indicated by Habermas, for planning is the acknowledgment of the problematical nature of the “epistemic notion of certain, absolute knowledge, and its practical corollary of command and control” in concrete situations (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 24). Since political exclusion can be hidden behind the veil of “objective’, rational science” (Nickum, 2001), there is a need to integrate poverty reduction, human well-being and the development of stakeholder participation in regional development policy and planning. Thus, state and governance forms play a key role in the objective to achieve social cohesion, defined in terms of both reduction in disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion, and the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties.

4 EU Regional Policy and Turkey

As a candidate country to join the EU, Turkey has to comply with certain institutional preconditions in order to have access to EU regional assistance with the aim to reduce regional disparities. Following the drawing up of the first Accession Partnership document in 2001, Turkey has been in the process of aligning itself with the EU Structural Funds regime, the pace of which has been subject to political developments.¹ The implications of Turkey’s adaptation to the EU regional policy can be examined in two broad dimensions: in terms of territorial organisation and regional development policy; and the challenge of establishing a competent network of actors and institutions with responsibility for coordinating and managing regional policy and programmes.

¹ See Ertugal (2005).

4.1 Territorial Organisation and Regional Development Policy

One of the most important implications of adjusting to the EU in the area of regional policy has been the introduction of a territorial dimension in Turkey; since the location of the poor is important and they need to be reached through programmes. Turkey needed to propose a NUTS² classification in accordance with European Community rules, in particular for the NUTS2 level, which plays an important role in the implementation of the EU Structural Funds. The administrative breakdown in the form of provincial units is too small in size to have the administrative or economic capacity to carry out regional policy in accordance with EU rules. Hence, the law establishing 26 new regions to form the provisional NUTS2 classification was passed in September 2002 (CEC, 2003). The new provisional NUTS2 regions assemble 81 provinces into groupings with geographical or economic similarities.

The territorial dimension facilitates the possibility of, or potential for, integrating disparate programmes aimed at economic growth, social development and poverty reduction. Since 1960, national development plans in Turkey have been prepared according to a sectoral logic with the priority of national industrialisation. In the sectoral planning approach, the plans are made to encourage the growth of certain sectors only without any consideration of regional or sub-regional dimensions and without making any links between different spaces. The incentives scheme was thus oriented towards businesses, which would contribute to sectoral targets, rather than on the basis of encouraging development in the least developed regions (Dericioğlu, 1989). These national plans have predominantly focused on economic measures; and it is only recently, with the 8th Five Year National Development Plan (2001-2005) (SPO, 2000), that poverty alleviation started to feature in the policy agenda.

While experiencing growth, Turkey is constrained by debt, low government revenues and high levels of need in the least developed regions, which have important implications for anti-poverty policies. Economic growth in Turkey averaged close to 5 percent per annum from 1980-2005.³ In the last four years, growth has accelerated, averaging 7.5 percent. However, the unemployment level is quite high at more than

² *Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Units in the EU.*

³ *Source for economic indicators: Turkish Statistical Institute (<http://www.tiie.gov.tr>).*

10 percent according to official figures. GDP per capita income, on the other hand, is relatively low, lower than that of the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. The share of the industry in total value added is at 25 percent, whereas agriculture accounts for 11 percent of value added in Turkey and of the 23 million workforce, 35.6 percent are employed in agriculture, many in subsistence farming in the very poor East and Southeast. In transforming its agricultural economy, Turkey is facing challenges in finding employment for its young population. In terms of food and non-food expenditure, 28.1 percent of the approximately 70 million people live in poverty as of 2003. Socially excluded in Turkey are particularly those working at temporary or insecure jobs, especially in the agricultural sector, uneducated, women, children, elderly and disabled.

