SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE

GLOBAL TRENDS, COMPARATIVE ANALYSES, AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

EDITORS

HAKAN GÖKHAN GÜNDOĞDU

ÖMER FARUK GENÇKAYA



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Global Trends, Comparative Analyses, and Strategic Approaches

Editors
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PREFACE

Sustainable public administration and urban governance are of critical importance in effectively addressing the economic, social, and environmental challenges faced by contemporary societies. Factors such as rapid urban transformation, population concentration, climate change, and resource management necessitate a rethinking of public policies and local governance practices. In this context, the transformation of public administration structures, local governance models, and urban policies in line with sustainable development goals must be considered in an integrated manner, incorporating principles such as institutional capacity, participatory mechanisms, environmental sensitivity, and social justice.

This book aims to bring together theoretical approaches and comparative applications in the field of sustainable public administration and urban governance, offering both conceptual and practical contributions to the literature. The chapters are organized in a logical progression, beginning with social justice and vulnerable groups, followed by modern and post-modern governance paradigms, sustainable urban management models, urbanization and development processes, energy and sustainability perspectives, and, finally, local governance case studies.

Accordingly, the first chapter establishes the conceptual framework by addressing social justice and the governance of vulnerable groups; it is followed by an introduction to modern and post-modern governance paradigms and a discussion of sustainable urban management models and global comparisons. Subsequent chapters elaborate on the relationship between urbanization and sustainable governance, energy management and sustainability perspectives, and environmental sustainability practices. The book concludes with practical insights through paradiplomatic relations and local governance case studies.

This work aims to provide academics, public policy experts, urban planners, and local government actors with both a theoretical foundation and a practical governance perspective, fostering a comprehensive understanding of sustainable public administration and urban governance. It also seeks to equip all relevant stakeholders with in-depth insights into the sustainable transformation of cities and public administration processes.

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INTRODUCTION

Hakan Gökhan Gündoğdu[1], Ömer Faruk Gençkaya[2]

In the twenty-first century, sustainable public administration and urban governance have become essential frameworks for addressing the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges of contemporary societies. Rapid urbanization, climate change, environmental degradation, social inequality, and the rising demand for transparent and participatory governance have significantly transformed the relationships between states, local authorities, and citizens. These global transformations have redefined the functions of public institutions and emphasized the need for governance models that harmonize efficiency, social justice, and environmental responsibility. Within this framework, the central research problem explored in this book focuses on how sustainability principles can be effectively embedded within the institutional and policy practices of public administration to foster long-term societal resilience and inclusiveness. The significance and urgency of this issue arise from the growing necessity for governance systems that can effectively respond to diverse crises, including environmental threats, public health challenges, economic instability, and social fragmentation, while ensuring democratic participation and institutional transparency. By examining global developments and conducting comparative analyses, the book seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different countries and cities integrate sustainability into their governance mechanisms. Through this approach, it identifies key institutional reforms, innovative policy tools, and strategic frameworks that support the transition toward sustainable governance models. Ultimately, the study aims to make both a theoretical and practical contribution to the discipline of public administration by linking sustainability theory with the realities of governance practice. The overarching goal of the book is to analyze and synthesize international experiences in sustainable governance to generate evidence-based insights that can assist policymakers, academics, and practitioners in creating governance systems that are more inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking.

Although sustainability and governance have both been extensively examined in academic research, their convergence, particularly in relation to urban

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transformation and administrative reform, remains relatively underexplored. Existing studies often approach environmental sustainability separately from institutional, economic, and social factors, thereby neglecting the complex interconnections among governance systems, public policies, and civic participation. This book seeks to fill this gap by exploring how sustainability principles influence and transform governance frameworks, policy-making processes, and institutional practices. It views cities as living laboratories of experimentation and innovation, where administrative efficiency, participatory governance, and ecological responsibility come together. Through this lens, the book provides insights into how sustainable governance can simultaneously confront environmental challenges, enhance institutional resilience, and foster more inclusive and adaptive forms of urban management.

The book is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines governance theory, sustainability transition studies, and urban political ecology, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between institutions, society, and the environment. Central concepts such as resilience, justice, inclusiveness, and capacity-building are employed to conceptualize sustainability as a transformative paradigm rather than a purely ecological concern. Drawing on the perspectives of thinkers such as Elinor Ostrom, David Harvey, and Patsy Healey, the analysis connects structural and participatory dimensions of governance. Concepts including power, spatial justice, and collective agency are fundamental to understanding how institutional change takes place. This conceptual diversity is significant because it allows for a comprehensive interpretation of sustainable governance that reflects the complexities of urban systems, integrates diverse knowledge traditions, and adapts to different political, social, and cultural contexts.

Methodologically, this book combines comparative, qualitative, and policy-oriented approaches. It draws from case studies, policy documents, and institutional analyses to capture the dynamic processes through which sustainability principles are embedded into public administration and urban governance systems. Through its interdisciplinary scope, the book highlights both global trends and locally grounded practices, demonstrating how governance models evolve in response to political, social, and ecological pressures.

The book is structured to provide a logical and progressive transition from theoretical debates to comparative frameworks and policy-oriented analyses, presenting a coherent exploration of sustainable public administration and urban governance. Chapter 1 outlines the theoretical foundations of sustainable urban governance within global and Turkish urbanization contexts. It emphasizes the need to move from traditional management to participatory, multi-actor governance in response to growing social, economic, and environmental

challenges. The section defines sustainable governance through key principles like participation, transparency, accountability, and collaboration, aligning these with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Chapter 2 explores how sustainable governance can only be achieved through social inclusion and justice-oriented policy frameworks. Focusing on vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, and the urban poor, this section analyzes comparative cases like Istanbul, Barcelona, and Medellín to demonstrate how participatory and rights-based governance enhances sustainability. By linking equity, representation, and spatial justice to the broader goals of the book, the chapter highlights that sustainability must integrate not only environmental and economic dimensions but also strong commitments to democratic participation and social fairness.

Chapter 3 examines how the transition from modernism to postmodernism has transformed urban governance from a sustainable perspective. It explores alternative urban models such as new towns, satellite cities, smart cities, and slow cities (Cittaslow), emphasizing the emergence of postmodern governance through living lab practices in smart cities. The chapter also assesses how this shift manifests in Türkiye regarding environmental awareness, participation, and inclusiveness, linking these developments to the Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, Chapter 3 aligns with the book's broader framework by offering an integrated view of sustainable urban governance in theory and practice. Chapter 4 focuses on how governance-based approaches can support sustainable city management. It compares global frameworks and best practices with Türkiye's local governance system, highlighting issues of participation, accountability, and digital transformation. The chapter underscores the need to strengthen local capacity and adapt governance models to promote sustainability, aligning closely with the book's overall goal of linking public administration reforms to sustainable urban development.

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between urbanization and sustainable development through the case of Indonesia, emphasizing how rapid urban growth shapes economic transformation, spatial inequality, and environmental sustainability. It analyzes the balance between urbanization's potential as a driver of progress and its risks when governance and planning are weak. In line with the book's broader focus, this section highlights the critical role of governance capacity, institutional design, and inclusive policy frameworks in ensuring that urbanization contributes to sustainable and equitable development. Chapter 6 examines how public administration adapts to rising global energy demand through a sustainability perspective, focusing on the balance between technological progress and environmental responsibility. It explores how governments integrate energy efficiency, policy innovation, and citizen participation into administrative processes to address climate and resource challenges. Consistent with the

book's overarching framework, this section underscores the need for sustainable governance approaches that link energy policy with institutional capacity, transparency, and long-term ecological resilience.

Chapter 7 focuses on the intersection of climate change, human rights, and governance, emphasizing the protection of vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by environmental crises. It explores how climate justice can serve as both a legal and normative framework for ensuring equity, participation, and accountability in climate action. In alignment with the book's broader theme of sustainable governance, this section highlights the need for rights-based, inclusive, and transparent policy reforms that integrate environmental sustainability with social justice and human dignity. Chapter 8 explores the role of local governments in international relations through the lens of paradiplomacy and sister city partnerships, using the case of Tokat Province as an illustrative example. It examines how local administrations contribute to soft power, cultural diplomacy, and regional development by engaging in cross-border cooperation. In alignment with the book's overarching focus on sustainable and multi-level governance, this section highlights the increasing importance of local actors in global policymaking processes and demonstrates how paradiplomatic practices can strengthen local capacities, foster international visibility, and support sustainable urban and regional development.

This book explores the evolving landscape of sustainable public administration and urban governance, focusing on how institutions can adapt to global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and urban resilience. It covers comparative cases and theoretical frameworks from diverse contexts while recognizing that its scope is illustrative rather than exhaustive. The analysis bridges theory and practice by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from public policy, urban studies, and sustainability science. Guiding questions include: How can public institutions embed sustainability into governance structures? What mechanisms foster participation, adaptability, and long-term resilience? Ultimately, sustainable governance is not simply an administrative function; it is a transformative framework that unites institutional, social, and environmental dimensions to build adaptive, inclusive, and resilient systems capable of shaping fair and sustainable urban futures.

CHAPTER 1
SUSTAINABLE URBAN GOVERNANCE: A CONCEPTUAL PROLOGUE

Ömer Faruk Gençkaya[1]

1. Introduction

Since 1970, the urban population has increased from 1.19 billion to 4.8 billion by 2025, representing 58% of the world's population. It is estimated that 70% of the global population will reside in cities by 2050 (Van Bronkhorst et al., 2023; Mukim & Roberts, 2023, p. 53). Governments will need to construct housing for approximately 2 billion individuals within the next 25 years, compared to the growth of settlements for 3 billion inhabitants over the past 3,000 years. Access to clean water, sanitation, waste disposal, sustainable transportation, safe housing, and climate resilience will be essential for 7 billion individuals in developing countries, especially in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Urban areas generate over 80% of global GDP; however, they also account for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making them a significant source of pollution (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). In addition to negative impacts such as air pollution caused by urbanization, the overconsumption of natural resources poses a significant issue. Nevertheless, cities are vital to society, acting as hubs of wealth, culture, and education (Evans et al., 2005, p. 1). They promote change and innovation, form new ideas and political visions, and represent humanity's past accomplishments and future promise. Therefore, they bridge past and present achievements and play a crucial role in the process of sustainable development (United Nations, 1992).

Cities in Türkiye accommodate a significant portion of the country's population. Türkiye's population consists of 67.2% of densely populated urban areas, 15.5% of moderately populated urban areas, and 17.2% of rural areas (Turkish Statistical Institute [TURKSTAT], 2025). The proportion of people living in provincial and district centers is 93.4%, while the population living within municipal boundaries is 81.2 million (94.8%). Scientific estimates indicate that the population of Istanbul, the most populous city, will remain stable, especially after 2025 (Hoornweg & Pope, 2014). According to recent data (Turkish Statistical Institute

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[TURKSTAT], 2023), the share of 30 metropolitan cities in total GDP is 85.6%.

Several countries encounter challenges in urban governance, requiring adjustments for sustainable development (da Cruz et al., 2018; Sisson et al., 2023). These challenges include inadequate decentralization, limited resources, and limited citizen engagement, resulting in poor public service delivery and dependence on informal providers. Inefficient governance structures hinder planning, escalate expenses, and diminish transparency. The expansion of metropolitan regions and inequalities among intermediary cities further complicate urban governance initiatives. Following the declaration of the UN Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, a new governance concept has been formulated, which is "governance for sustainability" (Agrawal et al., 2022), or "sustainability governance" (URBACT, 2024).

In line with global developments, the effective and efficient management of economic, social, and environmental conditions will be crucial in urban areas. However, urban management encounters considerable challenges, particularly in developing nations, as it serves as the primary administrative unit tasked with addressing the daily requirements of inhabitants (Song et al., 2023). Tensions between central and municipal governments, constraints on financial and human resources, internal and external migration, and several related issues impede the efficient functioning of urban governance systems. Municipalities primarily attend to immediate and pressing needs while also planning and overseeing medium- and long-term requirements within a sustainable framework. Therefore, urban governance is essential for tackling the intricacies of urban life, and cities must urgently confront the challenges of the 21st century. This chapter aims to provide a conceptual assessment of governance, sustainability, sustainable governance, and sustainable urban governance.

2. From Governance to Sustainable Urban Governance

Governance

Since the advent of the "neoliberal turn" in the late 20th century, the adoption of private sector concepts and practices (Hood, 1991), including decentralization, performance evaluation, competition, and customer orientation, has characterized New Public Management (NPM), resulting in a managerial approach that emphasizes efficiency in public service delivery (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). This change originated from concepts such as the reduced significance of the state, increased managerial autonomy, and a focus on public responsibility and efficiency (Klijn, 2012; see also Pierre & Peters, 2000; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). While NPM emphasizes efficiency through market competition and performance management, the Neo-Weberian State (NWS) focuses on user-oriented professionalism to enhance effectiveness (Drechsler & Kattel, 2009). In

contrast, New Public Governance (NPG) seeks to create public value through collaborative relationships across sectors and societal levels (Osborne, 2010; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013), representing the major contemporary public management reform trends.

In a mutually dependent global context (Castells, 2000), political institutions facing intricate social challenges need to collaborate with diverse societal stakeholders (Kickert et al., 1997; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007), encompassing the private sector and civil society, via mechanisms such as public-private partnerships (Osborne, 2000), collaboration (Ansell, 2012), and stakeholder engagement (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). These approaches underscore governance as a viable alternative to state-centric service delivery frameworks. Efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in the provision of public services have driven the shift from centralized to market-driven public service delivery (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). In other words, governments are advancing NPM by enabling service delivery and public policy implementation through diverse corporate and non-profit organizations. Governance thus involves a dynamic relationship between the governing and the governed, enabling societal decision-making.

The distinction between government and governance is characterized by "old governance," which relies on state-centric political-institutional frameworks directing society and policies, and "new governance," which emphasizes self-governance within society (Pierre, 2000). In contrast to earlier definitions, recent interpretations highlight the non-hierarchical nature of governance (Capano et al., 2015, p. 313), indicating a transformation in the concept of government and characterizing it as functioning independently of traditional hierarchical structures. Governance encompasses a broader concept than government (Klijn, 2008), involving various actors engaged at multiple levels without relying solely on top-down strategies (Pierre & Peters, 2005).

Moreover, "governance" refers to the coordination mechanisms employed by government organizations to address collective action challenges in governmental functions (Kooiman, 1993, 2000; de Bruijn & ten Heuvelhof, 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Majone, 1997; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Colebatch, 2014). It explains the interactions among diverse governmental and non-governmental entities engaged in policy processes, as well as the instruments and concepts that enable these relationships. Governance functions as a framework for analyzing public policy decision-making, implementation, and the roles of diverse policymakers within this dynamic process. Governance utilizes processes through which citizens and groups articulate interests, meet obligations, and settle disputes (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, & United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012).

Three factors have caused modern democracies to shift from hierarchical

administration to a network-based system: the hollowing out of the state (emphasizing the increasing independence of civil service agencies and private enterprises in managing resources and making decisions), the contradictions of NPM, and the development of intergovernmental management (Rhodes, 1996, pp. 660-661).

In governance literature, the interplay between hierarchy, markets, and network governance is crucial in democratic systems (Tan, 2012). Although a governance approach promotes networks over hierarchy, Rhodes (1997) cautions against viewing networks as independent entities and emphasizes their reliance on other governance modalities. Traditional governmental tools coexist with network governance in hierarchical contexts, giving rise to "metagovernance," which encompasses the structuring of governance circumstances in a comprehensive manner and oversees the intricacies, diversity, and hierarchies inherent in coordination modalities (Jessop, 2003, pp. 14-15). It can be implemented through hands-off framing or narrative techniques, as well as direct support and involvement from the metagovernor. Moreover, metagovernance is executed not solely by state actors but also by diverse public and private networks across several political tiers (Sorensen, 2006, pp. 101-102). Furthermore, the structure-agency debate investigates the independence of actors in network governance relative to state authority (Tan, 2012).

Information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet and social media, have significantly impacted the state's capacity to formulate national development strategies, enhance citizen engagement, and foster public trust (Bertot et al., 2010). The Open Government Partnership is reflected in the adoption of freedom of information laws and the UN Convention against Corruption, which emphasizes integrity in public affairs (United Nations, 2019). Recent global mass mobilizations have raised the issue of democratic governance, emphasizing the mismatch between the global development agenda and the governance expectations of populations. Therefore, global governance, interconnected with international frameworks such as the United Nations' SDGs, signifies a commitment to inclusive and sustainable governance methodologies.

Nevertheless, these reforms have fostered public cynicism and are frequently rationalized by the imperative to adjust to globalization through the reduction of public services or privatization (Rigaud, 2012), leading to technocratic managerialism in public administration that overlooks transparency and democratic decision-making. It remains pivotal in public sector reforms, emphasizing information technology and innovation across many political and cultural contexts (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017), notwithstanding critiques regarding its impact on democratic values and inequality.

Critical questions arise regarding "governance," especially concerning the

relationship between macro-level and micro-level behaviors, and the measurement and creation of "good governance" (Peters, 2012, pp. 27-29). This relationship aligns with the structure-agency dichotomy, which explores whether organizational and network behaviors can be understood through individual actions related to governance decisions, thereby highlighting the microfoundations of those decisions. However, governance is instrumental in identifying issues but not necessarily in providing clear explanations (Peters, 2012, p. 26).

Good Governance

"Good governance" has been a significant concept in policy discussions of national development agencies and international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations since the mid-1990s. The International Monetary Fund, for instance, emphasized as early as 1996 that promoting good governance, characterized by the rule of law, public sector accountability, and anti-corruption, is essential for economic prosperity (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2005). The concept of (urban) governance traces its roots to Ancient Greece, where democratic mechanisms allowed *citizens* to participate directly in political processes, which later evolved into representative democratic institutions and practices during industrial urbanization and modernization (Badach & Dymnicka, 2017, p. 4). In the late 1970s, the crisis of the welfare state replaced representative democracy with a more pluralistic pattern of rule, which is based on interactions between the state and civil society organizations, marking a shift from government—the formal and administrative structure of the public sector—to governance. In other words, public participation, civic engagement, inclusiveness, and transparency became priority practices conceptualized under the term "governance" after a long period of progress (Bevir, 2010, pp. 97-121). Participatory governance, rooted in deliberative democracy, is a framework for public engagement through deliberative processes (Fisher, 2012). It empowers citizens and aligns with deliberative democracy principles. Participatory governance emerged in the 1990s, fostering diverse civil society actors. In Porto Alegre and Kerala, participatory projects demonstrate that citizens with limited formal education can competently engage in project planning, a phenomenon less common in advanced industrial nations. This approach has led to significant shifts in problem-solving and service delivery, promoting equitable support for economic and social development.

Good governance is defined by several key requirements: it must have a normative framework that establishes criteria for what constitutes "good," shift focus from the *input* to the *output* of the political system, and be applicable on a global scale despite varying institutional configurations across countries (Rothstein, 2012, pp. 151-152). For instance, countries such as Switzerland, Finland, Britain, and Germany demonstrate different governance structures yet are recognized for

their good governance. A precise definition must encompass a fundamental norm that embodies the system as a whole. Good governance has largely supplanted the Washington Consensus, which emphasized deregulation, tight fiscal policies, and large-scale privatizations (Serra & Stiglitz, 2008). Regulatory systems, the rule of law, and clean government to manage conflicts and mitigate risk are particularly crucial in transition and developing countries. Thus, fortifying institutions based on impartiality addresses the public goods challenge, especially for those living under governance models that lack these qualities.

Urban Governance and Good Urban Governance

The focus on governance in urban politics has evolved from local government to urban governance, emphasizing processes of regulation, coordination, and control (Pierre, 1999). This shift brings together regime theory, local state theories, and urban political economy, highlighting the constraints on local authorities' ability to bring about change in the local community. Urban governance refers to the study of governmental structures and activities in cities, focusing on interactions between government and civil society, which includes residents and organizations (Diaz-Sarachaga, 2025). Research has been conducted on foresight, urban economies, and municipal government, addressing subjects such as sustainability, ecological consequences, and spatial planning. The importance of technology in improving governance efficiency is highlighted, as is the need for community involvement in decision-making. Despite substantial research, few studies have focused on future planning for integrated urban governance, which has its roots in regional planning dating back to the 1980s.

The concept of urban governance has garnered attention in recent research, focusing on the incorporation of sustainability into urban policies (Thoyyib et al., 2025). A sustainable city necessitates comprehensive interventions across physical, economic, social, and political aspects to benefit all residents while maintaining the integrity of natural and constructed environments. Urban governance functions as a multifaceted framework, predominantly influenced by the political system, which enables stakeholder interactions and negotiations. The process involves both formal and informal measures, requiring collaboration among various parties. Effective governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008) facilitates autonomous negotiation among stakeholders to reduce conflicts and improve governance efficiency, promoting collaborative democracy and institutional legitimacy.

Urban governance encompasses interactions between public and private entities, focusing on identifying and meeting public needs while fostering local development and employment (Harvey, 1989; Grainer & Kudo, 2016; Sezer & Avcı, 2021). Effective urban governance promotes accountability, transparency, partnerships, and public engagement in decision-making. The evolution of

technology necessitates new governance systems, often referred to as "smart governance," which leverage ICT to enhance citizen participation and policy development rooted in data analysis. Smart urban governance further addresses urban challenges through technological innovations, characterized by smart city governance, smart management, policy-making, and social participation (Yiğitcanlar et al., 2019). Despite criticisms regarding its technical focus and lack of exploration of its effectiveness, it remains pivotal in aligning urban policies with the societal context (Verrest & Pfeffer, 2018).

"Smart governance" is a transformative approach to urban governance, addressing the complexities of urban management in response to rapid urbanization, climate change, resource depletion, and socioeconomic inequality (Almulhim & Yiğitcanlar, 2025). It aims to improve efficiency, transparency, inclusivity, and sustainability by fostering a networked model that brings together governments, citizens, businesses, and civil society actors. SDG 11 points out the necessity of innovative governance mechanisms to address urbanization challenges, though implementation remains complex and context-dependent (Sharifi et al., 2024). The UN Agenda 21 and the SDGs emphasize the importance of local action in solving global problems (Ansell et al., 2022, p. 13). Global and national governance can stimulate local promotion through sustainable rules, agenda setting, funding, regulation, local autonomy, access to scientific knowledge, training programs, communication infrastructure, and sharing of good local practices (Ansell et al., 2022, p. 21). While leading global and national actors can support local governance initiatives financially and technically, universities, research institutions, and independent media, as well as digital communication structures, collaborate with local communities by providing practice-oriented leadership training and research-based knowledge to overcome barriers to local SDG action.

The Smart Cities Information System of the European Commission highlights issues stemming from limited urban policies for smart city development (Smart Cities Marketplace, 2024). Research points to a dearth of established standards for governance in smart cities and suggests that a holistic approach is required to study smart urban governance, incorporating contextual factors such as policy and social dimensions (Meijer, 2018). Global initiatives such as the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda emphasize the role of governance in achieving sustainable development, while the contribution of smart urban governance in this area needs further examination (Diaz-Sarachaga & Sánchez-Cañete, 2024). Additionally, the impact of Urban Digital Technologies (UDTs) on governance, while crucial, has been underexplored, pointing to various applications in planning and decision-making processes but lacking comprehensive analysis of governance implications (Yiğitcanlar et al., 2019).

"Good urban governance" encompasses diverse perspectives, including governmentality, decentralization, participation, equity, efficiency, civic engagement, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, subsidiarity, social justice, and political-economic resilience (Biswas et al., 2019; McGuirk et al., 2022; Taylor, 2000). Minimizing the substantial disparities between theory and practice in sustainable urban governance is crucial, particularly when considering the interconnectedness of contextual issues and sustainable urban systems (Chen et al., 2023; Salet & de Vries, 2019). It is suggested that a multilevel governance model, namely macro, meso, micro, and inter-levels, may address such difficulties (Thoyyib et al., 2025). At the macro level, coordination among stakeholders, including regional, national, and corporate institutions, is crucial for formulating unified sustainability policies. While interaction between governmental institutions and social actors, such as civil society, is required at the meso-level, micro-level governance encourages individual participation in local initiatives, thereby strengthening relationships among people at local and national levels.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability was introduced when human activities began causing environmental problems. This concept, derived from ecological science in the 1970s, evolved into a social and economic approach within the *World Conservation Strategy* in the early 1980s (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources [IUCN], 1980). The 1987 Brundtland Commission Report *Our Common Future* of the United Nations defines development as a process of change compatible with the needs and expectations of present and future generations, as distinct from the concept of growth (United Nations, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Taking into account the environmental impacts faced by different social segments, especially poverty, the Brundtland Report emphasized that economic growth must consider the stability of social and environmental elements. In other words, sustainable development, as a human-centered, value-based approach (paradigm), takes into account the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of development and progress. Essentially, improving the quality of human existence is the realization of biological (genetic differences, resilience, and biological reproduction), economic (providing basic needs, promoting equity, and increasing vital goods and services), and social system goals (cultural differences, institutional sustainability, social justice, and participation) at the highest level (Barbier, 1987). In other words, the harmonious development of these different ecosystems will ensure the sustainability of human existence without conflict. Therefore, how sustainable development will be achieved, rather than what it is, emerges as a fundamental question.

Until recently, sustainability literature focused on climate change, ecological economics, energy resources, forestry, land use changes, and wildlife (Shaharir,

2012). It also encompassed related subjects including nutrition, fisheries, economic growth, urban growth, healthcare, lifestyle, and demographic distribution. Sustainability in education is an emerging topic; however, the sustainability of knowledge, which is crucial for the preservation of culture and spirituality, receives comparatively less attention.

Various indices related to the sustainability of cities have been developed (European Commission, 2018; Meriono-Saum et al., 2020; Paksoy et al., 2023). These indices attempt to evaluate the traditional dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) with detailed indicators. Research conducted on cities in Türkiye indicates that the top rankings of the three largest cities are largely driven by economic sustainability indicators, while Istanbul leads in terms of social sustainability indicators (Saraç & Alptekin, 2017). The lack of reliable or collected data on sustainability indicators for cities, both globally and in Türkiye, necessitates a cautious approach to such assessments. While almost all of the sustainability goals set by the United Nations to transform our world directly concern cities, the goal of "sustainable cities and communities" has been defined as a separate objective. Subsequent to the establishment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Habitat III Conference in Quito (2016) saw the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. This agenda calls for implementation through the engagement of relevant stakeholders at all tiers and situates the discourse on urban and rural settlement management squarely within the parameters of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Pedersen et al. (2023) highlight the importance of effective governance in achieving the SDGs but often overlook risk assessments and management issues. In Africa, the population is expected to double by 2050, posing challenges due to rapid population growth and mass migration movements. These factors constitute a long-term threat to stable growth and development, negatively impacting income distribution, social justice, and overall stability. Human-centered sustainability approaches must consider human values and adopt a local-to-global perspective. McDonald (2024) emphasizes the need for remunicipalization, reinventing local governments to provide democratic and sustainable public services within the framework of basic needs and social justice. Similarly, Kishimoto and Petitjean (2017) stress the need for municipalities to re-perform privatized services, ensuring democratic and sustainable public services within the framework of basic needs and social justice.

Sustainable Urban Governance

Urban governance is crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, addressing urban challenges, and promoting sustainable development at national and global levels (Aust & du Plessis, 2018, pp. 201-221). Specifically, Goal 11

requires states and local authorities to commit to good urban governance as an integral part of the global pursuit of a more sustainable and socially just society.

There are several ways to combine the two concepts of (urban) *governance* and *sustainability*. First, according to Agrawal et al. (2022), governance within the context of sustainability places a central emphasis on the integrated understanding of social, economic, and ecological dimensions. The fact that current socio-environmental trajectories are far from sustainable necessitates that governance assumes a balanced position between stability and change. Achieving more equitable and sustainable outcomes requires decisive intervention and agency to transform institutions and rules. This dual structure prevents governance from solidifying into a rigid set of static rules and institutions. Second, s*ustainability governance* refers to the framework that manages the environmental and social interactions of autonomous, publicly accountable organizations affecting their sustainability performance through the implementation of policies, strategies, processes, decisions, and behaviors. The advantages of sustainable governance are evident in the enhanced economic performance of organizations, together with the social and environmental outcomes acknowledged by stakeholders in the economic system. Third, *sustainable urban governance* has evolved from primarily addressing environmental issues to encompassing broader social and political dimensions (Thoyyib et al., 2025, p. 3280). Neoliberal, market-oriented policy approaches have significantly influenced major shifts in urban policies and governance frameworks, emphasizing efficiency in urban centers (Bogaert, 2011). Smart cities represent a sustainable model for urban governance, effectively addressing environmental issues while incorporating social and political dimensions. Researchers emphasize the value of a supportive environment in fostering sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems, incorporating cultural and community factors (Levenda & Tretter, 2020). Synchronized models for sustainable cities, including smart cities and eco-cities, seek to address socio-environmental needs via technological advancements and emphasize self-resilience through sustainable interactions between humans and the environment (Bulkeley & Broto, 2013; Karvonen & van Heur, 2014; Kummitha & Crutzen, 2017; Luque-Ayala & Marvin, 2015). The degree to which these models achieve their intended objectives is a subject of ongoing debate in both literature and practice.

The *Sustainability Directory* (2025) highlights the importance of participatory governance in urban governance, a process that involves environmental stewardship, social equity, economic viability, and integrated planning and management. This approach ensures that decisions reflect community needs and values, promoting economic viability and prosperity. Stakeholders, including citizens, local government, businesses, civil society organizations, and academic and research institutions, play a crucial role in this collaborative methodology. Recent shifts in

sustainable urban governance mirror global tendencies shaped by neoliberalism, prioritizing efficiency and market-oriented policies. Urban administrations are now implementing new governance systems that integrate social, economic, technical, and environmental elements to improve cities' resilience and sustainability objectives. However, the efficacy of these models remains contentious in both scholarly discourse and practical urban administration.

3. Final Remarks

Governance models provide a framework for the advancement of local communities and primarily focus on examining the reasons behind the diverse practices adopted by various countries in this domain. Within the context of effective urban governance, sustainability and a commitment to quality in advancement are also institutionalized. Moreover, good urban governance necessitates the integration of several elements of community growth and sustainability. Initiatives by individuals and governments aim to enhance the environmental, economic, and social conditions of metropolitan areas to facilitate their involvement in local and regional development. The ideal urban governance model is characterized by indicators such as participation, accountability, responsibility, legitimacy, consensus, justice, transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness (Kramer et al., 2024). Furthermore, it is imperative for all communities and individuals in urban settings, including the impoverished and marginalized, to actively engage in planning, decision-making, and the oversight of managers and city officials, as well as to utilize their own resources to achieve sustainable urban development.

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CHAPTER 2

URBAN JUSTICE, VULNERABLE GROUPS, AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE: LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Hamza Ateş[1]

1. Introduction

Governance faces complex challenges such as rapid urbanization, increasing socioeconomic inequality, the effects of climate change, and the need for sustainable economic development which require the active participation of local and regional stakeholders and marginalized groups often excluded from decision-making processes (Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024, p. 1). As Kapucu et al. (2024) suggests, "To improve social inclusion in territorial governance, adopting more participatory and transparent approaches is vital, ensuring that all voices are heard in planning and implementation at the local and regional levels".

Contemporary cities stand as paradoxical formations: while they symbolize economic dynamism, cultural innovation, and political visibility, they concurrently incubate stark inequalities and multi-dimensional exclusions. Urban centers continue to expand, drawing populations in search of opportunities, yet the very mechanisms that facilitate growth—such as capital investment, infrastructure development, and real estate expansion—often produce displacement, marginalization, and spatial stratification (Harvey, 2012, pp. 15–18). This contradiction situates urban governance in a perpetual dilemma: how to reconcile the pursuit of development with the imperatives of justice. The promise of the city as an emancipatory space is belied by the proliferation of informal settlements, gentrified zones, securitized enclaves, and exclusionary zoning. The intensification of economic globalization has reshaped urban hierarchies, polarizing spatial configurations along lines of income, identity, and access to resources (Sassen, 2014, pp. 211–213). In many global cities, especially in the Global South, economic integration into global markets has exacerbated internal fragmentation, dislocating low-income populations from the urban core to peripheral zones with limited services and weak political representation.

Urban vulnerability is not a monolith but a relational construct shaped by intersecting axes of power, identity, and spatial dynamics. The notion of

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vulnerability in urban contexts must be understood through a multidimensional lens that considers economic precarity, social marginality, and political voicelessness (Sen, 1999, pp. 87–90). Groups typically classified as vulnerable include migrants, ethnic and racial minorities, the urban poor, women, persons with disabilities, and elderly populations (Fraser, 2009, pp. 16–20). These populations often inhabit liminal spaces—both physically and institutionally. They are overrepresented in informal housing and labor markets, underrepresented in governance structures, and systematically excluded from urban narratives and planning processes. Vulnerability, therefore, is not merely a condition of deprivation but also of invisibility and misrecognition. Policies that ignore these complexities risk entrenching injustice rather than alleviating it.

The shift toward new governance is due to social diversity, complexity, and dynamism. "These elements require public action that resorts to new modes of governance, such as self-government and co-governance. In this context, fostering an open public administration that allows for effective and equitable participation is essential, thus guaranteeing representative and effective public policies and authentic and lasting social justice" (Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024, p. 1). On the other hand, *inclusive governance* has emerged as a fundamental approach to addressing the needs of diverse groups and communities within the cities. "This model encourages the adoption of specific strategies that seek to optimize the government's response to these groups. Increasing socio-political, economic, and environmental polarization poses challenges and opportunities that vary according to the country's context" (Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024, p. 2). Inclusive governance extends beyond formal actors, promoting social justice through the participation of activists, organizations, and social movements (Yates et al., 2024). These actors are essential in building just and equitable societies free from injustice.

In light of these dynamics, the concept of urban justice acquires renewed urgency. Urban justice entails not only equitable access to services and infrastructure but also recognition of identity, redistribution of resources, and participation in decision-making (Soja, 2010, pp. 55–60). Drawing upon Fraser's (2009) tripartite model of justice—redistribution, recognition, and representation—urban justice demands a recalibration of how governance institutions conceptualize and respond to inequality. Moreover, the city is not merely a container of social relations but a constitutive space of rights, belonging, and citizenship. Lefebvre's (1996, pp. 146–148) notion of the "right to the city" insists on a collective claim to urban space and processes, challenging the dominance of market-driven urbanism. This ethical vision calls for a reorientation of planning paradigms from managerial control to democratic co-production. The ethical imperative of justice in urban settings is not simply a normative abstraction; it is anchored in the lived realities of exclusion and struggle. Justice becomes a matter of survival for those denied

housing, mobility, and voice. As such, it must guide not only urban theory but also policy and institutional practice (Connolly & Steil, 2009, pp. 4–6).

This chapter employs a hybrid methodological approach, combining normative political theory with empirical case analysis. Drawing from critical urban studies, public administration, and development literature, the chapter integrates conceptual frameworks with comparative case studies at the local, national, and transnational levels. Three spatial scales structure the inquiry:

1. The local level, examining city-level governance practices in Istanbul, Barcelona, and Medellín;
2. The national level, assessing policy frameworks in Germany and South Africa; and
3. The global level, analyzing international agendas such as the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11.

The research adopts a conceptual-typological approach, assessing three core dimensions of urban justice: accessibility to housing, services, and infrastructure; the depth and authenticity of participatory mechanisms; and measurable equity outcomes.

The structure of the chapter reflects this methodological pluralism. Following this introduction, the theoretical framework will elaborate on key justice theories and their application to urban governance. Subsequent sections will present comparative case analyses and thematic discussions, culminating in a proposal for a justice-oriented urban governance framework. Through this structure, the chapter contributes both to theoretical debates on justice and to the practical quest for more inclusive, equitable cities in the 21st century.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Urban Justice

Justice in urban contexts requires a shift from abstract philosophical idealism to grounded interpretations of fairness within the lived spatial realities of the city. Unlike state-centered conceptions of distributive justice, urban justice must grapple with the multifaceted nature of urban inequality—ranging from access to housing to symbolic representation in public space (Soja, 2010, pp. 55–60). As cities become increasingly diverse, complex, and unequal, theories of justice must evolve to address the spatial and institutional geographies of exclusion. The notion of justice in cities is not a static ideal but a dynamic and contested practice. Power relations shape who defines justice, how it is implemented, and whose voices are heard in the process (Fainstein, 2010, pp. 3–5). This makes the urban environment a uniquely volatile arena where economic, cultural, and political forces converge to either reinforce or resist prevailing structures of domination.

Urban justice also transcends the notion of service delivery and incorporates

affective and symbolic dimensions of belonging. Who feels safe in the city? Who is seen as a rightful resident? These are ethical questions that a theory of urban justice must address (Young, 1990, pp. 23–27). Thus, justice must be understood not merely as an institutional norm but as an everyday claim enacted through lived spatial experience. Furthermore, justice in urban governance demands a consideration of intergenerational, ecological, and epistemic dimensions. The city is not only inhabited by current populations but also shaped for future generations and marked by ecological constraints. Therefore, the concept of justice must be broadened to include sustainability and intergenerational equity. In sum, revisiting the concept of justice in urban contexts calls for an integrative, interdisciplinary approach that bridges philosophy, planning, and public policy. It must recognize both the universal ethical claims of justice and the particularities of urban social struggle.

John Rawls' theory of justice as fairness has profoundly shaped normative political theory, though its application to urban governance is more recent. Central to Rawls' framework is the idea that institutions should be designed to maximize the life chances of the least advantaged by correcting for social and natural contingencies (Rawls, 1971, pp. 75–83). In the urban context, this translates into policies that aim to equalize access to housing, transportation, education, and public services. Rawls' concept of the "difference principle" is particularly relevant for spatial justice. It implies that inequalities are justifiable only if they benefit the least well-off, which challenges many urban development models that prioritize economic growth at the cost of displacement (Harvey, 2012, pp. 18–21). Applying this principle means urban development must be evaluated based on its redistributive outcomes.

However, Rawls has been critiqued for an overly abstract conception of justice that inadequately addresses identity-based exclusion and the spatial dimensions of injustice (Fraser, 2009, pp. 17–20). While Rawls provides a powerful tool for thinking about equity, it must be supplemented with frameworks that recognize cultural and procedural aspects of justice. Recent urban theorists have reinterpreted Rawls to address contemporary urban issues. For instance, Fainstein (2010) advocates for a "just city" based on Rawlsian ideals, emphasizing democratic inclusion and equitable distribution as planning goals. Her work demonstrates how Rawls' abstract theory can be translated into concrete urban policies. Ultimately, Rawls provides a necessary but not sufficient condition for urban justice. His principles offer a baseline for fairness but must be combined with theories attentive to power, identity, and participation.

Henri Lefebvre's idea of the "right to the city" represents a radical rethinking of urban justice, centering the lived experiences of urban dwellers as the core of democratic space-making. For Lefebvre, the city is not merely a backdrop for

social life but an active site of political struggle, where the right to inhabit and shape urban space must be reclaimed from market forces (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 146–148). This right is not limited to access or use but extends to participation in the production of urban space itself. It challenges the commodification of land and housing, advocating instead for collective power over urbanization processes. Lefebvre's insights are especially relevant today as cities are increasingly driven by speculative real estate and global investment flows that displace low-income residents and erode public space.

The "right to the city" has been adopted by urban social movements worldwide as a mobilizing slogan and a normative principle. It provides a framework for challenging technocratic urbanism and promoting democratic, bottom-up urban governance (Purcell, 2003, pp. 567–570). The principle underscores the idea that urban justice is inseparable from spatial agency and collective rights. Moreover, Lefebvre's conception opens up a relational understanding of space that contrasts with static, territorial views. It aligns with feminist, decolonial, and ecological critiques that emphasize the need to democratize spatial production and include historically marginalized knowledges and practices. Despite its power, the "right to the city" remains difficult to institutionalize. Translating this radical vision into planning policies and legal frameworks requires a reconfiguration of power relations and urban governance structures. Nevertheless, Lefebvre's work remains foundational to any theory of urban justice.

Nancy Fraser's tripartite model of justice—comprising redistribution, recognition, and representation—offers a multidimensional framework for understanding urban injustice. Each axis corresponds to a key dimension of marginalization: economic, cultural, and political (Fraser, 2009, pp. 16–18). Redistribution addresses material inequalities that are particularly salient in urban contexts characterized by housing shortages, unequal infrastructure, and precarious labor. Policies that fail to address these disparities reinforce structural exclusion and spatial injustice. Recognition pertains to the cultural visibility and dignity of marginalized groups. In the city, this includes the symbolic erasure of certain communities from public narratives, planning discourses, and institutional frameworks. Fraser emphasizes that misrecognition is not just a psychological harm but a material injustice that undermines equal participation. Representation refers to political inclusion in decision-making bodies and public debate. In urban governance, this is often the most elusive form of justice. Participation may be formalized but remains substantively hollow, especially for those lacking institutional literacy or social capital.

Fraser's model is especially useful for diagnosing complex forms of exclusion that single-axis approaches may miss. It also invites a relational analysis, exploring how injustices across these domains intersect and reinforce each other. Applied to

urban governance, Fraser's model insists that justice requires structural change, not just policy reform. It also warns against "affirmative" remedies that address symptoms without altering root causes. This makes her framework crucial for advancing transformative urban justice.

Building on Fraser's insights and broader critical theory, a comprehensive model of urban justice must integrate three dimensions: distributive justice, recognition justice, and procedural justice. These dimensions correspond respectively to material, symbolic, and participatory rights within urban space. Distributive justice involves equitable access to housing, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and mobility. It requires public investment strategies that prioritize underserved communities and correct historical disadvantages (Fainstein, 2010, pp. 29–31). Recognition justice demands the cultural inclusion of marginalized groups in planning processes, public narratives, and spatial design. It means ensuring that the voices, symbols, and needs of these groups are visible and valued (Young, 1990, pp. 27–30). Procedural justice emphasizes meaningful participation in decision-making. This includes not just opportunities to speak but the institutional mechanisms that ensure voices are heard and acted upon. It calls for governance reforms that decentralize power and institutionalize listening.

The three dimensions are interdependent. Distributive gains are often unsustainable without recognition; participation is ineffectual without redistribution; and symbolic inclusion rings hollow without procedural empowerment. This model provides a diagnostic tool and a normative guide for evaluating urban governance. It also helps bridge academic theory with policy design and social mobilization.

A core critique in urban studies is the gap between participatory rhetoric and substantive empowerment. Participatory planning has become a dominant discourse but often serves as a procedural façade rather than a transformative tool (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, pp. 5–7). Many participatory processes are structured in ways that reproduce existing inequalities. They privilege those who are already institutionally fluent or well-resourced, while excluding marginalized groups through logistical, linguistic, or cultural barriers. Normative substance in participation entails more than consultation. It requires redistributive mechanisms, accountability structures, and institutional reforms that embed the principle of co-governance. This involves rethinking not only how decisions are made but who gets to set the agenda. Theories such as Arnstein's "ladder of participation" and Fung's "democratic spaces" provide valuable heuristics for evaluating participatory depth. Yet even these models must be updated to consider digital participation, intersectional exclusions, and non-state actors. Ultimately, moving from participatory form to normative substance means centering justice as the purpose—not the byproduct—of participation. It calls for cities to become

arenas of co-produced governance, where deliberation, representation, and redistribution are mutually reinforcing.

3. Local Case Studies: Practices and Contrasts

Urban justice is not an abstract ideal but a lived and contested reality shaped by local governance models, historical legacies, and socio-spatial dynamics. While global frameworks offer normative benchmarks for inclusive and equitable cities, their realization is always context-bound, mediated by institutional capacity, political will, and civic mobilization. This section adopts a comparative lens to examine how different cities have approached the challenge of embedding justice into urban governance.

By focusing on *Istanbul, Barcelona*, and *Medellín*, the analysis highlights a spectrum of practices—from exclusionary, market-driven redevelopment to participatory, rights-based planning and infrastructural redistribution. These cities are not selected as universal models but as illustrative cases that reveal contrasting approaches to procedural justice, spatial equity, and civic agency. Through a critical assessment of policy trajectories, participatory mechanisms, and governance cultures, the section explores how justice is enabled, negotiated, or undermined in specific urban contexts. The aim is not to idealize or condemn but to draw nuanced insights that can inform normatively ambitious yet pragmatically grounded urban policy frameworks elsewhere.

Istanbul experienced rapid urban growth in the last century, increasing from 1.1 million in 1945 to 16 million in the 2020s. "This city, as is the case in many other emerging economies, has followed a dynamic of government-led rapid urbanization, in a combination with shortage of land and stringent eviction policies, leading to the establishment of communities in environmentally hazardous areas, particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts" (Williams et al., 2022, p. 478). Further, as a city of migration, Istanbul has received significant migration from both within Türkiye and abroad. Particularly with the rise of domestic migration from the Anatolian periphery from the 1960s onwards, informal settlements (gecekondu) became the modus operandi of housing, often posing significant risks. These settlements expanded significantly with the arrival of Syrian and Afghan refugees, amongst others. This is in addition to those economically marginalized residents who voluntarily and involuntarily moved to these areas for reasons of affordability. Today, some of the neighborhoods in which marginalized urban populations reside have been the focus of studies researching urban inequalities, environmental injustice, and structural discrimination (Williams et al., 2022, p. 478).

Istanbul's urban development trajectory over the past two decades has been largely shaped by market-driven policies, extensive privatization of public land,

and mega-projects aligned with the interests of political and financial elites. State-led urban transformation projects, such as the renewal of Tarlabaşı and Sulukule, were carried out under the discourse of modernization and disaster risk mitigation, yet often resulted in the displacement of low-income and marginalized residents (Tansel, 2019, pp. 224–226). These transformations prioritized investor confidence and aesthetic redevelopment over social equity, with limited regard for long-term sustainability or participatory engagement. Public-private partnerships and zoning flexibilization became tools for enabling speculative investment rather than addressing pressing urban needs. In this context, the commodification of urban space displaced residents both materially and symbolically—recasting the poor as obstacles to development rather than legitimate urban stakeholders.

Participation mechanisms in Istanbul are typically symbolic rather than substantive. Municipal authorities may host public consultations or publish project summaries, but decision-making remains highly centralized and top-down. Civil society actors—including urban justice advocates and environmental organizations—frequently report that their input is sidelined or instrumentalized post facto to legitimize predetermined outcomes (Kuyucu & Ünsal, 2010, pp. 1491–1493). This dynamic reproduces a governance model where citizens are framed as passive recipients rather than co-creators of urban policy. Participatory practices are thus performative rather than transformative, sustaining the illusion of inclusion while excluding genuine influence.

Barcelona has institutionalized participatory governance through mechanisms such as the *Decidim* digital platform and participatory budgeting initiatives, which allow residents to shape urban policies at the neighborhood level. These instruments not only enhance civic engagement but also facilitate a structural redistribution of decision-making authority from technocratic centers to localized deliberative arenas (Barcelona City Council, 2024). In doing so, they embed democratic principles into the governance architecture of the city and reinforce the legitimacy of urban policy processes.

A key feature of Barcelona's urban justice agenda is its integration of gender as a planning principle. Through initiatives like the *Urban Planning with a Gender Perspective* strategy, city planners have reimagined public space, mobility networks, and service designs in ways that accommodate caregiving responsibilities, promote safety, and recognize women's spatial needs (Sánchez de Madariaga, 2013, pp. 49–52). This gendered urbanism has influenced broader debates on the ethics of care and inclusive infrastructure across Europe. It reorients urban planning away from productivity-centric metrics and toward the lived experiences of everyday life. Safe walkways, well-lit streets, accessible health centers, and integrated mobility networks become indicators of inclusion, equity, and well-being.

Barcelona's commitment to neighborhood democracy is also reflected in its decentralized governance structure. District-level councils possess a degree of autonomy, and community associations are actively involved in shaping local development plans. These structures provide institutional channels for civic actors to not only express their needs but to co-determine urban priorities. Although these mechanisms are not free from challenges—such as uneven participation, co-optation risks, or bureaucratic inertia—they offer a substantive alternative to tokenistic consultation practices. Crucially, they also allow for iterative governance: policy frameworks are adjusted based on citizen feedback rather than fixed through rigid, top-down plans.

Nonetheless, Barcelona is not immune to tensions. The city grapples with rising housing costs, overtourism, and social polarization, especially in working-class and migrant-heavy districts. These pressures have intensified since the early 2010s, with the proliferation of short-term rental platforms and the financialization of the housing sector. While inclusion remains a stated priority, some critics argue that urban branding and economic growth agendas have begun to erode the gains of participatory governance. This tension manifests in dual tracks of policy: one aimed at civic empowerment, the other at competitiveness and global visibility. The challenge, therefore, lies in sustaining democratic innovation amid global market pressures—a task that requires continuous political will, resource allocation, and critical self-reflection within municipal institutions.

Once known as a global symbol of urban violence and inequality, *Medellín* has undergone a remarkable transformation, particularly since the early 2000s. Its "social urbanism" model integrates infrastructural investment with social policy and community engagement. Projects like the Metrocable system, outdoor escalators in Comuna 13, and the construction of public libraries and parks in low-income areas have aimed to physically and symbolically integrate marginalized communities into the urban core (Brand & Dávila, 2011, pp. 7–9). These infrastructural interventions have had significant impacts on spatial equity and social belonging. They have not only reduced travel times and improved accessibility but also signaled a form of state recognition to historically neglected populations. Public architecture became a vehicle for dignity, visibility, and civic pride—key dimensions of recognition and symbolic justice (Dávila, 2013, pp. 62–64).

Crucially, Medellín's approach also emphasized participatory planning. The Urban Integral Projects (PUI) methodology fostered community dialogue and collaborative decision-making in project design. Local residents participated in needs assessments, planning workshops, and evaluation processes. These forms of participation generated a sense of ownership, reduced resistance, and cultivated civic trust in public institutions. While some critiques highlight the limits of this

participation—particularly its occasional co-optation by political elites or uneven implementation across neighborhoods—the procedural openness still marks a shift from exclusionary governance. It also offers a model for embedding deliberative practices into the technical routines of planning and construction.

However, Medellín's model is not without contradictions. In recent years, there has been a return to more technocratic and investment-driven policies, raising concerns about the dilution of earlier justice commitments. Critics warn that the language of innovation and "smart" development may mask a return to growth-first priorities, sidelining the very communities the model once centered. Furthermore, underlying structural inequalities—such as informality, racial marginalization, and intergenerational poverty—remain deeply entrenched, suggesting that infrastructure alone cannot resolve systemic exclusion. Without parallel reforms in land tenure, labor markets, and education, social urbanism risks becoming a technocratic fix rather than a redistributive paradigm.

The three cities examined—Istanbul, Barcelona, and Medellín—offer contrasting insights into the potentials and pitfalls of local urban governance in advancing justice. Istanbul exemplifies the risks of market-oriented redevelopment when participatory frameworks are weak or symbolic. Its governance structure centralizes power and prioritizes economic visibility over social solidarity. Barcelona, by contrast, demonstrates the possibilities of institutionalizing inclusive mechanisms and integrating care ethics into urban planning. Medellín highlights the transformative power of infrastructure when it is paired with social policy and community engagement, though it also reveals the fragility of justice gains in the face of political shifts. These cases underline the importance of procedural justice in mediating both distributive outcomes and recognition-based claims. Where participation is meaningful and structurally embedded, as in parts of Barcelona and Medellín, urban policies tend to be more responsive, equitable, and contextually grounded. In contrast, top-down approaches like those prevalent in Istanbul risk reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and producing governance alienation.

A common thread across all three cities is the persistent tension between social inclusion and economic pressures. Global capital flows, speculative real estate markets, and austerity-driven reforms continue to shape the policy landscape, often in ways that limit the space for justice-centered interventions. Even in progressive settings, there is a constant need to defend participatory gains against rollback, co-optation, and depoliticization. Ultimately, these local cases affirm that urban justice is both context-specific and structurally contingent. Institutional design, political will, civic mobilization, and historical legacies intersect to produce divergent outcomes. Comparative analysis helps reveal these dynamics and supports the development of contextually grounded but normatively

ambitious policy frameworks—ones that treat justice not as a residual goal but as a constitutive principle of urban life.

4. National Contexts and Institutional Capacities

Urban justice unfolds within specific institutional, historical, and political contexts that shape how inclusion, equity, and participation are conceptualized and practiced. Comparing countries with divergent state traditions, governance architectures, and socio-political legacies provides valuable insight into the structural conditions that enable or constrain the pursuit of spatial justice. This section examines *Germany* and *South Africa* as contrasting yet instructive cases: one a long-established welfare state grappling with neoliberal pressures in a highly institutionalized governance system; the other a post-authoritarian society seeking to overcome the spatial legacies of apartheid through constitutional and participatory reforms.

While both countries articulate strong normative commitments to equity and inclusion, their governance models diverge markedly in terms of institutional capacity, decentralization, civic engagement, and the relationship between national and local actors. Through this comparative lens, the analysis highlights how welfare provision, housing policy, integration strategies, and participatory governance function differently across contexts, illuminating shared challenges such as implementation gaps, siloed administration, and the marketization of urban space. The goal is to understand not only how justice is institutionally framed but how it is materially and procedurally enacted—revealing that effective urban justice requires both structural coherence and localized responsiveness.

*Germany r*epresents a strong welfare-oriented state model with a long tradition of social housing and integration policy, yet it faces growing challenges in managing contemporary urban inequalities. The country's approach to social housing is grounded in cooperative and municipal models, which have historically enabled wide access to affordable housing for working-class populations (Scanlon et al., 2014, pp. 313–316). Despite this robust framework, the sector has contracted significantly due to privatization trends and reduced public investment since the early 2000s. In urban centers such as Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich, rising property values and gentrification have dramatically reduced the availability of affordable housing. Vulnerable populations—including low-income migrants and refugees—are increasingly concentrated in peripheral or socio-economically segregated neighborhoods (Borck & Gohl, 2021). Although integration policies exist, such as language training and access to schooling, structural constraints—including discrimination and regional disparities in housing quality—limit their efficacy.

Moreover, Germany's federal structure introduces variation across Länder

(states) in the design and implementation of integration policies. While some cities (e.g., Hamburg) have developed proactive migrant inclusion strategies, others remain reactive and fragmented. This unevenness highlights the tension between national commitments and local capacities to ensure inclusive urban governance. Germany's constitutional commitment to human dignity and social participation provides a strong normative foundation for urban justice. However, the actualization of these principles is often undermined by market-driven housing dynamics and political resistance to redistributive planning. Addressing these gaps requires renewed investment in public infrastructure and greater alignment between federal, state, and municipal actors.

South Africa presents a unique case of a post-authoritarian society attempting to operationalize spatial justice through constitutional design. The 1996 Constitution explicitly mandates equitable access to housing, services, and participation, reflecting a normative commitment to redressing apartheid-era dispossession (Parnell & Pieterse, 2010, pp. 150–153). Programs such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) have been central to these efforts, aiming to provide mass housing and extend urban citizenship. Despite this ambitious legal architecture, implementation outcomes have been uneven. Many RDP housing projects have reproduced peripheralization by placing low-income communities on the urban fringe with limited access to employment, transit, or social amenities (Charlton & Kihato, 2006, pp. 258–261). The spatial legacy of apartheid persists in the form of racially segregated infrastructure and uneven service delivery, compounded by bureaucratic inefficiencies and political clientelism.

Participatory governance has been formally encouraged in post-apartheid urban policy, but in practice, community engagement is frequently minimal or tokenistic. Local governments face capacity constraints, and public-private partnerships often prioritize commercial interests over inclusive development. Consequently, the emancipatory potential of the Constitution is frequently diluted in the face of technocratic and market pressures. Nonetheless, civil society remains a vital actor in sustaining justice discourse. Organizations like Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) have mobilized legal activism and grassroots organizing to contest evictions, demand service delivery, and hold municipalities accountable. These movements reaffirm the political dimensions of urban justice and underscore the enduring importance of rights-based strategies in postcolonial governance.

Comparing Germany and South Africa reveals important contrasts between state-centered and localized approaches to inclusion. Germany exemplifies a model where the state retains significant regulatory and fiscal capacity, enabling robust policy frameworks but sometimes at the expense of localized

responsiveness. By contrast, South Africa's decentralization model creates space for localized experimentation but suffers from institutional fragmentation and resource disparities. In Germany, the strength of national institutions ensures policy continuity and funding stability, yet it can also create rigidities. For instance, national zoning and planning laws may constrain municipalities' ability to innovate or respond quickly to demographic changes. While the uniformity of social housing standards helps ensure equity, it can also limit context-sensitive design and community adaptation.

South Africa's local authorities possess greater flexibility in design and implementation, but often lack the technical expertise, staffing, or funding to deliver on their mandates. The result is a patchwork of outcomes—some municipalities championing participatory planning and spatial redress, others reverting to exclusionary practices or failing to implement national priorities effectively. The comparative insight here is that both models contain strengths and vulnerabilities. Effective urban justice requires both vertical integration (across scales of governance) and horizontal inclusion (across sectors and communities). Neither centralized control nor complete local autonomy–on their own–can guarantee inclusive outcomes.