Behind these national average figures, there are very wide regional disparities in Turkey. The GDP per capita in 2001 was highest in the three regions in the Western and Northwestern regions, which were up to 150 percent of Turkey's average income. The GDP per capita in the poorest three regions of Turkey in the Eastern and Southeastern regions, however, accounted for only 40 percent of Turkey's average income.⁴ Moreover, income in Turkey's poorest regions is around 9 percent of the EU-15 average income and around 11 percent of the EU-25. There is a broad West-East divide referring to the discrepancy between the more developed and prosperous Western Turkey and the under-developed, impoverished Eastern Turkey. The main centres of economic activity are located in the Western part, benefiting from trade with the rest of the world, large-scale tourism, a higher level of investment and better infrastructure endowment (CEC, 2004b: 37-38).

The implication of adjusting to the EU's NUTS system is, therefore, positive for Turkey in the sense that it potentially allows for a systematic consideration of the regional distribution of poverty and the possibility of drawing synergies between growth and poverty reduction policies at the regional level. Given the extent of regional disparities in Turkey and large differences in the economic, social and demographic characteristics between different areas, the introduction of a territorial dimension focusing on the regional scale, albeit determined by the statistical classification of the EU, may contribute towards the formulation of policies that take these differences into account and address development gaps. Region-specific social impact assessment, mapping of poverty, analysis of human development and other

⁴ Available at <http://dpt.gov.tr>.

indicators may provide insights into the targets of poverty reduction (Dabholkar, 2001). One reason why national development strategies “often do not get implemented is that their spatial and land-use implications are not delineated in specific geographic contexts” (CEC, 2004b: 23).

Additionally, the introduction of a regional scale and regional programming may provide an opportunity to link short-term social assistance and crisis relief to long-term enhancement of natural resource and labour productivity. In Turkey, economic growth efforts have not been integrated with efforts to provide welfare transfers to the needy. Rather, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund, which has come to assume almost all social responsibilities on behalf of the state with respect to the poor, provides for immediate and urgent relief instead of continuous or regular support. Social assistance as such in Turkey is considered as charity rather than a social right (UNDP, 2004).

One of the ways in which to build linkages between economic growth and poverty reduction is through growth that disproportionately favours regions where the poor live and uses the factors of production that they possess, which is labour (Klasen, 2003). Khan (2001) shows the successful experience in Bangladesh, which is based on social mobilisation and organisation of the poor. While the introduction of a bottom-up approach to regional programming in Turkey offers an opportunity for local and regional stakeholders to influence the formation of regional strategies with a view to generating growth from which the poor can derive disproportionate benefit, the economic growth agenda of the EU, based on the Lisbon process, is not particularly conducive to achieving this outcome.

Although still lacking comprehensive regional development strategies, Turkey’s official policy documents increasingly reflect the rhetoric of the EU. For example, the Medium Term Programme (SPO, 2005) for 2007-2009 emphasises the need to increase the contribution of regions to national development, competitiveness and employment creation by developing human resources, social capital, vocational skills and entrepreneurship. In the same vein, the 9th National Development Plan for 2007-2013 (SPO, 2006) states competitiveness, employment creation, human development and social solidarity, and regional development as its main aims. Policies will support innovative, competitive, and high value added, leading sectors in the regions and develop human resources and social capital as a way to foster specialisation. In centres that have high development potential, access to new technologies and innovation will

be fostered, technology transfer systems will be developed and an efficient R&D infrastructure will be formed. Typical policy instruments will consist of science parks, technology transfer centres and incubators (SPO, 2006).

The emphasis in these official documents on the knowledge-based economy and innovation will inevitably direct policies towards expanding agglomerations in high-tech activities. Within the available options provided in Turkey's official documents, it is difficult to find policy solutions for promoting economic growth that disproportionately favour both the backward regions and the poor living within those backward regions, which are suffering from a lack of human capital, insufficient physical and social infrastructure, and subsistence agriculture. Reliance on endogenous growth, based on the mobilisation of local resources and private investment, is not sufficient for poor regions where locally available resources are scarce. To give an indication, for Turkey overall, 67.3 percent of the labour force as of 2005 consists of those whose education is below high school level or illiterate. Those who have finished higher education constitute 8.8 percent of the labour force (SPO, 2006). Hence, the finance and delivery of services to poor regions for infrastructure, human capital or poverty reduction requires significant resource transfers, for which state resources are essential (Cook, 2006). While the EU provides financial assistance for these purposes in the pre-accession period, the amount of funding that is available to Turkey is minimal – €1 billion in the last three years, equivalent to a mere 0.2 percent of its GDP.⁵