A recurring challenge in both Germany and South Africa is the gap between policy formulation and practical implementation. In Germany, high-level strategies often fail to penetrate the local administrative apparatus due to political misalignment, resource constraints, or institutional inertia. Similarly, in South Africa, progressive laws and planning frameworks are often undermined by corruption, weak accountability, or overburdened municipal systems (Turok, 2016, pp. 477–479).

One key barrier is the siloed nature of governance. Housing, transport, health, and education policies are often designed in isolation, leading to fragmented service provision and missed opportunities for synergy. Integrated development planning is frequently discussed but rarely achieved in practice, due in part to jurisdictional competition and bureaucratic rigidity. Another barrier lies in data and monitoring. In both countries, there is a lack of disaggregated, real-time data to assess how policies affect vulnerable groups. Without such data, it is difficult to target interventions effectively or hold institutions accountable for equity outcomes. Additionally, evaluative frameworks often prioritize efficiency over justice, further marginalizing equity concerns. Overcoming these barriers requires not only institutional reform but also a cultural shift in governance. Justice must be re-centered as a guiding norm in public administration, supported by multi-level coordination mechanisms, inclusive budgeting, and community co-production models. Without such transformations, even the most ambitious policy frameworks risk devolving into empty rhetoric.

5. Global Agendas and Transnational Norms

The New Urban Agenda (NUA), adopted at the Habitat III conference in 2016, and Sustainable Development Goal 11 ("Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable") constitute two of the most prominent global efforts to institutionalize urban justice. These frameworks recognize the centrality of cities in achieving broader development goals and emphasize inclusivity, participation, and spatial equity as essential features of urban governance (United Nations, 2017, pp. 5–7). Both the NUA and SDG 11 articulate aspirational goals such as universal access to adequate housing, participatory urban planning, and reduced environmental vulnerability. However, their influence is mediated by national and local contexts. While they serve as important reference points for advocacy and policy alignment, their effectiveness often depends on the existence of domestic institutions capable of translating global vision into practice.

One of the primary contributions of these frameworks is their normative signaling. They provide governments, civil society actors, and international organizations with a common vocabulary of urban justice, enabling cross-national comparison and cooperation. Yet, the risk lies in the tendency of states to adopt the language of inclusion without enacting substantive reforms—what scholars call "isomorphic mimicry" (Pritchett et al., 2010, pp. 4–6). To bridge this vision–implementation gap, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation must be strengthened. Currently, many national reports on SDG 11 lack disaggregated data, meaningful stakeholder engagement, or independent verification. Without accountability and enforcement tools, these global frameworks risk being reduced to symbolic declarations.

The "Right to the City" has gained prominence as a global normative principle, appearing in the NUA's opening declaration and in the policy agendas of UN-Habitat and UNESCO. Originally articulated by Henri Lefebvre, the right emphasizes collective participation in the production of urban space and challenges market-centric urbanization models (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 148–150). Despite its radical origins, the concept's integration into global policy has led to a degree of dilution. Many state and institutional actors adopt the language of the right without engaging with its transformative implications. In global fora, it often becomes a rhetorical device disconnected from demands for redistribution, decommodification, or decolonization (Purcell, 2014, pp. 143–145).

Efforts to operationalize the right to the city must navigate this tension between normative ambition and political feasibility. Some international coalitions—such as the Global Platform for the Right to the City—have attempted to bridge this gap by producing toolkits, indicators, and training materials aimed at local governments and civil society actors. Nevertheless, structural constraints remain formidable. National sovereignty norms, donor-driven agendas, and capacity gaps

at the municipal level all hinder the transformative realization of the right. Thus, its implementation requires more than policy adoption; it demands governance reform, fiscal decentralization, and political commitment.

One of the defining characteristics of global urban policy frameworks is their status as "soft law"—non-binding agreements that rely on voluntary compliance and normative pressure rather than legal enforcement. While this flexibility allows for broad consensus, it also limits effectiveness, particularly in contexts where domestic accountability mechanisms are weak (Rodríguez-Pose, 2013, pp. 1031–1033). The reliance on soft law creates asymmetries in implementation. Wealthier and institutionally robust states can more easily align their policies with global standards, whereas low-income or fragile states may lack the technical, administrative, or financial capacity to do so. This reinforces global urban inequalities, contrary to the inclusionary ethos these frameworks espouse.

Moreover, the metrics used in global urban monitoring systems often fail to capture localized and intersectional forms of exclusion. Standard indicators, such as the number of housing units built or kilometers of transit developed, may obscure deeper issues related to accessibility, cultural appropriateness, or spatial justice (Parnell, 2016, pp. 531–534). To overcome these limitations, a rethinking of global governance is necessary. More robust horizontal mechanisms—such as peer learning networks, city-to-city cooperation, and participatory monitoring platforms—could complement the top-down nature of soft law frameworks and support the diffusion of justice-oriented practices.

The universalist aspirations of global urban agendas often encounter friction when applied in Global South cities, where governance realities, colonial legacies, and resource constraints shape urban trajectories. While concepts like participation, resilience, and equity are widely endorsed, their local operationalization requires adaptation to context-specific challenges and knowledge systems (Roy, 2009, pp. 82–84). In many Global South settings, informal settlements are the dominant mode of urbanization, and state capacity is limited. Applying universal benchmarks—such as formal land tenure or piped infrastructure—may inadvertently exclude the very populations urban justice seeks to empower. This underscores the need for flexible, context-sensitive indicators and bottom-up planning approaches.

Moreover, global discourses on urban justice often prioritize technocratic expertise over local knowledge. Planning models developed in the Global North are exported through donor-funded programs, sometimes with little regard for their applicability or cultural resonance. This epistemic injustice reproduces hierarchical power relations in the global urban policy domain (Watson, 2009, pp. 2263–2265). To address these concerns, greater emphasis must be placed on the co-production of knowledge, the inclusion of subaltern voices, and the valorization of vernacular planning practices. Only through such pluralization can

global urban agendas move beyond token inclusion and contribute to genuinely emancipatory change.

6. Critical Reflections: The Crisis of Inclusion

Participation has become a ubiquitous element of urban governance discourse, yet its widespread adoption often masks a deeper structural deficiency: participation without power. As Arnstein (1969) argued decades ago, many participatory processes remain at the bottom rungs of her "ladder of participation," confined to tokenistic consultations or information dissemination. These practices offer the appearance of inclusion while preserving decision-making authority within centralized institutions. This fallacy is especially evident in contexts where formal mechanisms of participation—such as public hearings or advisory councils—are designed more for legitimizing preordained policies than for influencing them. Vulnerable populations are invited to speak, but their voices carry little weight in actual resource allocation or spatial planning decisions. The result is a form of "performative participation" that reinforces, rather than challenges, power asymmetries (Cornwall, 2008, pp. 271–273).

Moreover, participatory fatigue often sets in when communities repeatedly engage in forums that yield little tangible change. This undermines trust in institutions and weakens the political will for deeper civic engagement. Genuine participation requires more than procedural access—it demands redistribution of decision-making authority, transparent deliberation processes, and accountability for how public input is used. To move beyond this fallacy, urban governance must embrace models of co-production and shared sovereignty, where citizens do not merely react to state agendas but co-shape them. This shift entails changes in institutional culture, legal frameworks, and budgetary mechanisms, ensuring that participation translates into actual power.

Technocratic governance refers to the privileging of technical expertise, data-driven models, and bureaucratic efficiency in policymaking. While valuable for ensuring evidence-informed decisions, this approach can inadvertently marginalize non-expert forms of knowledge, particularly those rooted in lived experience, cultural memory, or community organizing (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 130–132). Epistemic injustice arises when certain voices are systematically excluded from the knowledge production process. In urban planning, this often takes the form of ignoring community narratives in favor of GIS maps, cost–benefit analyses, and feasibility reports. Marginalized groups—such as informal settlers, migrants, or the disabled—are thus rendered "unknowable" within planning frameworks, not due to lack of insight, but because their ways of knowing do not conform to bureaucratic norms (Fricker, 2007, pp. 1–3).

This technocratic bias is reinforced through institutional logics that valorize

quantifiable metrics over qualitative insight. For example, urban renewal projects may be evaluated on the basis of GDP growth or property values rather than social cohesion, cultural preservation, or historical justice. The result is a planning paradigm that conceals normative judgments under the guise of neutrality. Challenging epistemic injustice requires democratizing the production of urban knowledge. Participatory mapping, storytelling, and ethnographic inquiry should be integrated into planning processes. Moreover, planning education and professional norms must evolve to recognize the legitimacy of diverse epistemologies, particularly those emerging from the margins.

Digital technologies are reshaping urban governance, from e-governance portals to algorithmic decision-making in public service delivery. While these tools promise efficiency and transparency, they also introduce new modalities of exclusion. Digital divides—based on income, age, literacy, and geography—limit access to these systems, especially for vulnerable groups (Eubanks, 2018, pp. 47–50). Moreover, the growing reliance on algorithms and big data analytics in urban management raises concerns about accountability and bias. Predictive policing tools, automated welfare eligibility systems, and smart city infrastructures often reflect the prejudices embedded in their data sets and design logics. These systems can reproduce existing inequalities in opaque and unchallengeable ways, a phenomenon increasingly referred to as "algorithmic exclusion" (Noble, 2018, pp. 8–11).

A further concern is the loss of discretion and empathy in digital governance. Automated systems lack the contextual judgment that human actors might apply in complex social situations. When decisions about housing, policing, or welfare are delegated to machines, they often ignore the nuances of individual circumstances, cultural variation, or historical injustice. To mitigate algorithmic exclusion, cities must adopt principles of data justice, including transparency in algorithmic design, participatory oversight mechanisms, and digital inclusion strategies. Importantly, the adoption of technology must be guided by normative values—equity, dignity, and accountability—not merely by efficiency goals.

Many urban governance systems suffer from structural deficits that hinder the pursuit of justice. These include fragmentation across jurisdictions, underfunded local governments, and policy incoherence across sectors. In such contexts, even well-intentioned inclusion policies are undermined by institutional weaknesses (UN-Habitat, 2022, pp. 44–47). Fragmentation is particularly problematic in metropolitan regions where multiple municipalities, agencies, and service providers operate in silos. Coordination failures result in overlapping mandates, service gaps, and bureaucratic competition. This not only reduces efficiency but also complicates access for marginalized groups who must navigate complex institutional landscapes.

Fiscal constraints further exacerbate these problems. In many countries, local governments are tasked with delivering inclusion programs but lack the revenue-raising capacity or intergovernmental transfers to do so effectively. This results in "mandate without means" scenarios that erode trust and performance. Finally, urban governance often lacks robust mechanisms for policy evaluation and adaptation. Programs may persist despite poor performance because of political inertia or bureaucratic path-dependence. A justice-oriented governance model requires flexible, learning institutions that can respond to evolving needs, correct failures, and integrate feedback from affected communities.

Transformative participation goes beyond consultation and representation; it aims to reconfigure the institutional logic of governance. Rooted in theories of radical democracy and critical pedagogy, it treats participation not as a means to an end but as an emancipatory process that builds collective agency and challenges structural power (Gaventa, 2006, pp. 23–26). Such participation requires inclusive agenda-setting, shared rule-making, and community control over key aspects of decision-making. Models of participatory budgeting, neighborhood assemblies, and citizen juries provide glimpses of this approach, but they must be supported by legal mandates, fiscal backing, and capacity-building efforts.

Transformative participation also demands attention to intersectionality. Not all citizens have equal capacity or freedom to participate. Gender, class, race, and disability shape how individuals engage with governance processes. Therefore, participation must be designed to address these asymmetries, offering differentiated supports and safeguards. In sum, rethinking participation requires shifting from a managerial paradigm to a democratic one. It involves building institutions that are not only inclusive in form but equitable in function—spaces where justice is not a rhetorical aspiration but a lived, negotiated practice.

7. Toward a Just and Inclusive Urban Governance Framework

A foundational step toward urban justice involves rethinking citizenship beyond legal status and territorial residence. A rights-based conception of urban citizenship treats all urban dwellers—regardless of migration status, tenure security, or national identity—as bearers of enforceable rights to housing, mobility, participation, and basic services (Holston, 2009, pp. 246–248). This approach counters exclusionary regimes that condition rights on legal recognition or property ownership. In many cities, undocumented migrants, refugees, and informal settlers are denied access to services or excluded from participatory governance due to bureaucratic or legal barriers. A rights-based model mandates that cities acknowledge their de facto residents as legitimate participants in urban life.

Such a reconceptualization entails a paradigm shift in how urban belonging is

institutionalized and practiced. Municipal ID programs, sanctuary city policies, and inclusive service access schemes are not merely administrative tools—they are emblematic of a deeper normative commitment to human dignity and democratic inclusion. They signal a move from exclusionary legalism toward emancipatory municipalism, wherein local governments act not as gatekeepers of national sovereignty but as guarantors of fundamental rights. In this light, the state is reoriented: rather than a filter that mediates access to rights based on predefined statuses, it becomes an enabler of civic presence and facilitator of inclusive belonging. This also compels cities to incorporate international human rights frameworks—such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights—not as abstract commitments, but as operative norms embedded within urban planning, policy design, and regulatory oversight.

However, inclusion in rights is insufficient without pathways to power. Inclusive governance requires not only normative commitments but also institutional architectures through which marginalized groups can influence decisions. Equitable representation involves designing governance structures that not only reflect the demographic composition of the urban populace but also correct historical and systemic exclusions (Young, 2000, pp. 127–129). Representation is not a matter of symbolic presence but of substantive engagement, requiring mechanisms that translate participation into influence.

This can be achieved through a range of structural innovations: from gender quotas in municipal councils to neighborhood-level deliberative forums with binding authority; from guaranteed seats for racialized minorities and migrant organizations to the institutionalization of participatory planning boards with co-decision rights. The institutional design of these mechanisms must be grounded in accountability, transparency, and accessibility. Critically, tokenistic inclusion must be avoided; representational reforms should aim not to co-opt dissenting voices but to empower them through meaningful roles in agenda-setting, policy formulation, and oversight.

Representation must also be intersectional. The lived experiences of exclusion are shaped not only by singular identities but by their intersection—women of color, undocumented youth, disabled migrants, queer elders—all face layered and compounded forms of marginalization. Thus, a truly inclusive governance model must be attuned to the heterogeneity within marginalized groups. Institutional responses must include practical accommodations—such as childcare during meetings, translation services for linguistic minorities, disability-accessible venues, and digital tools for those excluded from physical participation. These are not peripheral considerations but essential conditions for authentic inclusion. Institutional reforms must transition from consultative formats—where citizens are merely asked for input—to co-productive models of shared authority.

Justice in urban development must be spatially expressed. Infrastructure—roads, water systems, public transit, parks, schools—is not merely a set of technical or economic deliverables; it is an inscription of social values and power relations upon the urban fabric. As Harvey (1996, pp. 392–395) notes, the geography of infrastructure reflects the geography of injustice: who receives what kind of infrastructure, and where, is a political question that reveals whose lives are prioritized. Spatial equity thus demands a redistribution of investment toward underserved and historically marginalized neighborhoods, which are often home to racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, and informal settlements.

This redistribution must not merely be reactive or compensatory but proactive and transformative. Planners must interrogate and challenge the market-driven locational logics that privilege high-return zones and elite interests while relegating vulnerable communities to infrastructural neglect or displacement. Infrastructure planning must be guided by principles of restorative justice—reversing the harms of redlining, forced evictions, or environmental racism. Public investment, in this view, becomes a tool of spatial reparation. Concepts such as the "15-minute city," universal design, and climate justice provide normative direction, encouraging the design of urban systems that promote accessibility, resilience, and intergenerational equity. These paradigms elevate infrastructure from a utilitarian function to a vehicle of dignity, enabling all residents to live, move, and thrive in their environments.

Moreover, the process of infrastructure development must be participatory and locally responsive. Community-led mapping initiatives, citizen audits, participatory budgeting, and inclusive design charrettes help ground infrastructure projects in the situated knowledge and lived experience of residents. These practices reconfigure infrastructure not as an imposed solution but as a co-constructed asset. Infrastructure should not displace or disrupt but instead repair social fabrics, reconnect severed communities, and promote socio-ecological integration. Participatory planning is therefore not an optional add-on but a democratic imperative.

Governance itself must be reconceptualized. Too often imagined as a hierarchical function of the state, governance must be reconfigured as a horizontal and co-productive endeavor. In this model, municipalities, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and private actors operate not as hierarchical stakeholders but as equal co-creators of the urban future (Ansell & Gash, 2008, pp. 544–547). Horizontal governance is premised on deliberative collaboration, distributed knowledge, and joint problem-solving. It thrives where there are robust intermediary institutions, relational trust, and open data ecosystems. This model is not simply about participatory moments but about enduring partnerships across sectors and scales.

Concrete manifestations include co-managed housing cooperatives, community land trusts, participatory policy labs, and urban commons initiatives. These institutional forms not only distribute governance capacity but also cultivate civic agency, thereby deepening the democratic fabric of urban life. Yet, horizontal governance is not immune to power asymmetries. Without explicit mechanisms to redress inequality within collaborative structures, elite capture and performative inclusion may persist. Institutionalizing co-production requires legal frameworks that recognize non-state actors as legitimate decision-makers, fiscal instruments that support bottom-up initiatives, and capacity-building investments that empower civil society organizations. Otherwise, co-production risks becoming a fragile and episodic endeavor, vulnerable to political shifts and bureaucratic inertia.

Accountability is the backbone of inclusive governance. Without mechanisms to track, evaluate, and correct actions, commitments to justice risk remaining rhetorical. Cities must develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems that assess not only outputs—such as housing units built or kilometers of road constructed—but also equity outcomes: who benefited, who participated, and who was left out. Justice-oriented evaluation necessitates the use of disaggregated data that captures the intersectional effects of urban policies across dimensions such as race, gender, income, disability, and migratory status (Taylor, 2017, pp. 98–101). The emerging field of data justice underscores the importance of not only what data is collected but also how it is collected, analyzed, and applied. Processes of data production must themselves be democratic, inclusive, and reflexive.

Community-generated data, participatory GIS platforms, and citizen science initiatives are critical in this regard, as they challenge the technocratic monopolies of official statistics and center the epistemologies of those most affected by urban decisions. Transparency mechanisms—such as open budgets, urban report cards, rights-based audits, and real-time dashboards—create public infrastructures of visibility and scrutiny. Yet, the mere availability of data does not ensure accountability. Without feedback loops embedded into policy cycles, data may become a spectacle rather than a tool for transformation. Institutional learning requires that evidence lead to action, and that failures are addressed, not obscured.

Finally, accountability mechanisms must be accessible, legitimate, and enforceable. Ombudsperson offices, urban equity commissions, independent review panels, and participatory grievance redress mechanisms provide essential channels through which citizens can contest injustice and demand responsiveness. These institutions should not only offer post-hoc remedies but also proactively inform planning, regulation, and service delivery. In this way, justice becomes not an aspirational discourse but a lived, enforceable reality—manifested in both the structure and the soul of urban governance.

8. Conclusion

Today, inclusive governance has emerged as a vital framework for addressing the diverse needs of communities and fostering social justice. "By promoting the active participation of various stakeholders, including marginalized groups, this model enhances the effectiveness of governance and ensures that policies are more equitable and representative. As socio-political, economic, and environmental challenges continue to grow, the importance of inclusive governance becomes even more pronounced" (Sánchez-Soriano, 2024).

As this chapter has demonstrated, the language of inclusion is ubiquitous in contemporary urban discourse, yet its practice often remains superficial. Symbolic gestures—such as nominal participation, diversity statements, or consultative platforms—frequently substitute for genuine transformation. Bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality requires a shift in how we conceptualize and operationalize inclusion. Substantive inclusion entails institutional redesign, resource redistribution, and epistemic pluralism. It involves dismantling the systemic barriers—legal, cultural, and infrastructural—that silence or marginalize particular groups. It also demands recognition of non-dominant knowledge systems, particularly those rooted in lived experience, resistance, and informal governance. Cities must evolve from spaces of managed diversity to spaces of co-produced pluralism, where the rights, needs, and aspirations of all residents are structurally embedded in governance processes. This transition is not merely a matter of technical reform but one of political imagination—redefining who belongs, who decides, and whose voices matter in shaping the urban future.

Justice is not a luxury or an afterthought in urban governance—it is a precondition for democratic legitimacy, social sustainability, and institutional resilience. In a context of growing urban inequality, climate crisis, and democratic backsliding, a justice-centered approach provides both normative guidance and strategic coherence. Strategically, justice fosters public trust, civic engagement, and inclusive innovation. Cities that invest in equity-oriented infrastructure, participatory mechanisms, and social protections are better equipped to respond to shocks and manage diversity. Ethically, justice affirms the intrinsic dignity of all residents, challenging exclusionary practices and unequal distributions of power. This chapter has outlined concrete frameworks—rights-based citizenship, equitable representation, infrastructure justice, horizontal governance, and data accountability—that can serve as guiding pillars for urban transformation. These are not abstract ideals but pragmatic tools, already visible in cities that are reimagining the possibilities of governance beyond market logics or technocratic managerialism.

The urban future remains contested terrain. Policy frameworks alone cannot achieve justice; they must be backed by political will, civic mobilization, and

institutional innovation. Power must be redistributed—not only spatially and economically but epistemically and procedurally. Democratic space must be reclaimed as a site of collective authorship and belonging. Yet there are reasons for cautious optimism. As the table below clearly suggests, from Seoul to Medellín, from Vienna to Cape Town, local actors are forging alternative paths that challenge exclusion and build inclusive urban futures. These practices show that transformation is not only possible—it is already underway.

Table 1

Best Practice Highlights in Urban Governance

City	Best Practice Theme	Key Features
Seoul, South Korea	Age-friendly urban design integrating intergenerational needs	Universal design, digital literacy for seniors, lifelong learning programs
Vienna, Austria	Social housing with inclusive architectural and cultural principles	Mixed-income housing, public amenities, transparent allocation processes
Cape Town, South Africa	Participatory spatial planning rooted in historical redress	Inclusionary housing frameworks, land reclamation, grassroots activism
Medellín, Colombia	Infrastructure-led inclusion and civic belonging	Cable cars, outdoor escalators, cultural centers, participatory urban planning

Note. Created by the author.

The task ahead is to scale, sustain, and connect these efforts within a shared normative horizon. Justice must no longer be the rhetorical flourish of plans and policies; it must become the animating logic of how we build, govern, and inhabit cities. Only then can urban citizenship be reimagined not as a status granted by the state but as a democratic practice sustained by the people.

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CHAPTER 3

TRANSCENDING THE MODERNIST URBAN PARADIGM AND THE RISE OF POST-MODERN GOVERNANCE: THEORETICAL DEBATES AND PARADIGMATIC TRANSFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Cities, as spaces where the economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics of social life intersect, have historically served as the most tangible arenas for diverse intellectual currents. Modernism, emerging from the late nineteenth century, introduced a paradigm of standardization and efficiency in urban governance through industrialization, rationality, and the principles of centralized planning. Post-modernism, by contrast, arose in the second half of the twentieth century as a critique of modernism, laying the groundwork for an alternative understanding of urban management rooted in pluralism, locality, flexibility, and participation (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991).

As of 2025, the global urbanization rate has reached 58%, while in city-states such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Macau, this rate has approached nearly 100% (World Population Review, 2025). In 1950, the global level was merely 30%, more than doubling over the past seventy-five years (Sassen, 2005; Castells, 2009). The acceleration of urbanization has been particularly evident in regions where digital infrastructure has expanded, the service sector has gained prominence, and demands for greater flexibility in governance have intensified. This spatial concentration has not only driven physical growth but also ushered in profound transformations in urban governance structures. The centralized and hierarchical forms of management characteristic of the modernist era are increasingly being replaced by governance models that prioritize participation, transparency, and network-based interaction in the post-modern period. Parallel to architectural and cultural diversification, urban governance is becoming more flexible, pluralistic, and digitally oriented, thereby redefining decision-making processes and modes of social interaction. Consequently, cities are being reshaped not only in terms of population density and physical form but also in their governance structures and

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levels of democratic participation.

In Türkiye, however, the effects of this transition on local governance, decision-making processes, and urban sustainability have not yet been evaluated within a comprehensive and interdisciplinary framework (Bayraktar, 2007). Recent empirical studies reveal that processes of urban transformation in Türkiye have been organized as political negotiations among state policies, central–local relations, and local actors, with outcomes that vary significantly depending on regional and local contexts (Bayırbağ et al., 2023). Field-based studies further demonstrate that micro-level practices and mediation mechanisms at the street level play a decisive role in shaping local governance, highlighting the need for research on the disjunction between macro-policies and local practices (Massicard, 2022). Evaluations specific to Istanbul also indicate that neoliberal urbanization policies have restructured local governance practices and participatory mechanisms, though challenges of implementation and representation persist (Erder, 2009). Accordingly, while theoretical discussions on modern and post-modern urban paradigms are relatively well-developed in the literature, there remains a need for systematic, comparative, and context-sensitive studies addressing their implications for governance processes, practical interactions, and sustainability goals.

Harvey (1989) conceptualizes post-modernism as a movement of "flexibility and local difference" against the homogenizing and centralized nature of modernism. Castells (2009) emphasizes that the dynamics of the information society and globalization have rendered post-modern governance approaches in cities indispensable. Tekeli (2011) draws attention to the relaxation of central–local relations and the introduction of new governance instruments, particularly after the Democrat Party era in Türkiye. Nevertheless, these works have largely been framed within sociological and political perspectives, while holistic analyses from the standpoint of public economics and governance paradigms remain limited.

The transition from modernism to post-modernism thus represents not only aesthetic or spatial transformations but also a profound rupture with respect to principles of sustainability, social justice, and democratic participation. Today, global challenges such as the climate crisis, migration, income inequalities, and social cohesion pressures necessitate governance models that transcend classical paradigms (UN-Habitat, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). In this regard, the post-modern urban paradigm, together with the rise of alternative models such as smart cities, slow cities, and living laboratories, underscores multi-actor, data-driven forms of governance.

Although a substantial body of academic debate has developed around modern and post-modern urban paradigms internationally (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991;

Castells, 2009), this literature remains relatively limited in the Turkish context. Existing studies show that the governance dimension of the modern/post-modern transition has not been systematically addressed to the extent seen in Western scholarship, with most works concentrating on spatial transformation, zoning policies, or political history (Bayraktar, 2007; Massicard, 2022; Bayırbağ et al., 2023). Moreover, the disciplinary scope of this scholarship remains narrow; the lack of integrative approaches bridging political science, public administration, sociology, and urban planning constrains the holistic analysis of urban governance processes. Third, the technological dimension—particularly the impact of artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools on governance—has not been sufficiently incorporated into debates on the modern/post-modern paradigm.

Yet digitalization and AI-based decision support systems have emerged as key determinants of structural transformation in urban governance. Big data analytics, machine learning, and algorithmic management tools represent not merely technical innovations but foundational elements that enhance transparency, strengthen accountability, and encourage participation (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017; Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Floridi & Cowls, 2022). At the same time, the rapid integration of AI raises new debates concerning ethical responsibility, inclusivity, and governance capacity. The use of large language models such as ChatGPT and Copilot in decision-making processes, for instance, enables managers to transcend cognitive limitations by offering advanced analytical capabilities, but simultaneously foregrounds ethical, security, and transparency concerns (Weidinger et al., 2021; Mökander et al., 2021).

At the international level, OECD (2019, 2023) and European Union (2021, 2024) frameworks provide normative guidelines to ensure the human-centered and safe use of AI. In Türkiye, the *National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2021–2025)* (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Dijital Dönüşüm Ofisi, 2025) and the establishment of the Parliamentary Commission on Artificial Intelligence in 2025 stand out as initiatives aimed at systematically integrating technology into public services and local governance. These developments indicate that AI has become not only a technical instrument but also a defining element in the reconstruction of public policy and urban governance paradigms.

Although such strategies provide a comprehensive policy framework for the multi-dimensional integration of AI into public services and local governance, their intersections with the modern–post-modern urban paradigm have yet to be subjected to a systematic and comparative academic analysis.

This study seeks to make an original contribution to both theoretical and applied scholarship by re-examining the theoretical tensions between modern and post-modern urban paradigms through the lens of Türkiye's contemporary urban governance experience. The transition from the top-down planning and

rationalist spatial order of the modernist approach to the emphasis on locality, participation, and pluralism of the post-modernist paradigm has today acquired a new dimension with the processes of digitalization and artificial intelligence (Harvey, 2000; Lefebvre, 2003). In this regard, the study aims, on the one hand, to advance the theoretical debate on modernism/post-modernism in the context of the reconstruction of urban governance in the age of AI, and on the other, to develop an evaluative framework that links Türkiye's AI strategies to urban governance practices in terms of governance capacity, transparency, and participation.