The second way in which the poor can benefit from growth is if it involves “public redistributive policies, especially via taxes, transfers, and other government spending” (Klasen, 2003: 68). Government spending can either aim to include the poor in economic growth; or it could provide the poor with safety nets transferring payments, which increase with the increase in economic growth. Klasen (2003) prefers the former to the latter but, at the same time, acknowledges the importance of safety nets in allowing the poor to take greater risks enabling them to become direct beneficiaries of growth. Effective redistributive processes are particularly important for Turkey, which is characterised by extreme levels of inequality.

There are two major reasons as to why the second method of benefiting the poor from economic growth, as proposed by Klasen, poses a major challenge in the

⁵ *Author's calculation.*

Turkish context. The first major reason is that Turkish politics is marked by a “populist” model of distributional and social policies (Boratav and Özuğurlu, 2006). Waldner (1999: 37) calls this type of polity “constituency clientelism”, referring to a system where payments to class constituencies buys political loyalty. Politics is “understood and defined as a strategy to build and sustain power by distributing material benefits generated by the state through clientelistic channels of interest mediation” (Cizre-Sakallioğlu and Yeldan, 2000: 500). Populist redistribution, instead of tackling income and wealth inequalities, in fact, evades distributional issues.

The second major reason has to do with populist measures reaching beyond sustainable limits during the 1980s and 1990s, with disastrous consequences in the form of financial crises, which brought the IMF and the World Bank as the major actors in macroeconomic policies. The solution of these international organisations to the impasse was to set increasing high targets on primary surpluses on the public budget leading to a crowding-out of social expenditures and social transfers (Boratav and Özuğurlu, 2006).

4.2 Institutional Adaptation

It is now widely established that in the absence of additional measures to ensure their participation the poor benefit less from regionally targeted programmes than the non-poor (Cook, 2006). Thus, despite the unfavourable policy agenda of the EU regional policy for growth that disproportionately favours the backward regions and the poor, the EU requirement to establish a regional level of institutions and network of actors can, in principle, provide for the possibility of intended beneficiaries to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of regional policy. This can be achieved in two respects. Firstly, the establishment of a regional level implies a degree of decentralisation in an otherwise highly centralised country by getting closer to the citizens, which may serve further democratisation. Secondly, the state can promote the inclusion and participation of the socially excluded in the institutions to be formed at the regional level. Designed in this way, institutional arrangements can empower, protect rights and enable participation, which is necessary for growth that disproportionately favours the poor. However, historical legacies and pre-existing institutions do not easily permit the design of institutional arrangements with intended consequences.

The impact of the EU requirement to establish a regional level of governance in Turkey has been the adoption of a law in January 2006 for establishing Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) based on NUTS2 regions.⁶ RDAs in themselves constitute novel forms of governance for Turkey. In terms of geographical size, Turkey encompasses an area almost as big as Germany and France combined. Despite its geographical size, however, a regional tier of government/administration has not existed in Turkey. The territorial organisation of the state traditionally consists of the central and local levels (provincial and sub-provincial). Historically, regional policies have not been given priority. Where regional development concerns emerged, these were addressed either through the State Planning Organisation (SPO) or other central government ministries with regional development responsibilities without the involvement of local or regional actors. For the most part, these measures tended to be on an *ad hoc* basis outside any comprehensive regional development strategy framework, with the exception of the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP).

The proliferation in the number of territorial actors that take part in the formulation and implementation of regional programmes through the RDAs in Turkey, therefore, represents a shift, albeit an incremental one, from central command and control towards more participatory approaches. In Turkey's traditional planning approach, it has been assumed that the decisions taken are non-political and serve the interests of the whole public (Sökmen, 1996; Alpöge, 1994). In this approach, different preferences, interests and expectations encountered in implementation and the associated resistance become an external reality, outside of the planning process. From the authoritarian point of view, this multi-actor outside world becomes an enemy. Thus, whereas previous decisions about planning have been taken by a group of technical experts, with the establishment of RDAs, there will be more territorial levels involved. Moreover, the assumption about the "objective, rational" nature of the planning process is being challenged in favour of an acknowledgment of the political nature of the process.⁷

The institutional structure of the RDAs, as designed by Turkey's central authority, however, does not provide much scope for ensuring the participation of the poor on an equal basis with the state and non-state actors in the formulation of regional plans

⁶ *In the first stage, two RDAs are being set up in the relatively developed pilot regions of Izmir and Adana/Mersin. The establishment of RDAs for the rest of the regions will follow.*

⁷ *Interviews conducted with the SPO, responsible for regional policy and planning, in 2003.*

and programmes, with the implication that the regional growth agendas are not likely to be designed in a way that will benefit the poor disproportionately. The decision-making organ of the RDAs – the executive board – will be composed of centrally appointed provincial governors, heads of locally elected provincial assemblies, elected mayors of metropolitan municipalities (or the mayors of municipalities in the provincial centres), and presidents of chambers of commerce and/or industry from each province. Where the RDA is based on a NUTS2 region that is composed of one province (such as Istanbul, Ankara or Izmir) then the executive board will additionally comprise three representatives from the private sector and/or civil society organisations, who will be elected by the development board.⁸

The role of the centrally appointed governors in the executive board as well as the supervisory role of the SPO over the RDAs in determining the latter’s performance are indications of the degree of central state control. Governors will act as the heads of the RDAs. The executive board will take decisions by majority vote, reflecting a “voting-centric” understanding rather than a “talk-centric” one. If the vote is split, then the vote of the governor representing the RDA will determine the result. The general-secretary of the RDA, who will be a specialist, responsible for execution, will have no right to vote. Moreover, the decisions of the RDAs taken in this manner and pertaining to the regional development strategies and programmes will be subject to the control of the SPO, which may or may not integrate these regional priorities to the national development plan as it sees fit.

The composition of the executive board in the RDAs also point to the role of the local administrations. Since the RDAs do not constitute a separate layer of administration but rather serve as platforms that bring together local institutions, with the state remaining the dominant player, regional development projects are likely to place greater discretion in the hands of local administrations. However, demands on local administrations, which suffer from weak human and financial resources especially in the backward regions, for facilitation and coordination may exceed their capacity to deliver.⁹ Moreover, greater demands from local administrations may increase the scope for rents and corruption. It has already been observed that patron-client relationships embedded especially in municipalities in Turkey constitute

⁸ See *Law No. 5446 (2006)*.

⁹ *Interviews with Diyarbakir Metropolitan Mayor and Sanliurfa Deputy Mayor (Southeast Anatolia region) in 2003. Also see UNDP (2004)*.

significant constraints in the way of ensuring the meaningful participation of civil society at the local level (Sengul, 2004). The partisan approach of municipalities in Turkey in the distribution of social assistance to the poor has been documented (Bugra and Keyder, 2005). Questions of transparency and accountability about the functioning of Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations managed by government officials in the provinces, which provide social assistance to the poor, have also been reported (UNDP, 2004). Linking local-level participation with accountability and service delivery, as has been tried elsewhere, could have been an innovative approach¹⁰, but it was not adopted.