Accordingly, the research focuses on three main questions:

(i) How has the transition from modernism to post-modernism transformed sustainability-oriented development in urban governance?

(ii) What concrete reflections has this transformation produced in Türkiye in terms of environmental sensitivity, participation, and inclusiveness?

(iii) To what extent does the post-modern understanding of urban governance overlap with contemporary approaches, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals and local governance capacity?

Based on these questions, the study is structured as follows: The second section discusses the emergence of modern urban thought and the theoretical foundations of the transition to post-modernism in conjunction with the literature on sustainable urban governance. The third section examines the emergence of post-modern cities and their impact on governance paradigms, while the fourth section compares alternative approaches to modern urbanism. The fifth section evaluates urban approaches arising from the transition from modernism to post-modernism in light of contemporary examples, and the sixth section analyzes the factors influencing governance paradigm transformations. Finally, in the context of smart cities, living laboratory examples are discussed as concrete manifestations of the transition from modernist urban management to post-modern governance; the conclusion presents the findings along with policy recommendations in relation to sustainable public administration and AI integration.

2. Theoretical Background: The Emergence of the Modern City and the Transition to Post-Modernism

Understanding the modern city requires an examination of the origins and significance of modernism. Modernism is an intellectual and cultural movement rooted in Ancient philosophical thought and Enlightenment principles, characterized by rationality, progressivism, and a focus on transformation. Emerging in the eighteenth century, modernism positioned itself in opposition to traditional orders and articulated the development of the capitalist industrial

state. In this context, modernism represents a worldview centered on continuous progress and change (Yıldırım, 2009, p. 382). Moreover, while modernism was shaped by the Enlightenment era, particularly through the English Revolution (1688) and the French Revolution (1789), its influence persists to the present day. It played a decisive role in multiple domains of social life up until the Second World War and continues to exert significant influence in the twenty-first century (Yalçın, 2023, p. 165).

The process of modernization has brought about profound transformations across economic, political, and cultural spheres. Economically, the decline of agriculture and the rise of industry and service sectors expanded labor and financial markets. Politically, processes of centralization and democratization gained prominence, while culturally, the differentiation of religion, philosophy, and science, alongside the spread of secular education, became defining features. Cities emerged as the primary arenas where these transformations were most acutely experienced. They were at the center of industrial and service production, market relations, and socio-political-cultural changes. According to Lerner, urbanization can be regarded as the starting point of modernization, progressing in tandem with increased literacy, the proliferation of mass communication, and expanded political participation. In this context, modern society presents a continuously evolving structure shaped by the active engagement of individuals (Keleş, 2021, pp. 69–70).

Thus, urbanization shaped by modernism provided a fertile ground for the concentration of economic, political, and cultural transformations. However, critiques of this paradigm, emerging from the late twentieth century onwards, paved the way for the conceptualization of the post-modern city (Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1996). The distinction between modern and post-modern cities is not limited to spatial arrangements; it is also manifested in urban visions, aesthetic approaches, transportation preferences, and relationships with the natural environment. In the literature, the modern city is defined by functionality, rationality, and ideals of comprehensive planning, whereas the post-modern city emphasizes diversity, flexibility, locality, and cultural pluralism (Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1996; Dear & Flusty, 1998). Table 1 below presents a comparative overview of the key differences between these two paradigms across spatial, aesthetic, and governance dimensions.

Table 1.

Comparative Analysis of the Modern and Post-Modern City Across Various Dimensions

Dimension	Modern City	Post-Modern City
Spatial Scale and Architecture	Emphasis on scale through mega-structures: large, uniform, and functionally oriented buildings with minimal detailing.	Human-scale, carefully designed spaces incorporating historical or nostalgic elements.
Urban Fabric and Aesthetics	Flat, homogeneous areas; skyscraper clusters, urban canyons, and expansive suburban zones.	Facades with rich detailing: pedestrian-friendly streets and aesthetics evoking historical references.
Order and Rationality	Rigid rational order; tendency toward comprehensive planning and standardization.	Diversity, flexibility, and trend sensitivity; heterogeneity and distinctiveness in aesthetics.
Nature and Environment	Marginalization of natural elements; dominance of highways, rigidity, and starkness.	Reconnection with local values; incorporation of historical and geographical contexts into the urban fabric.
Transportation and Mobility	Car-centric vision; fragmented urban development with discontinuous flows.	Segregated pedestrian and vehicle spaces; prioritization of public spaces.
Urban Vision	Uniform, modernist, and centralized city ideal.	Pluralistic, multi-layered, and culturally diverse urban vision.

*Note***.** From Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991; Soja, 1996; Dear & Flusty, 1998.

The comparative analysis presented in Table 1 demonstrates that the transition from the modern to the post-modern city entails not only spatial and aesthetic transformations but also a profound shift in governance paradigms. In modern cities, governance is grounded in rationality, functionality, and centralized planning principles, producing a uniform urban vision and largely delegating decision-making processes to bureaucratic control. In contrast, the post-modern city

foregrounds pluralism, locality, and participatory principles within governance, offering a fundamentally different framework. Governance in this context is shaped not solely by the central authority of the state but through the interaction of local actors, civil society, market participants, and individuals. Thus, the post-modern city exemplifies the evolution from a centralized, hierarchical, and standardized governance model toward a polycentric, flexible, and heterogeneous approach. This transformation fosters a new perspective on urban policy-making and implementation, redefining not only the spatial and social arrangements of cities but also the legitimacy and inclusivity of decision-making processes.

Examining the emergence and development of modern cities is essential for understanding the administrative framework underpinning this profound transformation. Modern cities arose as a product of industrialization and modernization, laying the foundation for substantial economic, social, cultural, and structural changes. Modernization encouraged migration from rural to urban areas, positioning cities at the center of industry and services, and facilitating the emergence of new forms of urban life. In Türkiye, modernization accelerated urbanization through advancements in industry and technology, yet it also introduced significant social and spatial challenges. Modern cities provided the groundwork for the emergence of metropolitan centers and megacities during globalization, simultaneously serving as the most visible manifestation of modernism (Keleş, 2021, p. 71).

The concurrent development of modernism and capitalism was a fundamental factor in accelerating urban transformation. The dissolution of the feudal order, the dynamism of capital, and the expansion of market economies shaped modernist urbanization. The industrial revolution further intensified this process, dramatically increasing urban populations: approximately 30 million in 1800, 200 million in 1900, and approaching 5 billion by the twenty-first century (World Bank, 2024). Diversification of production and consumption patterns transformed housing typologies and living spaces, with smaller, private, and differentiated housing types becoming characteristic of modern cities.

Modern urbanization initially emerged in Western Europe and was directly linked to industrial development. Functionality took precedence over aesthetic considerations, with factories and production centers replacing temples and palaces. However, it was recognized that maintaining quality of life required attention to aesthetic and cultural values. In Türkiye, the modernization process differed from Western examples. Industrialization during the Ottoman period was limited, leaving only traces of modernization. Following the proclamation of the Republic, modernization became a central component of nation-state building, with the planning of Ankara as the capital representing a symbolic modernist project (Yalçın, 2023, pp. 169-172). In the early Republican period, planned and

collective urban development aimed at public welfare was prioritized; however, post-1950 neoliberal economic policies and conservative approaches weakened this legacy. The balanced development vision underlying Ankara's designation as the capital was eroded as Istanbul regained dominance, and modernization policies of the 1950s led to the destruction of the historical fabric and the erosion of collective identity (Turhanoğlu, 2024, p. 651).

Thus, modern cities in both the West and Türkiye reflect the spatial manifestation of economic and social transformations, while also revealing the limitations and vulnerabilities of modernist governance approaches.

2.1. Urbanization Dynamics and Legislative Transformation in the Transition from the Modern to the Post-Modern Era

Urbanization and modernization processes have historically served as key indicators of profound structural transformations within societies. Modernization, accelerated by the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, reshaped economic, social, and spatial organization, with intensive rural-to-urban migration emerging as a defining dynamic of modern urbanization. In contrast, the post-modern era has witnessed an increased focus on sustainable lifestyles, environmental consciousness, and alternative ways of living—such as veganism or rural revitalization movements—which have reshaped urban–rural relations and, in some cases, prompted reverse migration trends. These developments have introduced new discourse areas into the literature, alongside the traditional concepts of "urbanization" and "city-making," including notions of "return to the origins" and "rural orientation."

In the context of Türkiye, urbanization has taken on a distinct dimension in coastal regions with high tourism potential, where seasonal population fluctuations are significant. Cities such as Antalya and İzmir demonstrate how tourism-driven population concentrations reflect changes in post-modern spatial preferences, while demographic stagnation in inland areas indicates a redirection of migratory flows. Whereas internal regions were primary recipients of migration in the early Republican era, the rapid expansion of coastal cities today exemplifies this transformative trend.

These shifts in urbanization paradigms are mirrored in governance legislation. During the early Republican period, Law No. 442 on Villages (1924) and Law No. 1580 on Municipalities (1930) established the foundations of modern local governance. Subsequent regulations, including the Provincial Administration Laws (Law No. 1426, 1929; Law No. 5302, 2005), delineated the scale and jurisdictional scope of local administrations. Approaching the post-modern era, notable transformations occurred in the legal status of villages: Law No. 6360 on Metropolitan Municipalities (2012) reclassified villages within metropolitan

boundaries as neighborhoods (Gündoğdu, 2015), illustrating the adaptation of rural governance to emerging paradigms.

Metropolitan municipal governance was initially introduced with Law No. 3030 (1984) and continuously redefined through subsequent legislation, including Law No. 5216 (2004) and Law No. 6360 (2012). The latter, in particular, aligned provincial and metropolitan municipal boundaries, integrating provincial administrations, town municipalities, and villages under a unified governance framework. These legislative reforms can be interpreted as institutional reflections of the transition from the centralized local governance model characteristic of the modern period to the multi-scalar, flexible, and inclusive governance approaches emblematic of the post-modern era.

In conclusion, the transition from modern to post-modern urban paradigms entails not only transformations in spatial and social dynamics but also significant shifts in the legal and institutional frameworks regulating city governance. In Türkiye, this transformation has reshaped the structure of local administrations, opening a critical discourse on urbanization paradigms through the lenses of governance, sustainability, and participatory practices.

3. The Emergence of Post-Modern Cities and Their Impacts on Urban Governance

The transition from modernism to post-modernism has profoundly transformed urbanization processes, not only spatially but also in terms of governance paradigms. While the modernist conception of the city relies on rationality, centralization, standardization, and uniform organizational structures, post-modern cities are characterized by governance models that prioritize diversity, pluralism, locality, and participation (Kaypak, 2013). This shift has resulted in fragmentation, diversification, and the prominence of symbolic meanings within urban spaces.

The post-modern urban paradigm, which became particularly evident in the last quarter of the 20th century, emerged as a reaction to the uniform and functionalist approaches of modernist planning. During this period, urban space was redefined not merely as a physical settlement but as a multi-layered experiential environment where cultural, social, and economic processes intersect (Harvey, 2000). The rise of consumption-oriented spaces, shopping centers, and iconic architectural projects, facilitated by globalization, has made the effects of post-modernism on urban identity increasingly visible (Jameson, 1991). However, there is still no consensus in the literature regarding the final outcomes of this process, as post-modernism represents a diversified transformation across different geographies rather than a completed historical period (Dear & Flusty, 2002; Ellin, 2006).

Post-modern urbanism demonstrates that urban space is constructed not solely through functional concerns but also via symbolic values, aesthetic diversity, and cultural identities. Cities, in this context, have become arenas for commodification, identity negotiation, and spatial differentiation (Soja, 2000; Sorkin, 2004). Contrary to the homogeneity and rational spatial order of the modernist era, the post-modern period emphasizes the revitalization of historical fabrics, the foregrounding of local identities, and the coexistence of diversity as fundamental principles of urbanization.

From a theoretical perspective, Jean-François Lyotard's *the Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* is particularly significant. Lyotard defines post-modernism through skepticism toward metanarratives, highlighting that knowledge, once regarded as universal and certain during the modern period, is now approached through doubt and fragmented legitimization (Keleş, 2021). This perspective has influenced urban planning and governance, replacing singular, centralized planning with pluralistic, flexible, and locally sensitive models.

One of the most criticized aspects of modernism was its tendency to transform cities into standardized, identity-less, and "soulless" spaces. The demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in 1972 symbolized the end of modernist architecture and planning. Subsequently, the rise of post-modern architecture brought about a reconsideration of urban fabrics. Post-modern cities have evolved into multidimensional spaces, representing power through skyscrapers and financial centers, and reflecting consumer culture through shopping malls and entertainment facilities (Yalçın, 2023, p. 174). Thus, the post-modern urban paradigm counters modernist ideals of order, homogeneity, and centralization, foregrounding difference, multiplicity, and individual experience. This transformation extends from the aesthetic dimensions of urban life to social participation, spatial design, and governance practices. The modernist legacy has not been entirely erased; rather, it has intertwined with post-modern critiques to form the basis of a hybrid urban governance model.

Historically, cities have not only been spatial structures but also the sites where social, economic, and administrative relations are most intensely realized, and they have been influenced by various intellectual movements. Modernism, during the 20th century, shaped urban development through rational planning, centralization, and functionalist approaches, which gradually came under critique and were replaced in the post-modern era by pluralistic, participatory, and locally oriented governance principles.

Jane Jacobs (1961) significantly influenced this transformative process by emphasizing that urban life should be organic, diverse, and based on the participation of local communities. Jacobs' critique of modernist planning highlighted that cities should be evaluated not only through their physical

organization but also in terms of their social fabric. This perspective foregrounded flexibility, locality, and social participation as central to urban governance.

The post-modern urban paradigm encompasses not only spatial and aesthetic dimensions but also principles such as sustainable development, social justice, governance capacity, environmental consciousness, and transparency, thereby introducing a novel administrative approach in public management. In this respect, the transition from modernism to post-modernism represents a profound shift in governance paradigms.

Technological advancements are a key determinant of this transformation. Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data applications have not only transformed knowledge production and sharing processes but also facilitated the emergence of new governance models in urban management (Floridi, 2014; McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017; OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2024). AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot enable decision-makers to overcome cognitive limitations, develop data-driven scenarios, and enhance strategic flexibility (Lyotard, 1984; Jenkins, 2006; Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; West et al., 2021; OECD, 2023). However, if ethical, transparency, and security considerations are neglected, these technologies may create new governance risks (Weidinger et al., 2021).

Comprehensive research combining qualitative and quantitative methods is essential to understand the practical impacts of this urban governance transformation. In particular, examining the effects of AI-supported decision-making mechanisms on governance quality, transparency, and social participation at the local level will provide concrete insights for future policy design.

Recent developments in the United Kingdom and Sweden, where policymakers have begun employing AI tools such as ChatGPT as "advisors" in policy-making processes, demonstrate the growing role of AI in governance (New Scientist, 2024; Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, 2025; Euronews, 2025). These applications highlight AI's capacity to process large datasets rapidly, evaluate multiple scenarios, and enhance strategic flexibility (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017; Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Sun & Medaglia, 2019). At the same time, issues of accuracy ("hallucinations"), data privacy, and ethical risks in large language models underscore the increasing need for strong oversight mechanisms and transparency principles (Weidinger et al., 2021).

At the national level, Türkiye's 2021–2025 National Artificial Intelligence Strategy Action Plan systematically guides the use of AI across public services, industry, education, and justice. This strategic orientation represents not merely a technological initiative but a process of restructuring public policies. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Research Commission, established on January 7, 2025,

develops policy recommendations concerning AI's opportunities, risks, and legal infrastructure (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, 2025). This demonstrates Türkiye's dual approach, aligning with EU regulations while fostering domestic technological capacity.

In conclusion, artificial intelligence represents a new rupture in public administration paradigms. Proper integration of AI-supported tools carries the potential to enhance efficiency and transparency in public services, while neglecting ethical, security, and accountability dimensions may trigger governance crises. Therefore, the future of urban governance necessitates continuous human–machine collaboration and rigorous adherence to national and international ethical standards (Jobin et al., 2019; Morley et al., 2020).

4. Alternative Approaches to the Modern City Concept

Contemporary debates shaped by artificial intelligence and digital governance indicate a paradigmatic rupture in urban management, while also revealing the inherent limitations of the modern city concept and prompting new explorations. In particular, challenges related to rapid urbanization, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion have created a fertile ground for the emergence of alternative urban development models.

Within this context, models such as "New Towns," "Satellite Cities," "Smart Cities," and "Slow Cities (Cittaslow)" provide distinct perspectives in terms of both spatial organization and governance approaches. This section examines these alternative urban models, evaluates their key characteristics, and discusses concrete examples within the Turkish context.

4.1. New Town Approach

Problems arising from the modern city paradigm—including high population density, environmental degradation, and social alienation—have facilitated the emergence of alternative urban development models since the 20th century. One such model, the New Town approach, is particularly inspired by the Garden City movement in the United Kingdom. Ebenezer Howard's Garden city concept, developed at the end of the 19th century, sought to combine the advantages of rural and urban life, creating small-scale settlements where people could live sustainably in harmony with nature (Howard, 2003). In Howard's vision, garden cities were urban models in which residential and agricultural areas were planned together, separated by green belts, and expanded through the establishment of new settlements once a population threshold was exceeded.

This approach was regarded as an alternative to the crowded and unhealthy urban conditions generated by the Industrial Revolution and was implemented in practice through early 20th-century projects such as Letchworth (1903) and

Welwyn (1919). These first garden cities in England exemplified Howard's New Town vision. His ideas influenced urbanization policies not only in the UK but also across Europe and the United States, providing the theoretical foundation for the pursuit of "humane, balanced, and sustainable cities" (Hall & Ward, 1998; Keleş, 2019).

Post-World War II pressures of rapid urbanization in the UK led to the development of New Town policies inspired by the garden city model. In 1945, the Labour government passed legislation establishing new towns around London, aiming both to alleviate the excessive population density in the metropolis and to support economically stagnant regions. These towns, with populations kept below 80,000, sought to combine "urban knowledge and technical facilities" with the "peace and naturalness of rural areas" (Durguter, 2012). Lewis Mumford hailed the New Town concept as the "greatest invention of the century after the airplane," which was later applied in countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, the Soviet Union, India, and Israel (Mumford, 1961).

In Türkiye, traditional settlement patterns in the Black Sea region and the town of Yeşilçay in Kütahya exhibit characteristics reminiscent of the garden city approach (Durguter, 2012). Settlements in the Batıkent and Eryaman districts of Ankara, on the other hand, are regarded as examples of "New Town / planned urban expansion" within the Turkish context. Batıkent, a product of the 1990s planning period, has demonstrated a large-scale, planned settlement form from the outset, implemented through cooperative and mass housing projects. Consequently, Batıkent is considered both an example of mass housing initiatives and an application embodying the New Town model (Gülpınar, 2021). Eryaman was designed within the framework of the Ankara Master Plan according to the "New Town" rationale, representing a planned settlement connected to the city center but aiming to provide its own infrastructure and housing stock. Analyses of Eryaman's design intentions and implementation process are also available (Kavas, 2016).

Therefore, both Batıkent and Eryaman settlements align with modernist planning principles, including rationality, functionality, scaled settlement organization, and the balance between housing, infrastructure, and amenities. In conclusion, the New Town approach was developed as an alternative to modern urban challenges, offering a model based on locality, small scale, harmony with nature, and social balance in terms of both spatial organization and governance. In this regard, it can be considered one of the precursors to contemporary debates on sustainable and human-centered urban visions.

4.2. Satellite City Approach

Satellite cities are settlements located within the influence of large metropolitan

centers, partially equipped but not fully autonomous. Often described as "dormitory towns," these cities are inhabited by individuals who commute to the central city for work, education, and services during the day, returning in the evening. Integrated with major cities through robust transportation networks (buses, metro, trains, minibuses, etc.), satellite cities provide alternative living spaces for low- and middle-income groups, particularly in response to rising living costs and housing demand (Keleş, 2019). In Türkiye, satellite city projects gained prominence from the 1980s onward, as urbanization pressures increased and authorities, particularly TOKİ, focused on planned housing production policies.

The theoretical framework of satellite cities is closely linked to the modern city paradigm. In the modern period, these cities were developed as spatial organization tools aimed at controlling the population pressures of large urban centers, emphasizing centralized planning and functional differentiation. However, with the rise of post-modern governance, satellite cities have acquired new functions, emphasizing multi-actor decision-making processes, participatory planning, environmental sustainability, and social inclusivity (Kooiman, 2003; Sassen, 2018). In this context, the satellite city approach now represents not only spatial planning but also strategic urbanization models integrated with governance capacity, social justice, and environmental sensitivity.

Applications in Türkiye concretize this transformation. Bahçeşehir in Istanbul, with a population of approximately 90,000 and 20,000 housing units, exemplifies a planned satellite city reflecting a modernist spatial vision (MESA, n.d.). TOKİ's Kayabaşı project, emphasizing environmental sustainability, incorporates green spaces, social facilities, photovoltaic panels, rainwater harvesting systems, and energy efficiency measures (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı [TOKİ], 2025).

The 12 planned satellite city projects in Arnavutköy, designed for 100,000 inhabitants and linked to mega projects such as Kanal Istanbul, reflect a strong central planning approach (Emlak News, 2025). Similarly, the 17,400-unit TOKİ satellite city project in Gürsu, Bursa, illustrates contemporary applications of modern urbanization practices in Türkiye. Its primary objective is to preserve the agricultural productivity of the Bursa Plain while providing alternative housing for increasing migration pressures (Yazman, 2011). However, this initiative carries broader significance when evaluated in the context of modern and post-modern governance. Modern governance focuses on regulation and control through central institutions, whereas post-modern governance emphasizes multi-actor collaboration, participation, and flexibility (Rhodes, 1996; Pierre & Peters, 2000). Furthermore, satellite cities today are not only intended to meet housing needs but are increasingly associated with sustainable urban objectives offered by the smart city paradigm, including sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, digital infrastructure, and social inclusivity (Komninos, 2002, 2016). The limited

integration of these principles in the Gürsu project demonstrates that satellite city policies in Türkiye still largely rely on a modernist spatial growth approach. Urban sustainability literature stresses that such projects should not be confined to physical space production but must also consider social cohesion, environmental sensitivity, and long-term quality of life (Campbell, 2003). Therefore, while the Gürsu TOKİ project combines spatial expansion with agricultural preservation, its insufficient integration of post-modern governance principles, smart city applications, and sustainability perspectives represents one of the most concrete examples in Türkiye of the structural limitations facing satellite city development.

4.3. Smart City Approach

The smart city approach is viewed as a reflection of the transition from the centralized, hierarchical, and techno-rationalist urban governance of the modern era to the multi-actor, participatory, and flexible governance model of the post-modern era (Pierre & Peters, 2000; Kooiman, 2003). Within this framework, smart cities utilize information and communication technologies not merely as technical tools but also as instruments that enhance governance participation, support data-driven decision-making processes, and promote sustainability objectives (Caragliu et al., 2011; Keleş, 2019).

Initially, the concept of a smart city focused on the integration of modern infrastructure with information technologies. The Smart Growth approach, which developed after 1996, aimed to limit urban sprawl and guide development in environmentally and socially sensitive ways, offering a new vision for cities in 1998 that emphasized the integration of technological innovation with sustainable economic growth, quality of life, and participatory governance (Örselli & Akbay, 2019). From the 2010s onward, with the European Union's adoption of "smart" concepts in urban sustainability projects, research expanded to include the social, environmental, and governance dimensions of cities within smart city applications (Pınarcıoğlu & Kanbak, 2020).

Smart city implementations have been realized with varying priorities across different countries. In Canada, Minton has emerged as an ecological and sustainable settlement, while New Zealand's Waitakere Eco-Tech ActionWETA network exemplifies a multi-actor governance model through the participation of municipalities, research institutes, and civil society organizations. Within the European Union's Euro Cities initiative, projects have been implemented since 1992 in cities such as Barcelona (Spain), Helsinki (Finland), Manchester (UK), and Thessaloniki (Greece), with Oulu and Viiki in Finland being recognized as exemplary eco-tech and sustainable cities. Singapore, Abu Dhabi, and Guang Ming in China are identified as "high-performance" smart cities with a focus on technology and infrastructure. Cities such as Ottawa, Stockholm, London, and

San Diego have long-standing smart city systems in place (Alkan, 2015).

In Türkiye, the first comprehensive approach to smart cities was initiated with the 10th Development Plan and materialized through the 2019–2022 National Smart Cities Strategy and Action Plan. Smart city projects in Türkiye aim to optimize resource utilization in transportation, energy, and infrastructure while improving service delivery to citizens. They also address governance dimensions such as data security, transparent spatial planning, and disaster management (Mirghaemi, 2019).

The 2019–2022 National Smart Cities Strategy and Action Plan formally defined Türkiye's smart city vision, values, strategic objectives, and priority actions. According to *the 2015 Global Metro Monitor report* by *the Brookings Institution,* the world's fastest-growing primary cities are located in China, Türkiye, and the Middle East; four of the top ten are in Türkiye (Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa), highlighting the potential in this field (Trujillo & Parilla, 2015). Accordingly, various institutions, primarily the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, have developed projects to enable self-managed infrastructure and networks in transportation and energy, ensure efficient use of city resources, and improve service delivery to urban populations.

Notable examples include the Smart Cities–Cloud City Information System Project, which emphasizes governance aspects such as data security, urban profiling, transparent spatial planning, planned and effective urban transformation, and infrastructure for natural disaster and crisis management. Other initiatives include KENTGES and ATLAS applications. Within the Istanbul Smart City Master Plan, projects such as smart parking and lighting systems, smart waste collection applications, digital services for people with disabilities, home care and healthcare solutions, IoT-integrated GIS-based vehicle tracking systems, the environmental control center supporting waste management, the Istanbul Traffic Control Center, and mobile traffic data-sharing platforms like İBB NAVİ are particularly noteworthy. The first system-based smart city project in Türkiye, "Smart KenTT," was implemented in Karaman in 2015 by Türk Telekom and Innova, establishing a city information network through kiosks for a population of 180,000, thereby serving as a model for other Turkish cities (Mirghaemi, 2019).

The Konya example demonstrates the integration of sustainability and local values in Türkiye's smart city approach. Applications such as fiber-optic infrastructure, integration of municipal services with bank cards, and smart bicycle systems reflect post-modern governance elements that emphasize both technology and citizen participation. These applications are designed to reduce urban transport burdens, conserve energy, and improve service quality (Yimsek & Yakar, 2023).

However, the literature indicates that smart city applications in Türkiye remain largely focused on transportation and infrastructure, while social inclusion, energy management, and smart building implementations are still limited (Meşhur, 2018; Altindas & Velibeyoglu, 2020). In this context, the smart city approach can be considered a paradigm that combines the technical rationality and centralization of modernist planning with the participatory, data-driven, and sustainability-oriented principles of post-modern governance. Türkiye's implementations demonstrate that technology is regarded not only as a technical innovation but also as a core component of post-modern urban governance (Mirghaemi, 2019; Örselli & Akbay, 2019; Pınarcıoğlu & Kanbak, 2020; Alkan, 2015).

4.4. Slow City (Cittaslow) Approach

Modernism, with its emphasis on rapid growth, globalization, and homogenization in urbanization processes, has also brought about environmental, social, and cultural challenges. In response to these issues, the Slow City (Cittaslow) movement emerged as an alternative approach, developing in parallel with the post-modern governance perspective that emphasizes pluralism and local identities. Cittaslow offers a model that counters the modernist urban paradigm focused on speed, efficiency, and growth by prioritizing the preservation of local values, the enhancement of quality of life, and environmentally compatible sustainability (Deniz, 2017; İlhan et al., 2020).

The foundation of the *Cittaslow* movement lies in the *Slow Food* movement, which originated in Italy during the 1980s. This movement advocated for cultural diversity, gastronomic heritage, and local identity as a counterpoint to global fast-consumption habits and the depersonalization of urban spaces. Institutionalized in 1999 through the initiative of Paolo Saturnini, the Mayor of Greve in Chianti, the Cittaslow Association rapidly expanded internationally, establishing a multi-actor governance network (Cittaslow International, 2016).

In Türkiye, the Cittaslow approach was concretely realized in 2009 when the Seferihisar district of İzmir joined the association. This initiative, led by the mayor of Seferihisar, aimed to preserve local values and promote sustainable development. By meeting the membership criteria of the international Cittaslow network, Seferihisar became the first slow city in Türkiye. This achievement enabled the district to maintain its urban development while safeguarding its history, culture, and natural beauty within a democratic and participatory governance framework. Furthermore, Seferihisar's experience served as a model for individuals seeking a peaceful and sustainable lifestyle and inspired other local governments, leading to the expansion of the Slow Cities network across Türkiye (Donat & Yavuzçehre, 2016).

Currently, there are 25 member cities in various regions of Türkiye (Cittaslow Türkiye, 2025). These cities are distinguished by environmental sustainability, preservation of cultural heritage, increased local participation, and democratic governance practices. *The Cittaslow Metropolis* project, developed in İzmir, functions as a post-modern laboratory for adapting this philosophy to large-scale cities, contributing to a new dimension in the movement in terms of scale and scope.

The Cittaslow approach aligns with the prominent principles of the post-modern governance paradigm. Multi-actor participation, the active role of local communities in decision-making processes, integration of sustainable development objectives with cultural identities, and the centralization of quality of life in spatial planning constitute the fundamental pillars of this approach. Indeed, İlhan, Karakaş, and Özkaraman (2020), examining the Taraklı example in Türkiye, emphasize that while Cittaslow offers an opportunity for local sustainable development, its effectiveness must be supported by robust institutional governance mechanisms.

In conclusion, the Cittaslow movement represents a tangible reflection of the post-modern governance approach, which is pluralistic, identity-based, and flexible, as opposed to the uniform and speed-focused structure of the modernist urban paradigm. With its integration of environmental sensitivity and social participation, this approach stands out among alternative urban development models.

5. Comparison of Urban Approaches Emerging in the Transition from Modernism to Post-Modernism

The transition from modernism to post-modernism has generated a profound transformation in the planning and governance of urban space. While urban models prominent in the modernist era were defined by rational planning, functionalism, and centralized decision-making mechanisms, the post-modern era has foregrounded multi-actor governance, the preservation of local identities, and environmental sustainability. This transformation can be observed concretely across different urban approaches. *The New Town* model reflects the functionalist vision of modernism, representing a planned spatial organization based on a balance between industry, housing, and green areas. *The Satellite City* approach, on the other hand, adheres to the modernist center-periphery logic, offering housing and transportation solutions to alleviate the burdens of large cities, yet maintaining a long-term dependency on the main city.

In contrast, *the Smart City* approach, which has emerged as a prominent trend in the post-modern era, emphasizes governance forms based on global integration, digitalization, speed, and technology. *The Slow City (Cittaslow)*

approach situates local identity, environmental awareness, and social participation at its core, offering an alternative urban paradigm within the framework of post-modern governance. Consequently, these different urban models, shaped between modernist rationality and post-modern pluralism, allow for a multidimensional comparison of the spatial, social, and administrative orientations that define the future of cities.

Table 2 presents a comparative framework of *Smart City, Slow City (Cittaslow), New Town,* and *Satellite City* approaches along axes consistent with the modern–post-modern debate.

Table 2.

Comparison of Contemporary Urban Approaches

Comparison Axes	Smart City	Slow City (Cittaslow)	New Town	Satellite City
Main Focus	Technology, digitalization, data-driven management	Local identity, culture, and environmental awareness	Planned urbanization, balance of housing and services	Alleviating pressure on main cities, housing, and industry-focused growth
Speed and Time Perception	Speed, efficiency, and real-time data processing	Slowness, quality of life, tranquility	Moderate pace, orderly life rhythm	Commute-based rhythm tied to the main city
Governance Approach	Multi-actor, technology-supported participation (infrastructure-focused)	Participatory, community-oriented, values-based	State-centered, top-down planning	Centralized planning with semi-autonomous dependency on the main city
Economic Perspective	Global network integration, innovation, and digital economy	Local production, small-scale economy, sustainable tourism	Self-sufficiency through industry and employment areas	Supporting the metropolis through industrial zones and affordable housing

Environment and Nature	Green technologies, energy efficiency, and environmental monitoring	Preservation of natural life, harmony with the environment	Planned green spaces, controlled environmental regulation	Mostly rapid growth, risk of environmental pressure
Urban Space	Smart buildings, sensor-based infrastructure, digital services	Human-scale spaces, protection of cultural heritage	Functionally zoned, modernist spatial planning	Separation of residential and work areas, transport-oriented spatial organization
Relation to Paradigm	Post-modern: positioning technology as a constitutive element	Post-modern: emphasis on local identity and diversity	Modernist: rational planning, homogenization	Modernist: center-periphery relations, functionalism
Example in Türkiye	Infrastructure-focused smart city projects in Istanbul, Ankara, and Konya (Meşhur, 2018; Kaya, 2021)	Cittaslow Türkiye network initiated in Seferihisar, 25 member cities (Donat & Yavuzçehre, 2016; Cittaslow Türkiye, 2025)	Planned "new town" settlements such as Batıkent and Eryaman in Ankara (Kavas, 2016; Gülpınar, 2021)	Planned satellite city projects such as Bahçeşehir, Kayabaşı in Istanbul, and Gürsu in Bursa, independent from the central city in terms of housing and social facilities (MESA, n.d.; TOKİ, 2025; Yazman, 2011; Emlak News, 2025)

*Note***.** Created by the authors.

This comparative table highlights the primary axes along which modernist and post-modernist urban approaches diverge. New Town and Satellite City models reflect the modernist rational planning, functionalism, and centralized governance perspective, producing housing and industrial and transport-oriented solutions, but over time have encountered issues such as homogenization, dependency, and environmental pressure. In contrast, the Smart City approach emerges as an extension of post-modern governance that positions technology as a constitutive element, while the Slow City model offers an alternative to modernist

homogenizing tendencies by placing local identity, social participation, and environmental awareness at the center.

Thus, in opposition to the urbanization practices shaped by the economies of scale, speed, and central control of the modernist vision, the post-modern paradigm foregrounds locality, diversity, sustainability, and flexibility. Cities are no longer merely unidimensional functional zones but have become multi-layered, experience-oriented spaces in which various actors interact.

An examination of Turkish examples shows that modernist and post-modernist approaches can coexist concretely within urban space. For instance, Batıkent and Eryaman in Ankara, as products of modernist rational planning, reflect functional segregation and homogenization, whereas the Cittaslow network led by Seferihisar reflects the post-modern paradigm's emphasis on local identity, participation, and diversity. Smart city applications in Istanbul aim for global integration through infrastructure and digitalization, while satellite cities such as Bahçeşehir and Kayabaşı maintain the center-periphery logic of modernist planning. This diversity demonstrates that urbanization in Türkiye simultaneously experiences the legacy of modernist planning and the post-modern innovations focused on difference and technology.

6. Factors Influencing the Transformation of the Administrative Paradigm

When comparing modern and post-modern urban models in terms of urban approaches, it is evident that the administrative paradigm has evolved in parallel with this transformation. The spatial organization and administrative functioning of urban models are mutually reinforcing: modernist approaches (New Town, Satellite City) are characterized by centralized, standardized, and functionalist decision-making processes, whereas post-modern urban approaches (Smart City, Slow City) emphasize multi-actor governance, flexibility, diversity, and mechanisms for local participation. In this context, the main factors influencing the change in the administrative paradigm can be highlighted as follows:

- **Globalization and Digitalization:** In the modern era, decision-making mechanisms were largely hierarchical and centralized. With the advent of the information age, digital technologies (big data, artificial intelligence, sensor networks) have become carriers of governance. Public administration processes are now reshaped not only through the physical development of infrastructure but also via digital democracy, e-government, and data-driven governance systems. For instance, Güler and Şahnagil (2017) discuss the relationship between e-democracy and e-government in terms of integrating information technologies into governance processes. At the local level, Antalya Muratpaşa Municipality's *"Neighborhood Assembly"* initiative provides an example of a digital democracy model supporting

citizen participation through technology (Erdoğan, 2020).

- **Institutionalizing Participation:** One of the inseparable elements of the post-modern governance paradigm is the direct involvement of local populations in decision-making processes. Mechanisms such as city councils, neighborhood assemblies, and digital participation platforms have gained importance in institutionalizing this participation. In Türkiye, city councils have begun to acquire formal status under Law No. 5393 on Municipalities; however, issues such as the lack of binding authority, political pressure, and limited governance capacity indicate the persistence of the modernist legacy (Saraçoğlu & Yılmaz, 2024). Activities targeting youth by the city council in Şanlıurfa underline the post-modern emphasis on local democracy (Doğan, 2023), while the Istanbul City Council demonstrates the potential for different social groups to participate in city-level governance (Karadeniz, 2025).
- **Transition from Centralization to Network-Based Governance:** The modernist paradigm emphasizes the planning and control power of central authority, whereas the post-modern paradigm features multi-centered (multi-actor), network-based, and coordinated decision-making processes. This transformation becomes particularly evident at local and regional governance scales. It is essential that administrative structures align with urban models: for example, Smart City projects produce infrastructure- and technology-oriented solutions but require governance structures that ensure oversight, transparency, and participation (Goldsmith & Yang, 2025).
- **Paradigmatic Breaks and Value Transformations:** The universalism, normative rationality, and plan-centered approaches of the modern paradigm have been challenged by post-modern critiques. Cities are no longer governed through a *"single correct plan"* but rather via context-based, plural, and dynamic processes. Zhao (2021) frames the transition from modernism to post-modernism as a paradigmatic break in planning and architectural literature, arguing that planning should be redefined in terms of sociality, history, and local identity. The modern paradigm is not entirely abandoned; rather, this transformation often manifests as a tensioned synthesis of old and new paradigms.
- **Differences in Resources and Institutional Capacity:** Paradigm shifts are not only conceptual but also practical processes; factors such as field capacity, technical infrastructure, financial resources, and human capital play a determining role. Many local governments struggle to move away from centralized control and budgeting traditions associated with the modern paradigm. Thus, there are practical limits to the adoption of post-

modern governance approaches, which can be overcome through staffing, managerial vision, and institutional culture.

In conclusion, the urban models presented in the previous section (*Smart, Slow, New, Satellite*) are closely linked with the administrative paradigms discussed here, forming a mutually shaping transformation dynamic. The spatial and functional boundaries of modern urban paradigms are being tested against the post-modern governance demands for values, participation, and technological transformation. Therefore, administrative paradigm shifts and innovative urban models should be analyzed together, as this duality mutually informs urbanization and governance studies.

Building on this, the concept of *"Living Labs,"* as a contemporary tool of post-modern governance models, exemplifies experimental governance and user-centered innovation in smart cities. These structures place citizen participation at the center, reshaping policy and service design processes in a flexible, experiential, and context-sensitive manner.

6.1. Examples of the Transition from Modern Urban Management to Post-Modern Governance: Living Labs in Smart Cities

Smart city governance represents a paradigm shift away from Weberian bureaucracy-based, centralized, and hierarchical mechanisms of modern urban management. While decision-making processes in traditional city administration were predominantly top-down, standardized, and centralized, the Smart City approach enables more horizontal, adaptive, and participatory governance through *"Living Labs"* (Urban Living Labs, ULLs), in which users, stakeholders, and technology actors collaboratively conduct experiments (Schaffers & Turkama, 2012). This transformation aims to redefine the planning process not only through physical structures but also via decision-making processes and innovation networks.

The concept of Living Labs historically emerged in the 1970s through collaborative design approaches, evolved in the 1980s with the integration of information technologies, and further developed in the 1990s with digital city projects. In the 2000s, under the leadership of Mitchell, it became a model enabling active citizen participation in urban planning and design processes (Schuurman, 2015). This historical development laid the foundation for a participatory and innovative paradigm shift in urban management. Today, Living Labs refer to experimental innovation processes conducted in real-world environments with active user participation, providing opportunities to test not only technological but also social and administrative innovations. These structures are defined by the concepts of *"user-centered innovation"* and *"experimental governance,"* emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and the importance of local context in urban governance

(Florez Ayala et al., 2022; Velasquez Mendez et al., 2025).

Living Labs provide effectiveness in areas where traditional participation methods are insufficient by allowing innovative solutions to urban challenges to be developed and tested in real time. Through mobile applications, online platforms, and open data-based tools, rapid decision-making mechanisms can be established, and multi-actor collaborations can be supported (Karlı & Açıksöz, 2021). For instance, *Urban Living Labs* develop experimental intervention models to enhance the adaptation of critical infrastructures to climate change and to increase urban resilience (Amorim et al., 2022).

Examples in Türkiye concretize this transformation. The Başakşehir and Bodrum Living Lab projects contribute to the local implementation of the smart city vision through multi-actor collaboration models (Kemeç, 2023). The Mezopotamya Living Lab demonstrates a strong example of post-modern governance in migration and social cohesion policies (Mezopotamya Living Lab, 2025). Arslan (2022) emphasizes that the Living Lab ecosystem in municipalities democratizes citizen participation in innovation processes, while Yılmaz and Ertekin (2023) indicate that, in Istanbul, these processes are limited by issues of funding, capacity, and scalability.

At the international level, *the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL)* has, since 2006, brought together more than 480 laboratories to support innovation in areas such as energy efficiency, mobility, and social inclusion (ENoLL, 2025). Similarly, Citylab projects implement the Living Lab approach in logistics, transportation, and energy efficiency to enhance urban resilience (Culwick, 2019). In Türkiye, CityLAB initiatives in Antalya, Ankara, and Istanbul serve as experimental governance applications supporting the smart city vision at the local level (CITYLAB, 2022).

However, the literature also highlights various limitations of Living Labs. Insufficient user participation, the project-based nature of labs limiting their societal transformation capacity, and the tendency to associate innovation solely with technological components are among the main concerns (Esashika et al., 2023). Therefore, it is critical to institutionalize Living Labs in a manner compatible with social learning, multi-actor participation, and sustainability objectives.

In conclusion, Living Labs in smart cities emerge as unique structures that challenge the boundaries of modern urban management paradigms and translate post-modern governance principles into spatial practice. These laboratories transform cities from mere sites of construction and service provision into participatory systems open to continuous experimental transformation, thereby reconfiguring urban spaces along the modern–post-modern continuum.

This new paradigm aims not only for technological but also for social and cultural sustainability, fostering more inclusive, resilient, and innovative urban environments.

7. Conclusion

The modernist urban paradigm, which emerged with the Industrial Revolution, shaped urbanization processes through rationalist planning and centralized governance principles. However, the homogenizing and uniform nature of this approach faced intense criticism, particularly from the second half of the 20th century, prompting the search for post-modern governance models that emphasize participation, pluralism, and flexibility. This transformation has profoundly influenced not only spatial planning tools but also urban governance practices.

Based on the primary research questions of this study, three main findings emerge:

First, the transition from modernism to post-modernism has transformed sustainable development within urban governance. The top-down and technocratic decision-making mechanisms of the modernist era have been replaced, in the post-modern era, by governance models sensitive to local contexts, attentive to environmental sustainability, and open to social diversity. The case of Türkiye demonstrates that this transition aligns with global discussions; however, institutional capacity and political will remain decisive factors in implementation.

Second, the transformation in Türkiye produces complex outcomes in terms of environmental awareness, participation, and inclusivity. Instruments such as city councils, digital participation platforms, and Living Labs have the potential to enhance transparency and civic engagement, yet they face practical limitations. The continuity of participation, funding, and the capacity of local governments are critical variables determining their effectiveness. While the Mezopotamya, Başakşehir, and Bodrum Living Lab examples demonstrate the capacity to develop innovative solutions in diverse contexts, the scaling and institutionalization of these mechanisms remain limited.

Third, post-modern urban governance aligns significantly with contemporary trend approaches. In parallel with the Sustainable Development Goals, energy efficiency, social inclusion, and digital transformation objectives, the integration of artificial intelligence and data-driven management tools into urban governance in Türkiye offers a new paradigm. Nevertheless, ethical transparency, data security, and societal acceptance concerns regarding AI-based decision-support systems emerge as risk areas that must be carefully managed.

From a theoretical perspective, Türkiye's transformation produces a hybrid governance model that partially aligns with Harvey's modernity/post-modernity tension, Lefebvre's social production of space, Castells' network society, and Sassen's global city theories, while also containing context-specific differences. This indicates that post-modern governance is not a static paradigm but a continuously redefined process across different scales and actors.

In conclusion, the transition from modern urban management to post-modern governance in Türkiye has accelerated under the influence of technological advancements and democratization dynamics. To ensure that this process attains sustainable, inclusive, and effective characteristics, the following policy priorities are emphasized:

- Strengthening the institutional capacity of participation mechanisms (city councils, digital platforms, Living Labs),
- Structuring AI-assisted decision-making processes in accordance with ethical and transparent principles,
- Maintaining context-sensitive balances between environmental sustainability and the preservation of local identities,
- Supporting local governments in terms of financing, human resources, and technical capacity.

Within this framework, the study reinterprets Türkiye's governance experience along the modern–post-modern continuum and develops holistic, multi-actor, and context-sensitive policy recommendations for urban management in the age of artificial intelligence.

7.1. Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study indicate that the transition from modernist urban management to post-modern governance carries distinctive dynamics within the Turkish context. At the same time, the rise of AI-based governance tools presents new theoretical and empirical avenues for future research.

Firstly, the effectiveness, ethical dimensions, and transparency of AI-assisted decision-making mechanisms in local governments should be examined in a multidimensional manner. Such studies would shed light on how current debates on algorithmic transparency, data security, and ethical oversight manifest in local contexts, thereby contributing to the assessment of governance quality.

Secondly, the functionality of participatory governance tools—such as city councils, digital platforms, and Living Labs—in decision-making processes should be systematically analyzed. Such investigations would provide an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the democratization claims of the post-modern

paradigm are realized and contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between the continuity of citizen participation and the preservation of local identities.

Thirdly, comparative research designs are necessary. Comparative case studies conducted across different cities in Türkiye could reveal similarities and differences regarding governance capacity, civic engagement levels, and innovation policies. Conducting these studies not only within the national context but also in conjunction with international examples would provide guidance in assessing how well local governments align with post-modern governance principles.

Finally, the degree of compatibility between existing local government legislation and post-modern governance principles constitutes a critical area for future research. In particular, identifying potential misalignments between legal regulations and goals such as participation, transparency, and sustainability could offer unique contributions to both theoretical literature and policy development processes.

Thus, future studies employing interdisciplinary approaches and methodologically diverse research designs are expected to produce deeper and context-sensitive contributions to debates on the modern–post-modern urban paradigm.

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CHAPTER 4

URBAN GOVERNANCE MODELS FOR SUSTAINABLE CITY MANAGEMENT: GLOBAL TRENDS AND A PERSPECTIVE FROM TÜRKIYE

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1. Introduction

The cities of the 21st century are confronted with multidimensional crises such as climate change, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, growing social and economic inequalities, rapid population growth, and spatial fragmentation. These crises have become too complex to be managed solely through technical or infrastructural solutions, thus necessitating new institutional approaches and governance transformations in urban management. In this context, sustainable urban governance has gained increasing significance within the discipline of public administration and local government practices, and this is directly linked to the developmental capacity of local governments in Türkiye.

Urban governance goes beyond the traditional understanding of public administration by emphasizing multi-actor, multi-level, and participatory decision-making processes. Municipalities function not only as service providers but also as democratic coordination centers. This approach constitutes the institutional foundation for the sustainable management of cities. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the European Union's urban policies, and international best practices illustrate the growing global importance of governance-based urbanization.

In the international literature, urban governance is predominantly discussed in terms of the principles of participation, transparency, accountability, and equity. Several studies from Europe and Asia demonstrate the effective implementation of multi-actor participation mechanisms and the innovative use of digital governance tools. However, there are also contrasting findings indicating that participation remains largely symbolic in certain contexts or that local autonomy is constrained by centralization. Limited studies focusing on Türkiye suggest that local governments possess a low capacity for sustainability-oriented governance, that participation and accountability mechanisms function only to a limited extent, and that gaps exist between legislation and practice. This highlights the

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lack of systematic studies comparing Türkiye's experience with global models.

The specific challenges in Türkiye can be defined as the symbolic nature of participation, limited accountability instruments, constraints on local autonomy due to centralization, and the insufficiency of legal frameworks in practice. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a comparative analysis of Türkiye's urban governance capacity vis-à-vis international models. By bridging theory and practice, the study seeks to provide an original contribution to both the academic literature and practitioners in the field of sustainable urban governance.

The objectives of this study are structured around three main axes: to analyze the theoretical framework and core principles of urban governance; to comparatively assess global best practices through case studies from Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, and Denmark; and to systematically examine the current capacity of local governments in Türkiye, including legislative and implementation challenges. This structure not only makes an original contribution to the literature but also offers practical recommendations for policy development in local governance.

Within this framework, the primary aim of this chapter is to explore the potential of urban governance models for sustainable public administration and to analyze the extent to which these models align with the local government system in Türkiye. Accordingly, the chapter is organized into three main sections. First, the concept of governance is examined from a theoretical perspective, and the key principles defining urban governance are analyzed. Second, sustainable urban governance models adopted globally are evaluated comparatively through examples from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, and Denmark. Finally, the governance capacity of local governments in Türkiye is assessed, focusing on the existing legal framework, implementation challenges, and potential areas for reform. Through this structure, the gap between theory and practice is bridged, thereby contributing to academic discourse while generating policy recommendations for practitioners.

2. Urban Governance

Urban governance refers to an approach in which cities are managed not solely by public institutions but through the collective involvement of multiple actors. Unlike traditional public administration, this model emphasizes horizontal relationships, participation, transparency, and accountability in decision-making processes, aiming to develop flexible and inclusive solutions directly linked to the goals of sustainable urban management. Today, cities are not merely physical spaces; they have become nodes where economic, social, cultural, and environmental processes intersect, and where multi-actor interactions are concentrated. Consequently, urban challenges typically require multidimensional, multi-stakeholder, and multi-scalar intervention strategies (Healey, 1997; United

Nations Human Settlements Programme [UN-Habitat], 2002).

In the international literature, studies on sustainable urban governance have generally employed comparative case analyses and policy analysis methods (Swyngedouw, 2005). Some research highlights the significance of participation and collaboration in urban governance (Healey, 1997; Kooiman, 2003), while others focus on accountability and administrative efficiency (Pierre, 2005; Rhodes, 1996).

In recent years, digital governance, smart cities, and climate-oriented urban policies have attracted growing attention (Giffinger et al., 2007). Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital participation platforms and the role of sustainability indicators in assessing urban governance performance have also been emphasized (Engaging Citizens in the Smart City, 2021; Citizen Participation and the Rise of Digital Media Platforms, 2019; Emerging Trends of Smart Urban Governance, 2022). These findings reveal a gap in the Turkish context regarding the limited utilization of digital participation tools and sustainability indicators.

Research conducted in Türkiye indicates that participation largely remains symbolic, local autonomy is restricted, and governance principles face challenges in institutionalization (Doğan, 2023; Öztop, 2021). In this context, neighborhood assemblies and other participatory mechanisms appear to have limited influence in decision-making processes, while legal and bureaucratic structures hinder the full implementation of governance principles at the local level. Accountability and participation are critical to sustainable urban governance. Post-2015 studies underscore the need for public governance to become more responsive and accountable, emphasizing the importance of civic participation mechanisms in achieving this goal (United Nations Development Programme, ; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015).

2.1. The Concept of Governance and Its Emergence

The concept of governance began to gain prominence in public administration literature in the late 1980s and, particularly after the 1990s, evolved into a fundamental management paradigm at both national and international levels, closely associated with institutional reform, democratization, and development debates. The term represents an alternative to the hierarchical, bureaucratic, and centralized structure of classical public administration, advocating instead a more horizontal, participatory, flexible, and multi-actor approach to management.

The governance approach not only redefines the role of the state but also envisions the active involvement of civil society organizations, the private sector, citizens, and other stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of public policies (Rhodes, 1996; Pierre & Peters, 2000). In this context, it is emphasized that the state alone cannot effectively address public problems and that effective

governance requires multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-instrument mechanisms.

Although the concept of governance initially emerged in the context of neoliberal reforms, it gradually evolved into a comprehensive framework encompassing normative principles such as democratic participation, accountability, and subsidiarity. Particularly in the policy documents of international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the OECD, the principles of "good governance" have become more pronounced, prioritizing not only effective and efficient management practices but also legitimacy, transparency, inclusiveness, and citizen engagement (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1997; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2001).

Classical public administration, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is rooted in the Weberian bureaucratic model, conceptualizing public administration around rational rules, hierarchical structures, specialization, centralization, and impartiality. In this approach, the citizen is perceived as a passive "subject," and decision-making processes are largely entrusted to public authorities (Weber, 1947). In contrast, the governance approach defines public administration as an interactive process involving all segments of society, with public institutions assuming roles not only as decision-makers but also as coordinators and facilitators (Bevir, 2011).

2.2. The Concept and Characteristics of Urban Governance

Urban governance refers to the application of the governance paradigm at the local level, particularly within the urban context. This concept denotes a multi-level and multi-actor governance structure in which various stakeholders, including municipalities, central government bodies, civil society organizations, private sector actors, universities, professional associations, and citizens, participate collaboratively in decision-making, implementation, and monitoring processes (UN-Habitat, 2002). In this sense, urban governance diverges from the classical public administration model by emphasizing a complex, dynamic, and interaction-oriented administrative structure.

Today, cities have moved beyond being merely physical spaces, becoming nodes of intensive economic, social, cultural, and environmental processes characterized by multi-actor interactions. Consequently, urban problems often require multidimensional, multi-stakeholder, and multi-scalar interventions. Urban governance responds to this complexity by advocating for decision-making processes that are decentralized and distributed through horizontal relationships rather than centralized structures. This approach prioritizes not only efficiency but also values such as legitimacy, inclusiveness, and social justice (Healey, 1997).

Unlike traditional models, urban governance envisions multi-actor, multi-

level, and collaborative frameworks for city management. In this model, not only public institutions but also private sector actors, civil society organizations, and citizens actively participate in decision-making and implementation processes. Relationships among actors are shaped by mutual trust, negotiation, and cooperation, with decisions made not solely by elected representatives but through the involvement of all stakeholders directly affected by the outcomes. To this end, participatory decision-making processes are encouraged through mechanisms such as neighborhood councils, citizens' assemblies, and digital participation platforms (Kooiman, 2003).

Urban governance also entails a multi-level structure in which local, national, and international actors jointly address complex challenges such as climate change, disaster management, and migration. The foundation of this structure lies in a set of non-hierarchical, flexible network relationships that facilitate information sharing and support the development of innovative and learning organizations. Urban governance seeks not only to enhance the efficiency of service delivery but also to promote normative values such as democracy, social justice, and sustainability (Pierre, 2005).

In this context, urban governance constitutes both the democratic and strategic infrastructure of sustainable urban management. Governance principles have evolved from being merely an administrative preference to becoming a necessity in responding to the multidimensional challenges faced by cities. Consequently, the governance approach enables urban policies to be shaped in a manner that is more legitimate, effective, and inclusive (Pierre, 2005).

2.3. Fundamental Principles of Urban Governance

At the core of the urban governance approach lies not only the reorganization of administrative processes but also the execution of these processes within a framework of democratic legitimacy, social inclusiveness, and administrative efficiency. In this regard, governance principles such as participation, transparency, accountability, equity, and effectiveness constitute not only the normative foundation of the concept of governance but are also regarded as indispensable elements for the success of sustainable urban management (UNDP, 1997; OECD, 2001).

2.3.1. Participation

Participation refers to the active involvement of citizens, civil society organizations, and other local stakeholders in decision-making processes. Participatory processes should not remain limited to consultation but should have a genuine impact on the shaping of decisions. At the urban scale, this principle is operationalized through tools such as neighborhood forums, citizens' assemblies,

digital participation platforms, and public consultation meetings. Effective participation enhances both the responsiveness of policies to local needs and the legitimacy of governance processes.

2.3.2. Transparency

Transparency denotes the openness and accessibility of the procedures, justifications, and outcomes of public decision-making to the public. In local governance, transparency is ensured through measures such as making budgets, plans, and activity reports publicly available, ensuring the traceability of decision-making processes, and facilitating the right to access information. Transparency plays a critical role in combating corruption and establishing public trust.

2.3.3. Accountability

Accountability refers to the obligation of public officials and local decision-makers to justify their actions and be held responsible to society. In urban governance, this principle must be secured through both top-down (administrative oversight) and bottom-up (societal monitoring) mechanisms. Performance audits, internal control systems, independent monitoring boards, and citizen feedback mechanisms fall within this scope.