The composition of the decision-making organ of the RDAs, while emphasising the private sector in the form of chambers of trade and industry, does not make provision for the inclusion of the poor and the socially excluded. Even though provision is made for the representatives of NGOs in metropolitan regions, the poor and the socially excluded are unlikely to have the resources to get organised and, therefore, not likely to be included and represented by the NGOs. The implication of ensuring participation through organisations rather than individuals and the absence of a strategy to reach the non-organised sections of society is that the socially excluded are going to be excluded even further. In any case, NGOs do not have a place in the executive boards in the vast majority of the RDAs to be established, including those in the most backward regions. The inclusion of the private sector and the exclusion of the civil society in the decision-making organ is likely to lead to a policy agenda for regional development that is not favourable to achieving growth that directly benefits the poor.

The development board of the RDAs, although encompassing a wider membership (a maximum of 100 members) including the civil society, does not provide much scope for the poor to influence policies either. In addition to the problem of who will represent the socially excluded and the absence of any envisaged state intervention to organise the poor, the development council will be a purely consultative body. Envisaged to convene at least twice a year, its decisions will be subject to majority vote. Moreover, the purpose of these decisions will be merely to provide suggestions or advice to the executive board and, as such, they will not be binding. This reflects

¹⁰ See de Janvry et al. (2005).

an understanding of participation that takes place in shape, not in essence.¹¹ The structure of the RDAs, therefore, is far from providing the scope for reasoned reflection aimed at understanding the values, perspectives and interests of others or “authentic deliberation”. Moreover, they are not likely to lead to a significant change in the structures of power since the mechanisms provided for the inclusion of non-state actors allow for only superficial consultation. Through its power to judge the performance of RDAs and its influence in the selection of the general-secretary and the designation of the non-state actors who will be involved in the development boards, the central authority retains the ability to draw up agendas and define the terms of debate.

5 Economic and Social Cohesion in Turkey’s Southeast Anatolia Region

The implications of adapting to the EU regional policy for achieving economic and social cohesion in one of the least developed regions of Turkey can similarly be assessed in terms of territorial organisation and regional development policy, and institutional structures, albeit this time at the regional level.

Turkey’s Southeast Anatolia region comprises nine provinces with a population of 6.6 million. GDP per capita income in the region is around 47 percent of the national average income. The region’s contribution to the national GDP is 5 percent, which consists mainly of the value added created in the agricultural sector.¹² While poverty exists in every region in Turkey, it is much more concentrated in the regions to the east. According to unofficial estimates, 50 to 60 percent of the population in the Southeast Anatolia region live in poverty, which has become inter-generational (TESEV, 2006). Sixty three percent of the population live in urban areas and 37 percent live in rural areas. Between 1990 and 2000, the rate of population growth was 2.5 percent in the region compared to the national average of 1.8 percent. Forty one percent of the regional population is younger than the age of 14, with women,

¹¹ *This understanding of participation in Turkey was articulated in the interviews conducted with several NGOs in Istanbul in the context of their relationships with local municipalities and in Diyarbakir and Sanliurfa (Southeast Anatolia) in the context of their relationships with the GAP Administration (see section below) in 2003. In the words of one respondent: “They ask for our opinion, but we can change only the wording or phrases; not make suggestions as to the essence, the way a law is being prepared, the thinking behind it.”*

¹² *Source for data: Turkish Statistical Institute (<http://www.die.gov.tr>).*

children and youth comprising the most disadvantaged groups. The regional unemployment rate is much higher than the national average, reaching unprecedented levels accompanied by an enormous gender bias. Approximately 44.4 percent of women and 18.2 percent of men are illiterate (Elmas, 2004).

Since the end of the 1980s, Turkey's biggest regional development project – GAP standing for Southeast Anatolia Project – has been implemented in this region with an estimated total investment cost of 32 billion US dollars, of which about 16-17 billion dollars or 50 percent has been realised. GAP originally consisted mostly of infrastructure investments in energy and irrigation, and only later developed a multi-sectoral approach. The establishment of the GAP Regional Administration, the only one of its kind in Turkey, in 1989 played an important role in the development of a social dimension.