2.3.4. Equity

The principle of equity refers to the fair representation of all social groups, particularly disadvantaged segments, in access to urban services, participation in decision-making processes, and distribution of resources. Dimensions such as gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the integration of migrants into the process constitute key determinants of this principle's applicability. Urban governance should develop active policies to reduce inequalities and strengthen inclusive mechanisms.

2.3.5. Effectiveness

Effectiveness relates to the capacity of local governments to achieve the intended objectives. This encompasses not only the technically efficient delivery of services but also the development of policies aligned with strategic goals, producing long-term impacts and meeting stakeholder expectations. Effective governance requires rational resource utilization while ensuring the continuous monitoring and improvement of governance processes.

In conclusion, while studies in the international literature on urban governance highlight participation, accountability, and multi-actor collaboration approaches, some research focuses on innovative governance mechanisms through digital platforms and smart city applications (Healey, 1997; Kooiman, 2003). In the Turkish context, however, deficiencies such as symbolic participation, limited

local autonomy, and the lack of institutionalization of governance principles persist (Doğan, 2023; Öztop, 2021).

In light of these evaluations, although the dimensions of participation and accountability have been sufficiently emphasized in the literature, their practical implementation and effectiveness remain limited in the Turkish context. Moreover, the integration of digital governance and sustainability indicators into local governance processes has been largely neglected in the literature. The purpose of this study is to identify gaps in both international and Turkish contexts, to examine the applicability of urban governance principles at the local level from a comparative perspective, and to provide policy recommendations for sustainable urban management. In doing so, the study aims to address existing gaps in the literature and contribute concretely to the development of participatory and accountable governance models in Türkiye.

3. Global Governance Models and Best Practice Examples

This section analyzes international governance models and best practice examples developed for sustainable urban management from a comparative perspective. In particular, it examines the European Union's urban governance policies within the framework of key documents that shape the urbanization and sustainability agenda, followed by a discussion of model types and governance principles through successful cases from countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, and Denmark.

3.1. The European Union's Urban Governance Policies

The European Union has long shaped the framework of urban governance through comprehensive policy documents grounded in the principles of sustainable urbanization and inclusive governance. One such key document, the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, adopted by the European Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Development (2007), advocates integrated urban development strategies particularly aimed at supporting socially disadvantaged areas, emphasizing the importance of local-level participation, multi-actor partnerships, and strategic spatial planning. The Charter places "good urban governance" at the core of sustainability objectives and serves as a guiding reference for European cities. In practice, the Leipzig Charter strengthened integration policies in urban renewal projects in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, contributing to social cohesion and increased local employment. However, it fell short of fully addressing spatial inequalities in disadvantaged areas.

The New Urban Agenda (2016), adopted as an outcome of the United Nations HABITAT III Conference, is the most comprehensive document framing the relationship between urbanization and governance on a global scale. The

Agenda proposes reimagining cities not only as centers of economic growth but also as spaces capable of generating transformation in social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability. This document prioritizes governance principles such as inclusive decision-making mechanisms, citizen participation, digitalization, and the empowerment of women and youth. In practice, participatory budgeting, inclusive planning, and digital urban services have become widespread in Latin American and European cities; however, implementation has remained limited in many African and Asian cities due to institutional capacity constraints (UN-Habitat, 2016).

The Urban Agenda for the EU (2016) offers a multi-level governance platform addressing the specific challenges of European cities. Through thematic partnerships referred to as "Pacts," it aims to foster joint policy-making among local, national, and EU-level actors. This agenda represents a distinctive governance model that seeks to enhance city representation in decision-making processes, strengthen local capacities, and improve policy coherence. In practice, the Urban Agenda for the EU has produced concrete policy recommendations in areas such as air quality, migration, and urban poverty; nevertheless, challenges such as inadequate resource sharing and coordination among partnerships have hindered equal levels of success (European Commission, 2016).

These documents support urban governance principles not only declaratively but also through actionable policy tools, providing roadmaps to transform European cities toward sustainability, inclusiveness, and multi-actor governance. From Türkiye's perspective, as a candidate country, the alignment process with these policies has been supported through various strategy documents. For instance, the Regional Development Strategies for the 2014-2020 period incorporated objectives aligned with the principles of the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda, such as integrated planning, local participation, and environmental sustainability. Moreover, recent initiatives such as Participatory Budgeting practices introduced in municipalities like İzmir, Eskişehir, and Antalya, as well as the Smart City Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2023), align with the digitalization and citizen participation objectives of the EU Urban Agenda. However, OECD (2023a) data indicate that the institutionalization rate of participatory mechanisms at the local level in Türkiye is around 35%, significantly below the EU average of 70%. Therefore, although Türkiye continues its alignment efforts with EU policies, there remains a need for further improvement in inclusive governance and multi-actor collaboration at the local level.

3.2. International Best Practice Examples

In the field of urban governance, many countries have developed participatory, transparent, and multi-actor models to achieve sustainability goals. In this study,

the cities of Freiburg (Germany), Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Seoul (South Korea), and Copenhagen (Denmark) have been selected as examples. These cities are considered pioneering examples in the international literature in terms of sustainable urbanization and participatory governance practices. The selection criteria are based on three main dimensions: the diversity and innovativeness of governance practices (each city has developed unique mechanisms in the areas of participation, transparency, accountability, and digitalization), environmental and social sustainability performance (Freiburg and Copenhagen serve as models for environmental sustainability, while Amsterdam and Seoul stand out in participatory and digital governance practices), and adaptability and comparability (the selected cities offer policies applicable to medium-sized and metropolitan municipalities in countries like Türkiye, enabling comparative analysis by considering national and local contextual differences). These criteria allow the study to adapt international experiences to the Turkish context from both normative and empirical perspectives.

3.2.1. Freiburg (Germany)

The city of Freiburg in Germany is one of the pioneering cities globally recognized as a model in sustainable urbanization. In particular, the Vauban district stands out not only for its environmentally focused approaches such as the use of renewable energy, low carbon emissions, and pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented transportation systems, but also for its participatory planning processes conducted at the neighborhood level. Thanks to the network structure established among citizens, housing cooperatives, and local governments, the planning process was grounded on a horizontal negotiation platform, and decisions were made jointly. This demonstrates how the principles of environmental sustainability and democratic participation can operate holistically in governance.

The success of Freiburg is based on strong environmental awareness, local autonomy, and a cooperative tradition. Germany's federal structure, by granting extensive powers and financial resources to local governments, has facilitated the implementation of innovative practices. In this context, the Vauban district stands out with the use of renewable energy, low carbon emissions, and bicycle-prioritized transportation systems, while citizens' direct participation in planning processes through cooperatives shows the strengthening of a horizontal negotiation culture in governance. For the Turkish context, the most important lesson to be drawn from this experience is the widespread adoption of cooperative-based housing projects and neighborhood-level participatory planning mechanisms. In particular, ensuring that citizens do not remain limited to mere information provision in urban transformation projects but actively participate in decision-making constitutes the adaptable aspect of the Freiburg model for Türkiye (Coates, 2013).

3.2.2. Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Amsterdam is a pioneer in integrating innovative digital governance tools into local decision-making processes. Through the "Amsterdam Smart City" platform, a ground for cooperation has been established among the municipality, technology firms, universities, and citizens, and joint solutions have been developed in areas such as transportation, energy efficiency, and urban planning. Under the "Buurtbudget" (Neighborhood Budget) application, citizens make suggestions on how to use a certain budget and participate directly in the decision-making process through online voting. These practices strengthen the dimensions of digitalization, transparency, and direct participation in governance (Fraaije et al., 2023).

In the Amsterdam example, success is associated with high digital literacy, a strong tradition of local democracy, and technology-economy integration. This model has reinforced the dimensions of digitalization, transparency, and direct participation in governance. For Türkiye, the Amsterdam example is significant in terms of developing digital participation platforms and making open data portals more effective in local governments. Especially in metropolitan municipalities, shaping budget planning through online participation will contribute to increasing transparency and enable citizens to be directly involved in the process (Fraaije et al., 2023).

3.2.3. Seoul (South Korea)

Seoul Metropolitan Government, particularly in the post-2011 period, prioritized governance reforms and adopted the "Open Government" approach. Through the "Seoul Innovation Bureau," citizens' opinions are taken as the basis for the design of public services, and problems are identified directly using data provided by citizens. Through mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, open data portals, and digital complaint systems, Seoul has increased accountability and citizen satisfaction in governance processes. Policies aimed at involving youth and disadvantaged groups in the process present significant examples of how the principle of equality can be institutionalized in governance (Open Government Partnership, 2017). For Türkiye, the most adaptable elements of the Seoul model include strengthening participatory budgeting legally and institutionally, making local-level digital complaint and suggestion systems interactive, and implementing affirmative action mechanisms to increase the participation of disadvantaged groups.

3.2.4. Copenhagen (Denmark)

Copenhagen has set an example on a global scale in environmental sustainability with its goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2025. Behind this success lie strong

environmental awareness, national policy support, and strong cooperation with the private sector. Through the "Copenhagen Solutions Lab," innovative solutions are tested in areas such as energy, transportation, waste management, and urban regeneration, and projects are shaped through the active participation of stakeholders within the framework of multi-level governance mechanisms. In the Turkish context, the elements that can be adapted from this model include the development of strong cooperation models among municipalities, universities, and the private sector for energy efficiency and carbon reduction, as well as the implementation of pilot sustainable neighborhood projects in metropolitan cities (Cömertler & Cömertler, 2021).

The differences among these four cities demonstrate how contextual factors influence the success of governance reforms. Freiburg has spread participation to the grassroots through strong environmental awareness and a cooperative tradition; Amsterdam has strengthened the principles of transparency and accountability by leveraging digital infrastructure and the innovation ecosystem; Seoul has institutionalized open governance through strong central government support and technological capacity; and Copenhagen has transformed environmental sustainability goals into concrete projects through multi-actor collaborations.

Within the scope of this study, a comparison table has been prepared to systematically present the extent to which the examined cities comply with governance principles. Governance principles frequently emphasized in the literature, such as participation, transparency, accountability, and sustainability, provide a critical framework for understanding the common features of successful urban examples. However, these principles are applied under different contextual conditions in each city.

Table 1.

Implementation of Governance Principles in International Examples

City	Participation	Transparency	Accountability	Digitalization	Environmental Sustainability
Freiburg	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very High
Amsterdam	High	High	High	Very High	High
Seoul	High	High	High	Very High	Medium
Copenhagen	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Very High

Note. From the Environmental Performance Index (Wendling et al., 2020), the OECD Digital Government Index (OECD, 2023b), and the Open Government Index (World Justice Project, 2025).

When a comparative assessment is made in terms of governance principles,

Freiburg has a strong level of participation but a limited structure in terms of digitalization, whereas Amsterdam and Seoul stand out in both digitalization and transparency. Copenhagen, on the other hand, differentiates itself with its environmental sustainability performance. Evaluated as an overall picture, Freiburg performs high in participation, medium in transparency, medium in accountability, low in digitalization, and very high in environmental sustainability; Amsterdam is at a high level in participation, transparency, and accountability, very high in digitalization, and high in environmental sustainability. Seoul is high in participation, transparency, and accountability, very high in digitalization, and medium in environmental sustainability; whereas Copenhagen shows medium success in participation and transparency, medium in accountability, high in digitalization, and very high in environmental sustainability. This comparison reveals which areas Türkiye needs to make progress in urban governance and which international experiences can be more easily adapted.

The table compares the governance approaches of cities within the framework of these principles, making visible which principles are implemented through which tools and mechanisms. Thus, the table functions not only as a descriptive tool but also as an analytical basis for policy transfer and model adaptation processes.

4. Assessment of Local Governance Capacity in Türkiye

The development of sustainable urban management in Türkiye is possible not only through investments in physical and technical infrastructure but also by strengthening governance capacity. This section evaluates the extent to which local governments in Türkiye have transformed according to governance principles, and how the existing legal and institutional framework contributes to or limits this process. From a comparative perspective with international best practices, the main opportunities, problem areas, and strategic priorities in the Turkish context are highlighted.

4.1. Legal and Institutional Framework

The legal foundations of local governance in Türkiye have largely been shaped by reforms carried out in the 2000s. Law No. 5393 on Municipalities, Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities, and Law No. 5018 on Public Financial Management and Control aim to institutionalize governance tools at the local level, such as strategic planning, performance-based budgeting, and participation mechanisms. These regulations theoretically aim to strengthen democratic accountability, transparency, and participation. However, in practice, the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains limited.

For example, according to the 2022 "Strategic Planning in Local Governments"

report by the Union of Turkish Municipalities (TBB), although 87% of municipalities held public meetings during the preparation of strategic plans, the average participation rate was below 1%. The same report notes that participation was mostly limited to representatives of professional chambers and civil society, while the involvement of ordinary citizens was extremely low (Türkiye Belediyeler Birliği [TBB], 2022). Similarly, although city councils are legally established under Article 76 of Law No. 5393, these structures mostly operate under the shadow of municipal administration and have very limited influence on decision-making processes. Indeed, according to 2021 data from the Ministry of Interior's Directorate General of Local Governments, although 64% of municipalities in Türkiye have active city councils, only 12% of these councils possess mechanisms strong enough to directly influence decisions made by the municipal council.

International comparisons indicate that participation mechanisms in Türkiye have a strong normative framework but fail to gain depth in practice. For instance, participatory budgeting in cities such as Porto Alegre (Brazil) and Barcelona (Spain) is not merely consultative but has binding effects on decision-making processes. In Porto Alegre, approximately 20% of the municipal budget is determined through participatory budgeting (Wampler, 2000), whereas such practices in Turkish municipalities mostly remain symbolic. Similarly, in Paris, participatory budgeting programs allow citizens to determine 5% of the total municipal investment budget (Sintomer et al., 2012). Although the concept of participatory budgeting is not directly included in Law No. 5393 in Türkiye, strategic planning and performance programs provide indirect opportunities for participation; however, in these processes, public influence falls far short of normative expectations.

In conclusion, although the legal foundations of local governance in Türkiye offer a framework consistent with democratic norms, empirical data show that participation occurs at a low level and that processes are largely formalistic. Compared to international best practices, this indicates that Türkiye is strong at the legal regulation level but weak in practical implementation.

4.2. Implementation Challenges in Governance

One of the main problems in the field of local governance in Türkiye is that the strong centralist structure limits local autonomy. The heavy dependence of financial resources on the central government and the high approval and oversight powers of central institutions in determining local policies restrict flexibility and the production of original policies at the local level. According to 2021 data from the Ministry of Finance, the average share of independent revenue for municipalities in Türkiye is around 27% (TBB, 2022). This clearly shows the constraints municipalities face in setting their own strategic priorities.

In a comparative perspective, approximately 50% of municipal revenues in Porto Alegre come from local taxes and service revenues, which increases the capacity of local governments to make independent decisions (Wampler, 2000). In Amsterdam, the local revenue share is around 42%, allowing municipalities to direct investment and participatory budget processes according to their own priorities (Sintomer et al., 2012).

The "symbolic" trend observed in the field of participation in Türkiye is also evident when compared to international examples. According to the 2022 report of the Union of Turkish Municipalities, although 87% of municipalities held public meetings during the strategic planning process, the participation rate is below 1% on average. Participation is weighted toward professional chambers and civil society representatives, with the influence of ordinary citizens being limited. In contrast, in Porto Alegre, direct participation in participatory budgeting meetings ranges between 15–20%, providing binding contributions to decision-making processes. In Paris, as of 2014, 5% of the municipal investment budget is determined by citizens through participatory budgeting, ensuring the direct impact of participation (Sintomer et al., 2012). These data indicate that participation mechanisms in Türkiye mostly remain formal and that significant reforms are needed in practice to strengthen democratic legitimacy.

Another factor limiting the effectiveness of local governance in Türkiye is the lack of institutional capacity. According to the 2021 Local Government Statistics by TURKSTAT, 42% of municipalities lack sufficient technical personnel, 38% have limited effective use of digital tools, and only 25% regularly operate monitoring and evaluation systems. In comparison, local governments in Seoul can receive real-time citizen feedback and continuously monitor service performance through digital infrastructure and monitoring systems. In Amsterdam and Copenhagen, municipalities also effectively implement participation and transparency principles with strong technical staff and data-driven management systems (OECD, 2023a).

This comparison highlights measurable dimensions of centralization, symbolic participation, and institutional capacity deficiencies in Türkiye, while also raising adaptable policy recommendations from international examples. For Türkiye, increasing local government revenues, making participatory processes binding, and strengthening technical capacity are fundamental lessons that can be drawn from international best practices. In this way, the institutionalization of governance principles in practice and the strengthening of democratic legitimacy can be achieved.

To visually and analytically demonstrate the similarities, differences, and alignment levels between EU-level urban governance policies, internationally successful city examples, and local governance practices in Türkiye, the following table has been prepared.

Table 2

Comparative Analysis of EU Policies, International Examples, and Urban Governance Practices in Türkiye

Area	EU Policies (Leipzig Charter, New Urban Agenda, EU Urban Agenda)	International Examples (Freiburg, Amsterdam, Seoul, Copenhagen)	Situation in Türkiye
Participation	Inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups in decision-making processes; neighborhood-based participation mechanisms	Freiburg: Neighborhood-level participatory planning; Amsterdam: Direct citizen participation via Buurtbudget; Seoul: Open Government approach; Copenhagen: Thematic networks and stakeholder participation	Participation is mostly formal; the number of participatory meetings is limited; youth, women, and immigrants have low participation
Transparency	Open data and reporting mechanisms	Amsterdam: Digital platforms and open data portals; Seoul: Open data portals and digital complaint systems	Strategic plans and budgets are made public, but digital and interactive platforms are lacking
Accountability	Decision-making processes are auditable and performance-based	Seoul: Participatory budgeting and feedback mechanisms; Copenhagen: Performance and monitoring systems	Performance monitoring and evaluation in municipalities is limited
Multi-actor Collaboration	Joint policy-making at local, national, and EU levels	Freiburg: Cooperatives and neighborhood networks; Copenhagen: City labs and thematic consortia	Collaboration with NGOs and universities is limited; joint governance mechanisms are mostly absent
Local Autonomy	Local governments can define their own policies	Freiburg and Copenhagen: Emphasis on autonomy in local decision-making processes	Centralization dominates; financial and administrative autonomy is limited

*Note***.** Created by the author.

The table not only provides a conceptual comparison but also concretely illustrates the level of implementation for each dimension (participation, transparency, accountability, multi-actor collaboration, and local autonomy). This allows for a clear view of which areas of Türkiye's current practices approach international standards and which areas still exhibit gaps. Additionally, the table helps policymakers and local government actors identify priority reform areas, contributing to the development of urban governance strategies in both academic and practical contexts.

4.3. Strategic Roadmap for the Transformation of Urban Governance in Türkiye

Despite all these limitations, there are some promising developments in Türkiye regarding urban governance. In particular, metropolitan municipalities and some district municipalities are taking steps to enhance transparency and participation in governance processes through digital participation platforms, open data portals, mobile applications, and e-municipality services. In addition, multi-actor collaborations developed by some municipalities with universities, NGOs, and professional chambers contribute to strengthening governance capacity.

However, for these developments to be scaled up, governance reforms at the national level need to be implemented. Some recommendations for these reforms are provided below. These recommendations are classified as short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5 years and above), taking into account criteria such as feasibility, resource requirements, and structural transformation needs.

Short-Term (1-2 Years):

- In the short term, deepening and democratizing the culture of participation is a priority step. Participatory mechanisms should be internalized not only as a legal obligation but also as a governance culture. As seen in the Vauban district of Freiburg, neighborhood-level participatory planning processes ensured citizens' direct involvement in decision-making mechanisms and provided an example of the integration of environmental sustainability with democratic participation. In Türkiye, similar mechanisms are expected to be designed to include marginalized groups such as youth, women, and migrants. The expected outcome is a meaningful increase in participation and the achievement of representational justice; the success indicator can be measured by the increase in attendance rates at participatory meetings and the representation level of different demographic groups.
- Citizen education and social awareness programs should be developed to enhance governance literacy. Increasing governance capacity is possible

not only through institutions but also through the active participation of citizens in the process. Therefore, participatory literacy programs that introduce urban awareness, citizenship rights, and governance processes should be implemented. Municipalities should collaborate with educational institutions to develop programs such as "urban schools" to strengthen civil capacity. Expanding citizen education and social awareness programs can be used as a tool to encourage citizens' direct participation in decision-making processes, as exemplified by Amsterdam's "Buurtbudget" application. The expected outcome is an increase in urban awareness and citizenship rights literacy; success indicators can include the number of citizens participating in literacy programs and the rise in governance awareness measured through surveys.

- Additionally, in the short term, digital governance and open data applications should be expanded. Technology plays a critical role not only in service delivery but also in transforming governance processes. Expanding digital governance and open data applications, as in Seoul's "Seoul Innovation Bureau" model, will make decision-making processes more transparent and strengthen citizens' roles as observer-actors. Municipalities should use tools such as open data portals, online voting systems, and AI-supported analytics platforms more widely and effectively to enhance transparency and citizen engagement. Pilot projects can be launched quickly using existing technological infrastructure. Success indicators can be measured by the number of open data portals and the growth in registered users on online participation platforms.

Medium-Term (3-5 Years):

- Strengthening local capacity strategically and establishing localized sustainability indicators becomes increasingly important. Institutional capacity does not only mean increasing the number of technical personnel; it also entails creating qualified staff who can manage participation, use digital tools, and guide accountability processes. As seen in the Copenhagen Solutions Lab example, projects are tested through collaborations among the private sector, academia, and municipalities, and urban-scale strategic planning is conducted within a multi-actor framework. In Türkiye, similar capacity-building processes can be initiated through governance-focused training programs in municipalities, continuous professional development models, and municipal academies. Expected outputs include an increase in qualified personnel and the establishment of an institutional structure supporting strategic decision-making processes; success indicators can be measured by the number of personnel participating in training programs and the number of projects implemented.

- Localized sustainability indicators and monitoring systems can be established. Developing performance indicators and impact-based evaluation systems requires planning and infrastructure. To measure sustainability at the urban level, performance indicators adapted to the local scale are needed. Monitoring and evaluating strategic plans should be based on these indicators; not only output, but also impact-based evaluation systems should be established. This will allow governance processes to be monitored with quantitative data. The expected outcome of this recommendation is the development of a performance monitoring system based on strategic plans at the city level. Success indicators are expected to include the regular publication of local performance reports and an increase in evaluations conducted using impact-based indicators.

Long-Term (5 Years and Beyond):

- Establishing collaborative governance mechanisms and strengthening local autonomy through legal and institutional reforms should be prioritized. Neighborhood cooperatives in Freiburg and thematic networks in Copenhagen provide concrete examples of how long-term collaborations among municipalities, NGOs, universities, and the private sector can be institutionalized. Similar governance networks in Türkiye could facilitate a two-way relationship between policy design and knowledge production. Innovative structures such as "urban laboratories," "policy design workshops," and "thematic consortia" can help institutionalize the exchange between knowledge creation and policymaking. However, institutionalized networks among actors may take time to mature. Expected outputs include sustainable collaborations and autonomously developed local policies; success indicators can be measured by the number of established networks and the effectiveness of jointly executed projects.
- Local autonomy should be strengthened through legal and institutional reforms. Enhancing the financial and administrative autonomy of local governments will increase their capacity to develop policies tailored to local needs. However, achieving financial and administrative autonomy requires long-term legal reforms and a reduction in centralization. Regulations should particularly limit the central government's intervention in local strategic planning processes, while simultaneously strengthening local oversight mechanisms through democratic representation. The successful implementation of this recommendation can be measured by the formalization of participatory planning processes in legislation and an increase in local governments' financial autonomy.

From these insights, it is evident that international experiences offer valuable lessons for designing urban governance reforms in Türkiye. Freiburg's neighborhood-level participatory planning demonstrates that democratic participation can be concretely implemented at the local level, emphasizing the importance of designing participation mechanisms that are not merely symbolic but effective and continuous. Amsterdam and Seoul illustrate how digital tools and open data applications can enhance transparency and enable citizens to take an active role in decision-making. In Türkiye, expanding digital platforms is a critical lesson for strengthening participation and accountability. The thematic collaborations and governance networks in Copenhagen show the effectiveness of multi-actor collaboration and strategic capacity development. For Türkiye, establishing institutionalized collaborative governance mechanisms among municipalities, NGOs, universities, and the private sector emerges as a key takeaway. Accordingly, for urban governance reforms in Türkiye to succeed, the principles of participation, transparency, accountability, and local autonomy must be simultaneously strengthened, and concrete implementation models derived from international experiences should be adapted to local conditions.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Deepening environmental, social, and administrative crises at both global and local levels have clearly highlighted the inadequacy of traditional public administration in urban governance. This underscores that sustainable urban management is not merely a policy preference but a structural necessity. One of the main contributions of this study is to concretize the theoretical debates on sustainable urban management within the Turkish context. Secondly, by comparatively analyzing EU documents, international examples, and Turkish practices, the study offers a holistic framework that overcomes fragmented approaches in the literature. Thirdly, it develops a unique discussion demonstrating that a governance-based approach to sustainability is achievable not only through legislation but also through cultural and institutional transformation.

Lessons drawn from international examples point to significant gaps in Türkiye. Practices such as institutionalized participatory mechanisms common in European cities, accountability standards supported by open data applications, and the effective use of digital tools in decision-making processes remain limited and largely formal in Türkiye. These limitations are closely related to structural challenges, including the centralist system restricting local initiatives, participation remaining mostly consultative, and insufficient capacity for data-driven decision-making. Consequently, for sustainable urban management, Türkiye must prioritize strengthening a participatory culture, enhancing governance flexibility, and deepening multi-actor collaboration mechanisms.

The seven recommendations developed in the study have been prioritized across short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives. In the short term, it is crucial to move participation beyond formal procedures by creating a continuous and meaningful interaction space and making city councils and neighborhood assemblies more functional. In the medium term, open data policies should be implemented, digital platforms should be integrated into decision-making processes rather than serving solely for information dissemination, and collaborations between academia and local governments should be institutionalized. In the long term, a comprehensive reform process should be carried out, focusing on cultural transformation, local autonomy, and governance flexibility.

The findings of the study are supported by official reports, international documents, and a comparative analysis of local-level practices, linking conceptual discussions to concrete data. However, the study has some limitations. The selection of international examples was based on accessibility and policy impact criteria, which may limit the diversity of regional practices. Additionally, the comparative method relied on existing official reports, literature, and secondary data, without in-depth field-based analysis. Future research incorporating qualitative field studies and interviews with local stakeholders would provide stronger evidence regarding the feasibility and impact of the recommendations.

In conclusion, the institutional resistance, resource limitations, and cultural barriers encountered in Türkiye's urban governance structure can only be overcome through strong political will and a long-term strategic vision, not just technical solutions. Accordingly, it is critical to position local governments not merely as administrative units but as key actors in democratization. Strengthening a participatory culture, enhancing data-driven decision-making capacity, and deepening multi-level collaboration will form the foundational pillars of Türkiye's journey toward sustainable urban management.

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CHAPTER 5

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBANIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF INDONESIA

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1. Introduction

Urbanization has become one of the most transformative processes of the modern era, fundamentally reshaping demographic structures, economic systems, and social relations. It reflects not only spatial and population shifts from rural to urban areas but also deeper processes of economic restructuring, cultural transformation, and institutional adaptation. While in advanced economies urbanization historically unfolded in tandem with industrialization and institutional maturity, in developing contexts it often proceeds more rapidly and unevenly, generating both opportunities for accelerated growth and risks of deepening inequality, congestion, and environmental stress (Xu et al., 2019; Qiao et al., 2024).

Defined broadly by the World Bank (2021), urbanization involves the relocation of populations, demographic restructuring, and the reallocation of resources toward urban centers. This transformation has far-reaching consequences: shifting employment from agriculture to industry and services, intensifying infrastructure demands, and altering patterns of land use and environmental sustainability (Mahtta et al., 2022). The "urbanization multiplier" (Okamoto, 2021) and the reciprocal links between urbanization and economic complexity (Di Clemente et al., 2021) demonstrate that urbanization functions as both a driver and a product of development. Yet, as Clark et al. (2018) caution, urbanization is not a uniform catalyst of growth but rather a context-specific phenomenon shaped by governance quality, institutional frameworks, and historical pathways.

Urbanization is also a profoundly socio-cultural process, reshaping values, aspirations, and social ties as rural populations adapt to urban lifestyles. It creates new forms of contact, identity, and collective organization while testing the resilience of communities in the face of systemic uncertainties (Huang et al., 2025). At the same time, it is an ecological and technological process, tied to

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environmental pressures, land-use transformations, and complex socio-ecological-technological networks that influence adaptive capacity and sustainable transitions (Mahtta et al., 2022).