The reasons behind the backwardness of this region, even despite the GAP investments, are many, ranging from economic and geographic to social conditions. However, political reasons stand out as perhaps the most important. The majority of people living in the region are Kurdish. One of the consequences of the armed fighting between the state security forces and the terrorist organisation PKK, fighting for secession, that has been going on for the last two decades, has been the death of an estimated 30,000 people and the forced displacement of more than a million villagers, who have had to migrate to urban areas. This has resulted in “rootlessness and loss of dignity” with “a strongly felt need for recognition of the suffering” (TESEV, 2006).

The most important implication of adapting to EU regional policy has been the division of this region into three NUTS2 regions with corresponding three RDAs to be established. The creation of new structures is likely to add to the already existing institutional complexity in the region. The new RDAs will co-exist with the GAP Regional Administration, which will co-ordinate the activities of the former, and other public investment institutions, which have been operating in the region to implement GAP investments. It is not clear what the relationship will be between the new RDAs and the public investment institutions; however, previous experience in the region suggests that it is unlikely to be an easy one. There are approximately 40 public investment institutions in the region, which have their own budgets. The GAP Administration, which does not have its own independent budget, has failed to co-ordinate the investments of these institutions, which can be seen in the fact that as of

2002 the sectoral realisation of GAP investments has been 18 percent in irrigation and 80 percent in energy even though it is investments in irrigation that are more beneficial for the regional economy. The possibility of a lack of co-ordination between institutions in the region that play important roles in the regional economy reduces the likelihood of effective regional development programmes.

Indeed, the GAP has failed to generate economic development and reduce poverty. Focusing on growth as the main indicator of material well-being, the GAP has not concerned itself with improvements in the distribution of income or enhancement of participation in decision-making. Consequently, the GAP could not be owned by the people in the region as their participation in decision-making and implementation has not materialised beyond rare and *ad hoc* information exchange meetings. The perception among people living in the region tends to be one of skepticism at best, which is illustrative of the deep distrust between the state and society in the region.¹³

In a political climate of mutual distrust between people and public officials in a region characterised by high levels of poverty, the RDAs as potential platforms for participatory planning acquire special significance for generating trust and a collective development effort focusing on the reduction of poverty. The institutional structure of the RDAs, that are yet to be established, constitutes an improvement when compared with the GAP Regional Administration in terms of facilitating participation since the GAP Administration is a deconcentrated arm of the central government, with its headquarters and most of its staff based in the capital Ankara. RDAs, thus, bring non-state actors through their executive and development boards as permanent features of the institutional landscape in contrast to the previous rare and *ad hoc* occasions.

Despite the improvement when compared with the previous period, the criticism levelled against the RDAs for excluding the non-organised interests gains even more validity in the Southeast Anatolia region. Historically, Southeast Anatolia is a part of Turkey where state penetration has been much more superficial than in other regions. Geographically, it is the most distant region from the centre and its mountainous terrain makes transportation and communication more difficult. In contrast to other regions in Turkey, land ownership is very unbalanced with 40.3 percent of the agricultural producers in the region not owning any land (GAP and KOOP, 2001:

¹³ *Interview with an NGO in Diyarbakir in 2003.*

13). In this quasi-feudal system, the few landowners deliver block votes for the political parties and get themselves or their candidates elected as local politicians.¹⁴ The RDAs in their currently envisaged form, therefore, serve to legitimise the status quo rather than change the social structures of power.¹⁵

Additionally, civil society organisations in the region are very weak both in terms of representation and participation. Most of them lack the capacity to be able to influence policies and contribute to the formulation of programmes. The region is also weak in terms of producer organisations. The number of agricultural cooperatives, agricultural chambers and their members remain very low compared with other regions (GAP and KOOP, 2001). Therefore, in their currently envisaged form, EU-induced RDAs in the Southeast Anatolia region are not likely to improve the situation of the poor and may even lead to their further exclusion from political and, hence, economic and social processes.