Within this broader debate, Indonesia offers a compelling case. The country has experienced one of the fastest urban transitions in Southeast Asia, with cities—especially on Java—becoming engines of economic growth and modernization. Urbanization has supported Indonesia's shift from an agrarian economy toward industry- and service-based structures, while also posing persistent challenges: regional disparities, overburdened infrastructure, and ecological degradation. The Indonesian case illustrates the dual nature of urbanization—as both a catalyst for sustainable development and a source of structural vulnerabilities. Its outcomes are contingent upon the effectiveness of governance, the inclusiveness of planning, and the ability to balance growth with sustainability.

By addressing these dynamics, this chapter contributes theoretically and empirically to the understanding of the complex relationship between urbanization and sustainable development. The analysis underscores that urbanization is not a linear process but a context-dependent transformation whose trajectories and outcomes vary across time and space.

This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by situating Indonesia's experience within broader global debates on urbanization and sustainable development. While prior research has extensively explored urbanization in developed contexts, fewer studies have systematically analyzed its implications in emerging economies where institutional capacity, governance quality, and policy frameworks remain uneven. The central research questions guiding this chapter are:

- How does urbanization influence economic growth and sustainable development outcomes in Indonesia?
- What opportunities and risks does rapid urbanization generate in terms of spatial equity, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability?
- To what extent can governance and planning mitigate the negative externalities of urbanization and strengthen its developmental potential?

By addressing these questions, this chapter contributes both theoretically and empirically to understanding the complex relationship between urbanization and sustainable development. The analysis underscores that urbanization is not a uniform process but a context-dependent transformation whose outcomes hinge on governance, inclusiveness, and adaptive capacity. The chapter proceeds as follows:

The chapter is structured to systematically explore the multifaceted

relationship between urbanization and sustainable development. Section 2 examines the nexus between urbanization, sustainable economic growth, and the dynamics of urban concentration, beginning with a discussion on the transition from basic urbanization to metropolitan expansion, followed by an analysis of the socio-economic and environmental consequences of rapid urban growth, and concluding with an assessment of its broader developmental implications. Section 3 adopts a comparative perspective, situating Indonesia's urbanization trajectory within the wider cross-country experiences of sustainable development. Section 4 turns specifically to Indonesia, first outlining key trends in urbanization before analyzing its connections with economic and social development, and then addressing the role of regional leadership in urban reform as well as major national initiatives such as the MP3EI and the relocation of the national capital to IKN. Finally, Section 5 concludes with a set of policy recommendations for politicians, urban planners, and development practitioners, highlighting strategies designed to harness the benefits of urbanization while minimizing its adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts.

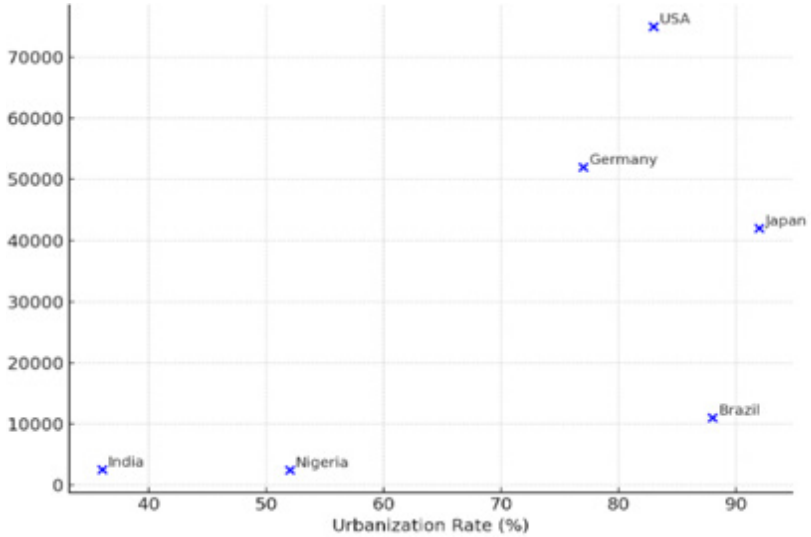
2. Urbanization, Sustainable Economic Growth, and the Dynamics of Urban Concentration

Urbanization transcends mere shifts in population size and density—it fundamentally reshapes economies, societies, and built environments. Rather than a unidimensional demographic trend, urbanization functions as a multifaceted transformation that integrates economic restructuring, cultural evolution, spatial reconfiguration, and institutional change. It is both propelled by and propels the convergence of human capital, infrastructure, technological innovation, and resource endowments. These dynamics foster not only growth but also complexity in modern urban landscapes.

Urbanization profoundly influences changes across various societal aspects, encompassing demographic shifts, political dynamics, social behaviors, technological advancements, and environmental impacts. These alterations emerge in historically contingent manners, differing from one nation to another based on local conditions and developmental trajectories. The effects of urbanization are evident in novel urban systems, increased land development, the creation of built environments and cityscapes, and the rise of unique urbanism and socio-economic structures. Such consequences need a reevaluation of spatial planning and governance frameworks, as well as the management of urban issues, including congestion, inequality, and environmental degradation.

Figure 1

Urbanization Rate and GDP per Capita in 2022



Note. From World Bank (2021); OECD (2022)

Figure 1 illustrates a notable divergence between developed and developing economies in terms of the relationship between urbanization and economic growth. In developed countries such as the United States, Germany, and Japan, higher levels of urbanization (above 75%) strongly correlate with elevated GDP per capita, reflecting the role of cities as hubs for advanced services, innovation, and productivity (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022). By contrast, developing nations like India and Nigeria demonstrate that high urbanization rates do not automatically translate into higher prosperity. In these contexts, insufficient infrastructure, weak governance, and spatial inequalities often limit the potential economic benefits of urban concentration (World Bank, 2021).

Cities are crucial for economic growth, as evidenced by data from the World Bank (2021) and OECD. Urban areas often outperform national averages in GDP per capita, labor productivity, and growth rates. However, diseconomies of scale, like congestion, can weaken these benefits beyond certain city sizes. In developing nations, urban concentration may exacerbate inefficiencies without robust infrastructure and governance (Centre for Economic Policy Research [CEPR], 2022).

Urban economics is a discipline that integrates geography and economics to study the relationship between urbanization and sustainable development. It focuses on how individuals and corporations make decisions to optimize utility and profit under scarcity, while geography analyzes the distribution and organization of resources and activities (Abdullah et al., 2022). This analytical framework is crucial for understanding urban expansion dynamics and the spatial arrangement of economic activity.

In the urban economy, growth can be categorized into two primary types: economic growth and labor growth. Economic growth is typically characterized as an increase in per capita income or the average salary within a city, signifying enhanced productivity and living standards. Labor growth denotes the increase in the whole workforce, reflecting a demographic aspect of urban development. Putri et al. (2023) posits that several interconnected factors may propel economic growth: (i) capital deepening, denoting increased investment in physical capital; (ii) the accumulation and enhancement of human capital, encompassing education and skills; (iii) technological advancement, which intensifies productivity and innovation; and (iv) economic agglomeration, referring to the geographical clustering of economic activities that facilitate knowledge spillovers, shared infrastructure, and network effects. The catalysts of growth highlight the close connection among urbanization, human development, and technological advancement.

Theoretical frameworks, including New Economic Geography, emphasize how agglomeration economies facilitate productivity through knowledge spillovers, dense labor pools, and shared infrastructure. Nonetheless, policymakers face a balancing act: too little concentration stifles scale advantages; too much leads to urban diseconomies—manifested in congestion, unequal service access, and housing crises. In this light, urbanization and concentration dynamics are deeply intertwined with national growth, infrastructural capacity, and governance strategies.

Early stages of economic development typically benefit from urban concentration, as centralizing infrastructure, labor, and innovation in a few cities enhances efficiency through agglomeration economies. Recent empirical evidence suggests that while urban concentration may hinder short-term economic performance due to overburdened systems, its long-term effects become positive when coupled with effective governance and tailored industrial policies (Maket et al., 2024).

2.1. Dynamics of Urban Growth: From Urbanization to Metropolitan Expansion

Urban growth and development are two distinct processes in urban studies.

Urban growth is primarily quantitative, involving physical and demographic expansion, while development emphasizes qualitative transformation, such as economic structure, social welfare, and institutional capacity. Growth alone does not guarantee progress, as true development requires structural change for diversified economies, improved quality of life, and sustainable urban systems (Sustainability Directory, 2025).

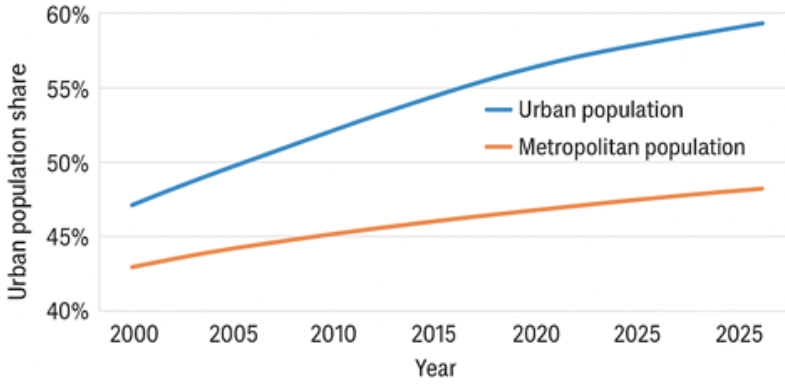
Urban growth is driven by population growth, resulting in increased demand for economic opportunities, social services, political representation, and cultural facilities. This pressure often extends beyond city boundaries, leading to suburbanization and peri-urban areas (Yunus, 2000). Recent studies show that unchecked urban sprawl can exacerbate environmental pressures, increase commuting times, and strain infrastructure, but it can also stimulate regional economic diversification if effectively planned (Maket et al., 2024).

A combination of push and pull factors influences urban migration. Pull factors include improved quality of life, education, work opportunities, healthcare, recreational facilities, and personal security in metropolitan areas. Push factors include economic constraints, insufficient infrastructure, substandard health and education facilities, and decreased living standards in rural areas. This interaction accelerates urbanization and transforms demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Jedwab et al., 2017). Contemporary research highlights that these forces reshape both urban and rural demographics while deepening regional inequalities if not managed inclusively (Ghani et al., 2016; Frick & Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). In emerging economies, these trends highlight the critical need for policies that balance metropolitan expansion with sustainable development strategies to prevent uncontrolled sprawl and spatial disparities (Clark et al., 2018).

The figure 2 illustrates the steady increase in urban population over the past three decades, highlighting a significant upward trend that continues into the mid-2020s. It shows that developing regions have experienced rapid urbanization, with urban population shares rising consistently as rural to urban migration accelerates alongside natural population growth. Between 1990 and 2025, the share of the urban population in developing regions rises from around 35% to about 50% of the total population. That means an increase of 15 percentage points over 35 years. On average, this equals roughly 0.4–0.5% growth per year in the proportion of people living in cities. The steepest growth is seen in the early 2000s, when urbanization accelerated due to stronger economic restructuring and large-scale rural-to-urban migration. By 2025, one in every two people in developing regions is projected to live in urban areas, underlining the transformative role of urbanization in shaping demographic, economic, and spatial development patterns (UN, 2022).

Figure 2

Urban and Metropolitan Population Growth in Developing Countries (2000-2025)



*Note***.** From United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022).

Urbanization is significantly influenced by economic growth processes, with the density of secondary and tertiary economic activity in major metropolitan areas. Urban growth involves quantitative expansion, such as increased production and infrastructure development, while urban development involves qualitative transformation, shifting from primary-sector reliance to diversified economies driven by manufacturing, trade, and services, emphasizing the importance of human capital in metropolitan economic and socio-cultural development (Maket et al., 2024). On the other hand, urban growth is driven by the growing population, increasing demand for economic activity, social services, and political representation. However, land constraints often lead to suburban and peri-urban sprawl, which can strain infrastructure and worsen environmental degradation (Fadda, 2024).

Migration inflows further widen urban complexes, driven by compelling pull factors such as better jobs, education, healthcare, and security, while also shaped by push factors including limited rural infrastructure, low incomes, and service gaps (Jedwab et al., 2017). These dynamics not only expand metropolitan areas but also influence patterns of regional inequality, necessitating governance frameworks that are both nuanced and inclusive (Frick & Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Clark et al., 2018). Given these conditions, it is unsurprising that significant investors often allocate their capital to large metropolitan centers rather than smaller communities, as the scale, diversity, and density of opportunities make big cities more attractive despite their increasingly complex challenges.

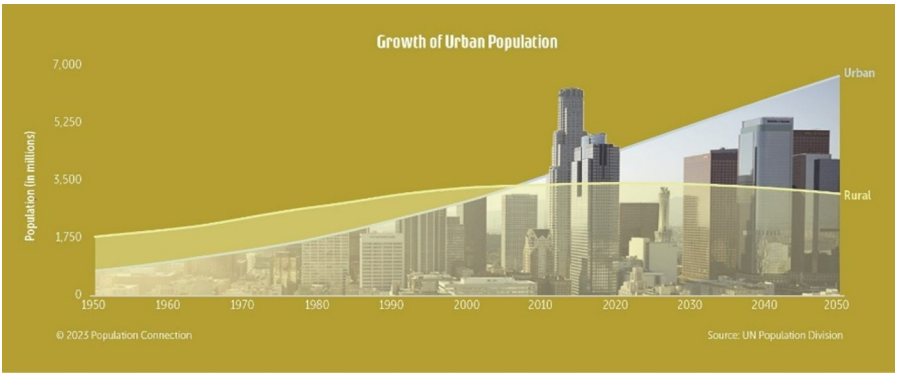
2.2. The Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts of Rapid Urban Growth

Rapid urban expansion, when poorly managed, often yields significant socio-economic and environmental disparities. A prominent outcome within many developing societies is the rise of primate cities—urban centers that overwhelmingly dominate in terms of population, economic activity, and political influence. These cities often stymie balanced regional growth by monopolizing resources and opportunities. For instance, financial and trade-focused research confirms that primacy intensifies where the financial sector is centralized, reinforcing inequalities (Wójcik et al., 2023). Moreover, studies show that primate cities in low-income countries are associated with roughly 11% more informal settlements compared to secondary cities (Izadi, 2023), reflecting both physical constraints and socio-spatial marginalization.

Primate cities often hinder the functional vitality of smaller towns, leading to an overreliance on jobs, education, and services, as well as overburdened infrastructure. This results in slums, pollution, and higher urban living costs. To address these issues, a shift towards people-centered development is needed, prioritizing quality of life, inclusion, and equitable access to services. This requires policies that account for demographic shifts, migration, and the interdependence between rural and urban territories (He & Zhu, 2025).

Figure 3

Global Urban Population Growth Infographic (A Visual Timeline Showing Rural vs. Urban Population Trends from 1950 to Present, with Projections to 2050).



Note. From United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2023).

Historical evidence underscores the urgent need for reform in urban planning. In 1900, only about 15% of the global population lived in urban areas (World Bank, 2009). The 20th century, however, marked a dramatic transformation, especially after the 1950s, when urban population growth accelerated rapidly. By 1950, roughly 30% of the world's population resided in cities, a figure that surpassed 50% by the early 21st century (Our World in Data, 2023). During the late 2010s, the UN (2019) reported that 55% of the global population lived in urban areas, with projections pointing to 68% by 2050—equivalent to an additional 2.5 billion urban residents, nearly 90% of whom will be concentrated in Asia and Africa, where many cities already face severe urbanization challenges. More recent estimates confirm the steady pace of this demographic shift: by 2025, nearly 58% of the world's population—around 4.8 billion people—are expected to live in towns or cities (Destatis, 2025), while another projection puts the figure at 56.9%, or approximately 4.6 billion people (StatRanker, 2025). This trajectory, which has seen the urban population balloon from 751 million in 1950 to over 4.6 billion by 2025, highlights both unprecedented opportunities and immense pressures for infrastructure, housing equity, and environmental sustainability in cities worldwide.

Despite progress, some regions continue to experience unregulated growth, which can lead to issues like high crime rates, insufficient housing, low public welfare, and worsening environmental conditions. This can result in "over-urbanization", where the urban population exceeds the nation's economic capacity, and "under-ruralization", where rural populations diminish, causing inefficiencies in food production and development. Urban centers often fail to drive innovation and prosperity, becoming hubs of unemployment and socioeconomic disparity. This phenomenon is known as pseudo-urbanization.

While urbanization can stimulate productivity and innovation through economies of scale and agglomeration effects—where firms and services cluster to enhance resource use and knowledge spillovers—this potential depends heavily on effective governance, infrastructure, and planning (Ghani et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2019). For instance, in developing regions, urbanization derived from in-migration positively correlates with economic growth, whereas natural urban population growth does not. Furthermore, Xu et al. (2019) highlight that simply accelerating urbanization, without strengthening institutional, economic, and social frameworks, fails to yield sustainable gains. They argue that the quality of infrastructure and environmental management is crucial to mitigating urbanization's adverse outcomes.

Land policy is crucial in rapidly urbanizing nations, as misaligned policies can lead to displacement, inefficient development, and ecological degradation. Reforming land governance is essential for directing urban expansion and

preserving rural livelihoods and ecosystems (Wu et al., 2018). In China, land policy development influences rural and urban systems. Failures in land policy often result in inefficiency, displacement, and unsustainable land utilization. Rapid urbanization often exceeds governmental capacity to deliver essential services, and metropolitan areas may serve as social exclusion areas, excluding marginalized populations (Sandholz, 2017). Due to persisting industrialization, globalization, and increasing population in propelling urbanization, the challenge for governments globally is to reconcile economic advancement with social equality and environmental sustainability.

2.3. The Impact of Urbanization

Urbanization is a multifaceted process that reshapes societies, economies, and environments. While it has long been associated with opportunities for growth, innovation, and improved living standards, it also presents significant challenges when it is unmanaged. Understanding both the positive contributions and the negative consequences of urbanization is essential for policymakers, researchers, and communities to balance development with sustainability.

2.3.1. Positive Impacts

Urbanization can be a powerful driver of economic growth, catalyzing productivity, innovation, and overall GDP expansion. For example, rapid urbanization enhances labor productivity and market access, significantly boosting regional economic output (Sumbaga et al., 2023). A recent provincial-level spatial econometric study confirms that urbanization works synergistically with economic agglomeration, generating positive spillover effects across regions. For instance, in India, urban centers have played a pivotal role in reducing poverty: cities with stronger urbanization have seen faster improvements in income and human development, particularly benefiting the lowest income decile (Sahasranaman et al., 2024). A compelling example comes from Tatu City in Kenya, a privately-led "startup city" located on Nairobi's outskirts. Sub-Saharan Africa offers a striking case through Kenya's Tatu City, which exemplifies how private-sector-led, master-planned urban projects can shape a new model of sustainable urban development. Located just north of Nairobi, Tatu City has quickly grown into a functioning Special Economic Zone, attracting approximately 5,000 residents and 88 businesses—including a 5,000-seat call center and a medical manufacturing company—within only four years. Its success is underpinned by high-quality infrastructure, transparent governance, and targeted economic incentives, positioning it as a promising model of inclusive and investment-friendly urban innovation (Associated Press, 2025).

2.3.2. Negative Impacts

The benefits of urbanization can be severely undermined when growth is unplanned or disproportionate. This phenomenon, known as "pseudo-urbanization," describes urban population growth that is not accompanied by an expansion in the economy or infrastructure (Harahap, 2013). Such growth strains resources and governance, resulting in unemployment, informal settlements, and uneven urban-rural disparities. Urban expansion frequently leads to significant environmental degradation. Unplanned city sprawl contributes directly to deforestation, land-use change, biodiversity loss, and agricultural displacement. Recent satellite-based studies indicate that more than 99% of global cities experience biodiversity decline due to natural habitat replacement. Urbanization not only encroaches on green spaces but also aggravates environmental pressures through consumption shifts and demand for housing—particularly via leapfrog development that catapults into undeveloped land (Inostroza et al., 2013).

Cities are major contributors to climate change. A 2023 study on Belt and Road countries finds a positive link between urbanization and CO_2 emissions, mediated by governance and technological capacity (Khan & Khan, 2023). Indian cities like Mumbai are warming nearly twice as fast as rural areas due to urbanization, amplifying heatwave severity and flooding risks (Time, 2025). Rapid urban growth intensifies emissions from energy consumption, transport, and infrastructure, while unplanned expansion often triggers urban heat islands and environmental vulnerability. Similarly, in China's Yangtze River Delta, increased land-use efficiency—situated within urban agglomerations—can both reduce and exacerbate carbon emissions depending on planning effectiveness (Qiao et al., 2024). Therefore, balancing these outcomes reveals that urbanization may support growth—but only when paired with strong institutional frameworks, sustainable land planning, and environmental safeguards (Sumbaga et al., 2023; Botezat et al., 2021).

3. Urbanization and Sustainable Development Across Countries

Urbanization is a key aspect of modern development, but its effects vary between industrialized and developing nations. Industrialized countries experience gradual urban expansion, characterized by rising incomes, medical advances, and economic transitions from agriculture to industry and services. In contrast, developing countries experience rapid and often unregulated urbanization due to colonial structures, centralized governance, and short-term growth strategies, leading to issues like informal settlement expansion, insufficient public services, and urban poverty (UN-Habitat, 2016). Under these circumstances, numerous rural migrants become urban impoverished individuals, residing in slums with restricted access to potable water, power, education, or healthcare. The divergent

experiences of urbanization illustrate fundamental structural disparities in economic history, governance, and institutional capability. Comprehending these dynamics is essential for formulating development policies that are customized to the distinct trajectories of both industrialized and developing nations.

Hu et al. (2023) find that in developing regions, rapid land expansion associated with urbanization compromises system resilience and increases citizens' exposure to heat and pollution, highlighting major environmental sustainability challenges. In contrast, urban dynamics in high-income countries show stronger polycentric structures and better spatial management. Meanwhile, in India, urbanization has contributed directly to significant poverty reduction and human development gains, particularly benefiting the poorest decile of the population (Sahasranaman et al., 2024). These contrasting trajectories underscore the need for nuanced urban policy: one that leverages urban growth for productivity and inclusion while mitigating environmental and social risks.

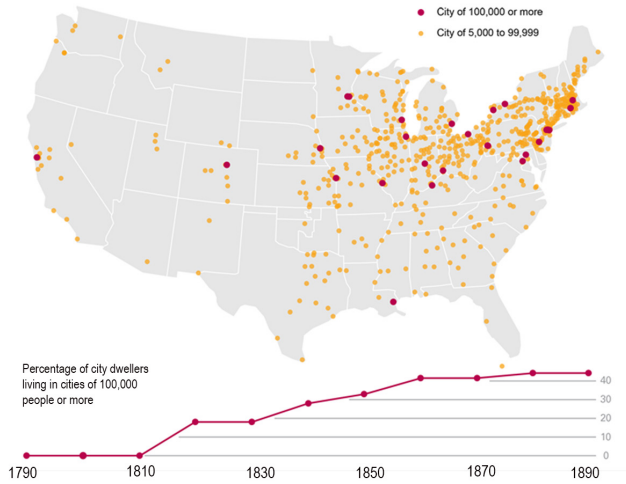
3.1. Developed Countries

Urbanization in industrialized countries has been a deliberate and transformative process, closely aligned with industrialization and economic restructuring. This gradual growth allowed infrastructure and public services to develop in tandem. In 1920, for the first time, a majority of Americans were classified as urban, signaling the maturation of urban infrastructure and planning capacity. The urbanization process in industrialized nations was characterized by a steady rise in per capita income, declining mortality rates, and substantial structural transformations in economies, transitioning from the primary sector to a more balanced composition, thereby enabling metropolitan areas to function as hubs of employment, innovation, and economic output (UN-Habitat, 2016).

The urbanization process in industrialized nations has traditionally been intertwined with industrial expansion, as cities grew through the development of industries, transportation networks, and labor markets. This process was largely endogenous, driven by domestic demand, technological innovation, and governance reforms. Consequently, these cities tended to be well-equipped with essential services, infrastructure, and institutional capacity to support growing populations (Broitman & Czamanski 2021). In high-income regions, urban development today often exhibits polycentric structures, where multiple sub-centers mitigate congestion and promote more inclusive growth. This carefully managed urban expansion reflects the benefits of endogenous economic growth, where localized knowledge spillovers and innovation ecosystems enhance resilience and productivity.

Figure 4

Population Distribution by City Size in the US from 1790 to 1890



Note. From U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

The figure illustrates that the United States has experienced a significant shift in urbanization since the early 19th century, transitioning from a predominantly rural population to a highly urbanized society by the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This growth was driven by industrialization, migration, and infrastructure development, particularly in transportation and housing. As metropolitan planning systems and governance mechanisms matured, the trend stabilized, reflecting a transition towards managed and sustainable urban growth. In developed countries, urbanization has followed a systematic progression from agriculture to industry to services, facilitating economically sustainable and socially inclusive urban expansion (Fatima, 2022).

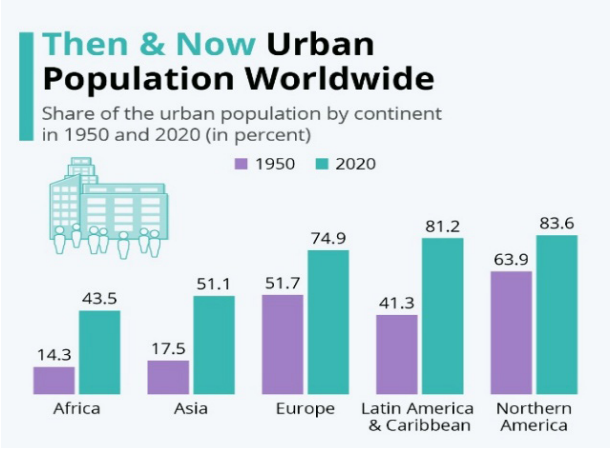
Japan, for example, has experienced a peaceful urban transition following World War II, with metropolitan regions like Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya becoming global economic hubs. This form of urbanization was structured, providing adequate housing, healthcare, and education while supporting sustained economic growth. However, Japan's urbanization has recently been undergoing a new phase due to demographic decline, aging populations, and changing spatial dynamics. Challenges include urban shrinkage in smaller municipalities and infrastructure adaptation for elderly populations. Japan demonstrates how developed countries can achieve sustainable urban growth (Murayama, 2022; Sorensen & Okata, 2011).

3.2. Developing Countries

Urbanization in developing countries often follows a vastly different trajectory from that of industrialized nations—marked by rapid, uneven expansion without parallel development in industrial capacity or urban planning frameworks. This pattern is frequently propelled by top-down, centralized planning driven by a focus on short-term economic growth rather than long-term sustainability or inclusivity. The result is fragmented urban spatial configurations, overburdened infrastructure, and widening socio-economic inequalities within cities (Fadda, 2024). For example, urban planning in many African cities has struggled to keep pace with expansion, with master plans often failing due to outdated boundaries and insufficient funding, leading to sprawling informal settlements (Fadda, 2024). Moreover, the legacy of colonial rule has left a lasting imprint on the urban landscape of many developing nations. Colonial powers typically concentrated investment in port cities and administrative capitals, creating starkly uneven urban systems that persist today (Mfum-Mensah, 2025). These urban hubs expanded swiftly as centers of trade and governance, while interior and rural regions remained marginalized, lacking essential infrastructure, education, and healthcare facilities (Fox & Goodfellow, 2021). Consequently, urbanization in developing contexts has often been spatially imbalanced, reinforcing disparities between core metropolitan areas and peripheral regions.

Figure 5

Urban Population Share by Region in 1950 and 2020



Note. From Buchholz (2020)

This figure demonstrates significant variation in urbanization rates across major regions. Latin America and the Caribbean remain among the most

urbanized, with over 80% of their populations residing in urban areas. In contrast, Asia and Africa continue to urbanize rapidly, with current urban shares around the mid-50% range—still significantly higher than earlier decades. This underscores that urbanization patterns in developing regions are accelerating even more quickly than in developed regions, presenting both opportunities and challenges in planning, infrastructure, and social equity.

Urbanization in developing nations, often former colonies, was influenced by colonial economics, leading to unequal urban systems. Colonial powers concentrated growth on coastal cities, while interior regions lacked infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Bansal et al., 2015). Although population growth has slowed in rich nations, urbanization in the Global South, particularly in Africa and South Asia, is accompanied by minimal industrialization, restricted job development, and inadequate energy infrastructure (UN-Habitat, 2016; Fatima, 2022). Consequently, urban growth in these regions tends to exacerbate poverty rather than mitigate it.