Yet, the introduction of RDAs, informed by the principles of participation and partnership and providing potentially for structures that can embody these principles, represents an opportunity to the state and society in the Southeast for mutual recognition and empowered capacity to act in order to fight against poverty. These platforms can evolve in order to serve as “avenues for learning” through the recognition of the suffering of people as a result of war and poverty (Forester, 1999: 203). In this sense, implementing the right democratic framework based on the “social learning model of deliberation” as advocated by Kanra (2005), through the medium of RDAs, as a stage leading to the decision-making oriented deliberation can serve the institutionalisation of dialogue. One feature of the social learning model of deliberation is that there is no pressure to reach an agreement and, hence, there is a wider scope for understanding and learning among participants. Without recognition on the basis of equality and respect and in the absence of appreciation of one another’s histories and understanding of common vulnerabilities and aspirations, policies are bound to fail in responding to real needs.

¹⁴ *In this context it has been observed that regions, where individuals decide their own votes, can more effectively bargain to attract public services to their regions. However, in regions where voting is not determined by individuals but by primordial loyalties and considerations, politicians can easily find ways of winning these votes without shifting public services to these regions (Tekeli, 1989).*

¹⁵ *It is argued that a social movement, which originated from social conditions (lack of land ownership and political powerlessness against the few land owners), transformed into an ethnic-based (Kurdish) and separatist violent movement due to state policies that ignored this problem (Keyder, 1996: 106-111).*

The key actor in facilitating these processes is the state. In the absence of political commitment on the part of the central authority to regulate power relations in social life so as to limit the possibility of domination and to transfer state resources, the objectives to reduce inter-regional disparities and achieve regional development in the backward regions that disproportionately benefits the poor cannot be realised. State support has been one of the essential factors in the success of the small-scale socio-economic development projects, aimed at poverty alleviation, implemented in the region by the GAP Administration with UNDP funding. The results of these projects, which targeted women, youth and children and aimed to increase their organisational capacity and opportunities for employment, varied from province to province depending on the degree to which (deputy) governors understood the needs of the targeted groups and adopted the principles behind such projects and, hence, provided their support.¹⁶

The GAP, which has failed to ensure participation in its programming despite the rhetoric to the contrary, has not addressed the real needs of the people in the region. While a disproportionate share of public investments went to the energy sector, investments in health and education lagged behind. A human and social dimension developed later in the mid-1990s with the GAP Administration. However, even then, the amount of state resources allocated for this purpose remained meagre.¹⁷ Within the framework of the pre-accession process, the EU provided €47 million of grant money for a five-year duration focusing on cultural heritage, rural development and SMEs. However, clearly, this is far away from being adequate for a serious development effort that aims to eradicate poverty.

6 Conclusion

This article identified the extent to which the principles and practices of EU regional policy, as they apply to Turkey in its accession process, are playing and are capable of playing a key role in addressing the development needs of the least developed regions in Turkey, characterised by high levels of poverty and social exclusion. Based on an

¹⁶ *Unpublished Report (2006).*

¹⁷ *Twenty eight Multi-Purpose Community Centres for women (ÇATOMs) were set up instead of the target of 67 due to lack of resources, despite the difference they make in the neighbourhoods where they are established. For enterprise support (GİDEMs), there has been no finance. At the moment, they are financed by the EU and previously, they were financed by the UNDP.*

analysis that differentiates between policy and polity, the article argues that while the policy agenda promoted by the EU regional policy is not favourable for addressing the needs of backward regions in Turkey, the institutional requirements for benefiting from the EU's Structural Funds may potentially provide, through regionalisation, more democratic platforms that enable the participation of the socially excluded in the formulation and implementation of regional programmes and the possibility of integrating policies aimed at poverty reduction and economic growth at the regional level, in an otherwise extremely centralised country. However, so far, the newly created institutions in Turkey, for compliance with the EU, do not facilitate deliberative processes and participation of the excluded, but rather reinforce their exclusion and do not disturb the status quo in terms of social power structures.

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