Industrialization is essential for fostering sustainable urbanization since it enhances productivity and creates formal job opportunities. In many developing nations, the industrial foundation is vulnerable, resulting in urbanization predominantly propelled by the tertiary sector, encompassing informal commerce and low-skilled services, which frequently exhibit lower productivity (Fatima, 2022). This results in an exogenous pattern of urbanization that is not organically synchronized with economic growth, hence exacerbating the strain on urban infrastructure, especially in water supply, sanitation, waste management, and housing (Fox, 2012).

Rural-to-urban migration in developing nations often leads to poverty, land degradation, and violence, resulting in migrants settling in informal settlements with limited access to education, healthcare, and jobs. This reinforces a cycle of poverty, affecting the environment and public health. Policies to improve urban environments are often hindered by limited financial resources, leading to inadequate support or omission of slum regions from urban planning, exacerbated inequality, and environmental degradation (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Brazil exemplifies rapid urban expansion juxtaposed with persistent inequality and informal settlement growth. Today, approximately 87% of Brazil's population resides in urban areas—predominantly concentrated along just 0.63% of national territory, creating intense spatial, social, and environmental pressures. Notably, 72% of Brazil's poor live in urban settings, and up to 22% of the inhabitants in cities like Rio de Janeiro are situated in informal settlements, known as favelas; in some cities, such as Belém, this figure rises to 54%. These areas often suffer from deficient access to clean water, sanitation, housing, and mobility (UN-Habitat, 2020).

One such example is São Paulo, where attempts to upgrade, informal settlements have led to unintended outcomes. A recent study reveals that as informal areas were upgraded, informal rental housing actually increased, intensifying precarity and reducing the permanence of improvements (Stiphany et al., 2024). Furthermore, the third-largest informal settlement in Brazil suffers from severely inadequate sanitary conditions—highlighting ongoing public health vulnerabilities that urbanization alone has not resolved (Castro et al., 2023). These cases underscore that in developing-country contexts like Brazil, urbanization can bring economic dynamism while simultaneously reinforcing inequity and straining governance systems that are inadequately adapted.

4. Urbanization in Indonesia: A Rapid Economic Transformation

Indonesia, as a developing country with the fourth-largest population in the world, is experiencing significant demographic transformation and urbanization. By 2023, approximately 59.2% of Indonesia's total population lived in urban areas, up from 51% in 2010. Population density is primarily concentrated on the island of Java, which, despite covering only 6.74% of the country's total land area, is home to more than half of Indonesia's population. This condition results in cities in Java having a much higher population density than areas outside Java, with various complex social, economic, and environmental implications (Setiawan et al., 2024).

Urbanization in Indonesia is driven by the search for job opportunities, access to better education and healthcare services, and rapid infrastructure development. However, rapid urban growth also presents serious challenges, such as congestion, pollution, and inadequate housing (Ayele & Tarekegn, 2020). This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia but is part of an inevitable global trend of urbanization. In the early 1950s, approximately 66% of the world's population lived in rural areas, but the United Nations (UN) estimates that by 2050, around 68% of the world's population will live in urban areas, with most of this growth occurring in Asian countries, including Indonesia (United Nations, 2019).

4.1. Urbanization Trends in Indonesia

Since its early independence, Indonesia has experienced significant urbanization and urban population growth. The rate of urbanization began to increase significantly in 1970, when the Indonesian government initiated a more structured national development program. According to the 1961 Population Census, the first national census after independence, the urban population was recorded at 15.5 million, or approximately 15.9% of Indonesia's total population of 97.09 million (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS], 1961). In the following four decades, the urban population increased more than fivefold, reaching 85.2 million by the end of the 20th century, equivalent to 41.9% of the total population (BPS,

2000). The 2010 census showed that the urban population had reached 118.32 million, or 49.8% of the total population, confirming that Indonesia now has over 100 million urban dwellers (BPS, 2011).

Urbanization is a global phenomenon experienced by many countries, including Indonesia. In recent decades, the rate of urbanization in Indonesia has accelerated, marked by an increase in the number of people migrating from rural to urban areas. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the proportion of the population living in urban areas increased from 30% in 1990 to 56% in 2020, confirming the continuing trend of urbanization (BPS, 2021).

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the following is a table showing the growth in the number and proportion of Indonesia's urban population from 2019 to 2023. In recent years, Indonesia has experienced a significant increase in urbanization rates. This trend is projected to continue, with the proportion of the urban population expected to increase from 56.7% in 2020 to around 60% in 2025 (Pida et al., 2025). This growth not only impacts large cities but also poses serious challenges in urban planning, infrastructure development, and the provision of adequate public services to meet the needs of a growing population.

Table 1.

Indonesia's Urban Population between 2019 and 2023

Year	Proportion of Urban Population	Urban Population (People)
2019	55,3%	149,7 million
2020	56,7%	153,5 million
2021	57,6%	156,4 million
2022	58,5%	159,3 million
2023	59,3%	162,1 million

Note. From BPS (2023a).

Metropolitan cities are often viewed as symbols of a nation's successful development. With their large and diverse populations, these cities serve as vibrant centers of economic, cultural, and social activity. In Indonesia, there are 98 cities spread across all provinces, but only a few are categorized as metropolitan cities: Jakarta, Surabaya, Bandung, Semarang, Palembang, Medan, Makassar, and Denpasar (Christian et al., 2023).

Jakarta is one of Indonesia's most densely populated metropolitan cities, where rapid land use change and intense transportation activities have led to severe air

pollution challenges. Assayuti et al. (2023) highlight that population density and vehicle congestion significantly affect public health, making environmental sustainability a pressing concern. Addressing these challenges requires integrated urban planning that prioritizes green spaces, promotes sustainable transportation systems, and enforces policies to reduce pollution. A comprehensive urban development strategy must balance public health, environmental quality, and economic activity to ensure Jakarta's future resilience.

Jakarta, as the capital of Indonesia, faces significant pressure from urbanization. The city's population is projected to increase by approximately 3% annually from 2019 to 2030, reaching around 10.9 million people (Rachim et al., 2022). This phenomenon underscores the importance of sustainable urban planning to address congestion, housing availability, transportation, and adequate public services. The following graph shows population growth in three major Indonesian cities—Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung—between 2019 and 2024, illustrating urbanization patterns and population concentration in major urban centers. However, the quality of life in Jakarta is not yet fully optimal. In 2022, Jakarta ranked 238th in the world and 48th in Asia on the global quality of life index, which measures purchasing power, pollution levels, housing affordability, cost of living, safety, and quality of healthcare (Numbeo, 2023)

The disparity between Java and outside Java is evident in regional fiscal capacity. On average, the Regional Original Income (PAD) of cities in Java reaches around IDR 805 billion, significantly higher than that of cities outside Java, which only reach around IDR 300 billion. This difference in fiscal capacity impacts the ability of city governments in Java to provide better infrastructure and public facilities, thereby increasing connectivity and productivity in the urban economy. Conversely, limited PAD outside Java often hinders the acceleration of equitable urban development (Chaniago & Hanri, 2021). This finding aligns with a World Bank report (2021), which emphasized that urbanization in Indonesia is often characterized by "concentrated urbanization," with urban growth more concentrated in Java than in other regions. UN-Habitat (2020) also emphasized the importance of reducing spatial inequality through inclusive urban development that balances economic, social, and environmental aspects.

Agglomeration involves high density, large labor markets, and dense supply/demand networks—all of which drive productivity, wages, and innovation. Comparative studies show that cities in Java have higher densities and higher average wages than those outside Java; this is consistent with the agglomeration literature linking density to increased productivity (Chaniago & Hanri, 2021). Morphologically, the process of mega-urbanization forms urban corridors (e.g., Greater Jakarta and the Jakarta–Bandung corridor) that strengthen inter-city connectivity and concentrate private and public investment in middle-class

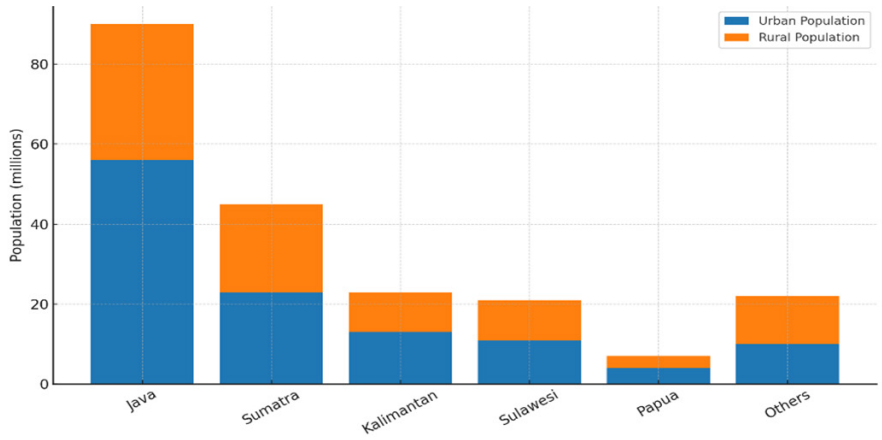
infrastructure—toll roads, intercity commuter lines, ports, and airports—which then further amplify Java's "magnetism" (Firman, 2009; Hill et al., 2008). The result is a feedback loop: agglomeration ⇄ productivity ⇄ regional income ⇄ public services, accelerating the transformation of Javanese cities into modern metropolises.

Outside Java, urbanization patterns are more dispersed and resource-based (nodes such as Medan, Batam, Makassar, and Balikpapan), but are hampered by inter-island connectivity, thinner markets, and generally lower regional fiscal capacity to fund urban infrastructure and services. The literature demonstrates persistent spatial disparities due to gaps in connectivity and economic structure; the most "connected" regions tend to perform better (Hill et al., 2008). The digital divide—for example, the quality of rural/urban internet access—has also widened the productivity and service gap, particularly outside Java (Susilowati et al., 2025).

The macro picture is confirmed by GDP contributions: Java accounts for approximately 56.5% of the national economy in 2022 - a strong indication of the concentration of value-added activities in Java, while other islands share the remainder (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). World Bank findings confirm that Indonesia is experiencing "concentrated urbanization": the economic benefits of urbanization are not evenly distributed, necessitating a strategy to strengthen medium-sized cities outside Java through logistical connectivity, cross-regional spatial planning, and more progressive fiscal instruments (World Bank, 2021).

Figure 6

Urban and Rural Population Distribution in Indonesia by Island (2020s Estimates).



Note. From BPS (2023b).

The figure illustrates the distribution of Indonesia's population between urban and rural areas across its major islands. Java shows the highest degree of urbanization, with over 80% of its population residing in urban areas, reflecting its role as the country's political, economic, and industrial hub. In contrast, islands such as Papua and Sulawesi maintain a predominantly rural demographic, highlighting uneven patterns of urbanization across the archipelago. This disparity underscores the concentration of infrastructure, services, and employment opportunities in Java, while peripheral islands continue to rely heavily on rural livelihoods and agricultural-based economies.

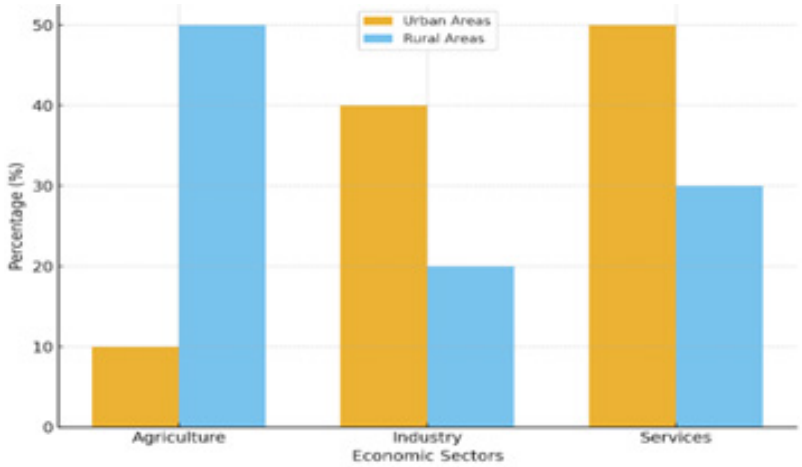
4.2. Urbanization and Economic Development

The contribution of large cities to the national economy is increasingly evident with the increasing urbanization in Indonesia. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2022), the average per capita income in urban areas reaches IDR 15 million per year (approximately USD 1,000), significantly higher than the average IDR 10 million per year (approximately 670 dollars) in rural areas. This difference demonstrates the significant role urbanization plays in creating productivity and adding economic value. Furthermore, urbanization also drives increased investment from both the public and private sectors. A report from the Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas (2023) noted that investment in the urban infrastructure sector increased by 20% during the 2020–2022 period, particularly for the development of mass transportation, housing, and energy infrastructure. Population growth in large cities also accelerates the need for this investment, thereby improving accessibility and connectivity.

Urbanization in Indonesia is a significant driver of industrialization and trade, with major cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung serving as distribution centers for goods and services. These cities attract manufacturing investment and strengthen Indonesia's export base (Bahari&Nisa, 2020). Urbanization also contributes to digital transformation and a technology-based economy, with cities like Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya developing into innovation ecosystems with startups and smart city initiatives. Collaboration between industry, academia, and government accelerates the birth of new ideas in financial technology, e-commerce, and digital public services. In addition, smart city initiatives can improve urban governance efficiency and expand access to public services (Rachmawati et al., 2024). However, rapid urban economic growth can widen the gap between large cities and suburbs, affecting living costs, the digital divide, and access to affordable housing.

Figure 7.

Comparison of Economic Structure in Urban and Rural Areas in Indonesia



Note. From BPS (2022).

The figure reveals the economic structure of Indonesia's urban and rural areas. Urban areas are dominated by the service sector (50%), industry (40%), and trade, while rural areas are heavily reliant on agriculture (50%). Urbanization accelerates the transition from an agrarian base to a modern industrial and service sector, making cities the primary drivers of national economic growth.

4.3. Urbanization and Social Development

Urbanization in Indonesia is not only related to population migration to cities but also has broad implications for education, health, and the fulfillment of basic rights. National Labor Force data as of August 2023 shows that 82.67 million of Indonesia's 147.71 million population work in the informal sector. This condition indicates high socio-economic vulnerability, especially in urban areas, as informal workers tend to lack social security, living wages, or adequate access to education and healthcare (Suryahadi et al., 2020). Therefore, urban poverty needs to be understood multidimensionally, not just in terms of financial aspects, but also in terms of access to basic services, housing conditions, and job insecurity. For instance, urban public services face significant challenges, including unequal access to clean water and sanitation, with only 42% of households having piped water and 72% having adequate sanitation. The poor pay 10 to 30 times more for water than the middle class (Wellenstein et al.,2021). Groundwater exploitation without regulation accelerates land subsidence and increases flooding risk. Suboptimal

urban transportation integration leads to private vehicles, with Greater Jakarta being the most congested metropolitan area, causing economic losses exceeding IDR 41 billion per year (World Bank, 2019).

Furthermore, waste management is becoming an increasingly complex issue. BPS (2021) data indicate that Indonesia produces 9 million tons of waste per day, with the waste sector contributing 9.4% to total national emissions. The case of Bandung City shows the accumulation of 1,500 tons of waste per day in rivers, including the Citarum River, exacerbating pollution and narrowing the river's flow. On the other hand, Urfanisa et al. (2022) showed that a slum improvement program in Bandung through community-drilled wells was able to reduce expenditures for poor households, but still faced challenges with water quality and distribution. Similarly, Setiawan et al. (2024) highlighted weak urban water governance due to a lack of regulation and community participation. Furthermore, a study by Kurniati et al. (2024) confirmed that the implementation of Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) in Indonesia remains hampered by budgetary, data-driven, and inter-agency coordination constraints.

Poorly managed urbanization in Indonesia has led to increased social inequality, with the country's Gini coefficient rising from 0.39 in 2018 to 0.41 in 2023 (BPS, 2023). Around 7% of the urban population lives below the poverty line, with dense slums, poor healthcare, and tenure insecurity making the "near poor" even more vulnerable. Urbanization drives economic growth and social transformation, but deepens inequality and exacerbates social vulnerability (Rosidin, 2021; Fauzan et al., 2020). Therefore, Indonesia's urbanization is multidimensional, presenting development opportunities but widening inequality gaps. Inclusive governance is needed for equitable urban transformation and improved community quality of life.

4.4. Urbanization, Governance, and Policy

Indonesia's decentralization era, initiated by Law No. 22 of 1999, has not fully met expectations, according to a 2024 regional government performance evaluation report by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The report revealed that 27% of 33 provinces achieved a high performance rating, while 51% were moderate, and 21% were low to very low. The city/district level also showed significant disparities, with 11.5 percent being high performers and over 80 percent in the medium to low category. The majority of low-performing regions were located in eastern Indonesia and the 3T (United Territories), indicating gaps in governance capacity and development quality (Prasojo, 2025). This evaluation used macro indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI), poverty rate, unemployment, economic growth, per capita income, and income inequality. The results confirm that decentralization has not significantly improved the quality of development,

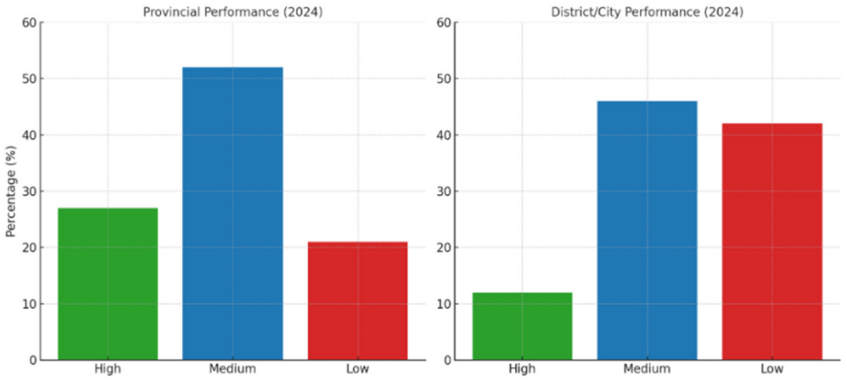
either at the national or regional levels. Many local governments still face serious obstacles in managing resources effectively and efficiently.

4.5. The Role of Regional Leaders in Urban Reform

Decentralization has yielded limited results, but regional leadership has led to innovative governance practices in cities like Surabaya, Bandung, and Solo. These cities have implemented digital-based public service reforms, environmental programs, smart city development, and citizen-driven policies, demonstrating the importance of visionary and collaborative leadership in urban reform (Rachmawati et al., 2024).

Figure 8.

Regional Performance Evaluation in Indonesia, in 2024.



Note. From the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2024).

The 2024 regional performance evaluation by the Ministry of Home Affairs (2024) showed that approximately 27% of provinces were in the high performance category, 52% in the medium performance category, and 21% in the low performance category. Meanwhile, at the district/city level, only around 12% were in the high performance category, while the majority were in the medium (46%) and low (42%) categories. This confirms that the disparity in governance capacity between regions remains a major challenge, particularly at the district/city level.

4.6. National Program: MP3EI and IKN (Indonesian National Capital City)

The Indonesian government launched the Masterplan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development (MP3EI) in 2011, which

includes over 380 strategic projects worth over Rp 500 trillion. The program focuses on infrastructure development outside Java, aiming to drive regional economic growth and strengthen national connectivity. However, the benefits have not been fully distributed due to high price disparities, especially in eastern Indonesia (Hilmansyah, 2014). The Indonesian National Capital City (IKN Nusantara) development marks a significant milestone in urbanization, driven by Jakarta's chronic problems like overpopulation, pollution, traffic jams, and environmental vulnerability (Amila et al., 2023).

Figure 9.

Flooding at the Bundaran HI, Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia



Note. From Kompas.id Archeive (2024).

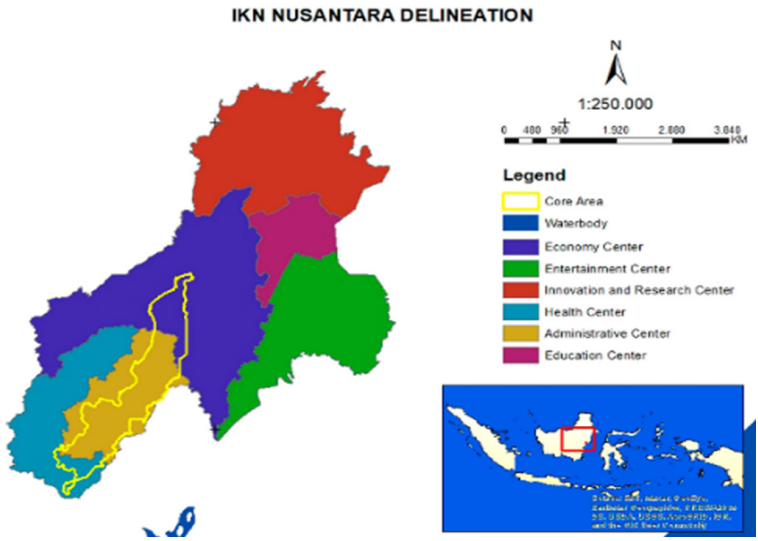
The development of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) in East Kalimantan is not only a relocation of Indonesia's capital but also a strategic response to the challenges of rapid urbanization in Java. With more than 56% of Indonesia's population concentrated on the island, Jakarta has faced severe problems such as congestion, flooding, and land subsidence. The IKN project aims to redistribute population and economic activity while promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development through the smart city and green city concepts (Otorita Ibu Kota Nusantara [OIKN], 2022). However, scholars argue that without careful governance and effective integration with local communities, IKN may risk replicating the urban inequalities seen in other major cities (Hudalah, 2023). Thus, IKN represents both an opportunity and a challenge in reshaping Indonesia's urbanization trajectory.

The IKN is located in East Kalimantan, Indonesia's new capital city, focusing on green, smart, and sustainable urban planning. However, the city's population

growth of 10-11 million by 2045 could lead to social inequality, conflict between residents and migrants, informal settlements, crime, and environmental degradation. Mitigation strategies are crucial to prevent social conflict arising from local culture and large-scale migration flows (Mulyady et al., 2024).

Figure 10

IKN Nusantara Maps



Note. From Nusantara Capital Authority (2022)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Urbanization is a complex process that impacts population structures, economic activity, cultural norms, and governance systems. While it offers opportunities for modernization and progress, it also leads to issues like inequality, congestion, environmental degradation, and regional disparities. Developed nations have benefited from slow industrialization-fueled urbanization, establishing resilient infrastructure and inclusive processes. Emerging nations, like Indonesia, are experiencing fast and unregulated urbanization, resulting in informal settlements, limited public services, and poverty. Decentralization allows local governments to customize policies, but it also increases inequalities between central and peripheral areas and urban and rural residents.

This chapter reveals that urbanization and sustainable development are interconnected processes, with urban growth promoting economic restructuring and modernization but also intensifying inequality if not properly regulated.

Governments must capitalize on urban expansion opportunities while addressing structural challenges, as the trajectory of urbanization in Indonesia and developing nations depends on their ability to manage these challenges.

Sustainable urbanization requires a balance between growth and equity, concentration and deconcentration, economic efficiency and environmental sustainability. If not managed properly, it can lead to fragmentation and inequality. Recommendations for politicians, urban planners, and development practitioners are presented to optimize urbanization's benefits while mitigating its negative impacts.

Strengthening Urban Governance and Institutional Capacity: Decentralization in Indonesia and other developing countries requires enhanced intergovernmental collaboration. A clear definition of roles between central and local authorities helps mitigate policy fragmentation. Moreover, establishing competent, responsible, and transparent municipal institutions is essential for enhancing service delivery, urban management, and public engagement.

Promoting Balanced Regional Development: Addressing overconcentration in primate cities such as Jakarta requires strategic investment in secondary and tertiary cities. Infrastructure, education, and industrial zones in peripheral islands must be targeted to establish alternative development centers. Moreover, spatial planning must actively include rural development into urban initiatives to mitigate rural push factors like poverty and underemployment.

Investing in Sustainable Urban Infrastructure: Enhancing affordable housing, public transportation, water supply, sanitation, and waste management systems is crucial to address population expansion and avoid the emergence of informal settlements. Conversely, green infrastructure, climate-resilient urban design, and intelligent technology must be integrated to tackle environmental issues such as floods, pollution, and resource scarcity.

Enhancing Economic Diversification and Labor Absorption: Enhancing connections between the industrial and service sectors is essential for ensuring stable job prospects for expanding urban populations. Furthermore, bolstering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and formalizing segments of the informal sector can enhance productivity, working conditions, and inclusion within the labor market.

Adopting People-Centered Development Approaches: Policies should emphasize human welfare indicators—such as health, education, housing, and social security—rather than only concentrating on economic growth. Furthermore, particular emphasis must be placed on underrepresented groups, like women, adolescents, and the urban impoverished, to provide equitable access to urban possibilities.

Implementing Evidence-Based and Adaptive Planning: Systematic data collection about demographic changes, land utilization, migratory patterns, and environmental conditions is crucial for informing policy decisions. Moreover, adaptable planning frameworks capable of responding to rapid demographic and economic shifts have to replace inflexible top-down planning paradigms.

Integrating Environmental Sustainability into Urban Policy: Urbanization programs must integrate environmental protections to prevent the irreversible degradation of ecosystems due to land conversion, industrial growth, and infrastructural development. Furthermore, renewable energy, sustainable transportation, and environmentally conscious building methods must be included in urban design.

Fostering Regional and International Cooperation: Insights from the urbanization experiences of other nations should guide national and local plans. South-South collaboration can offer significant insights for nations with analogous difficulties. Furthermore, international collaborations can mobilize financial resources and technical expertise to facilitate sustainable urbanization in Indonesia and other developing countries.

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CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE AGE OF RISING ENERGY DEMAND: A SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

The rapidly evolving global dynamics continually cause energy consumption to rise at an accelerating rate. Factors such as technological innovation, industrialization, urbanization, and demographic growth are unquestionably driving energy demand upwards, with significant implications for sustainability. With natural resources depleting and environmental damage increasing, humanity is compelled to replace traditional energy production methods with more innovative and environmentally friendly alternatives. Within this context, increasing energy consumption and demand assumes critical importance, not only from an economic and environmental perspective but also in relation to public administration.

Energy resources are among the fundamental elements that directly impact the development and well-being of societies. However, managing these resources efficiently and using them sustainably is a fundamental responsibility of public administration. Public administration must implement various regulations to develop an effective strategy for meeting energy demands, increase energy efficiency, and implement environmentally friendly energy policies. The sustainable management of energy consumption plays a critical role not only in economic growth and environmental protection, but also in ensuring social well-being.

The rise in energy demand heavily affects public administration at almost every stage. First and foremost, increasing energy demand can directly affect the quality and continuity of public services. Challenges such as power outages, energy crises, or the depletion of natural resources can have tremendously negative consequences for all areas of society. At this point, the effectiveness of governmental energy policy becomes a key factor determining citizens' living standards. Furthermore, the rise in energy demand necessitates the rapid implementation of technological innovations in the use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

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Sustainable energy management broadly encompasses not only the conservation of energy resources but also economic sustainability, minimizing environmental impacts, and social equity. To achieve these goals, public administration must develop long-term plans and collaborate with various stakeholders. This chapter aims to examine the impact of increasing energy demand on public administration and discuss the importance of sustainable energy management in public policy.

1.1. Problem Statement

In today's world, rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrialization have led to a significant increase in energy consumption. This situation, particularly pronounced in developing countries, exerts serious pressure on existing energy infrastructures and poses significant threats to environmental sustainability. In this context, public administration energy policies and practices must not only meet current energy needs but also properly consider the protection of future resources. However, current public administration structures often prioritize short-term political objectives, thereby impeding the integration of sustainability principles into energy management practices.

Energy consumption by public institutions is increasing significantly not only in physical infrastructure but also in service delivery processes, transportation, and digitalization initiatives. Policies for energy efficiency and renewable energy use are often inadequate or not supported by effective oversight mechanisms in practice. This primarily leads to the inefficient allocation of economic resources and undermines the role of public administration in addressing climate change. Sustainable public management reasonably requires efficiency, accountability, transparency, and consideration of long-term environmental impacts in resource use. However, these principles, particularly concerning energy consumption, have not yet been fully integrated into the core policies of numerous public institutions. A more holistic, data-based, and participatory approach to energy management is genuinely needed.

The research aims to analyze current trends in public administration regarding energy consumption, evaluate their alignment with sustainability objectives, and explore how public policies can be optimized to enhance sustainability outcomes. The ultimate aim is to contribute to the creation of a public administration model centered on sustainable energy management.

1.2. The Aim and Research Question

The primary objective of this research is to analyze how public administrations have recently developed a sustainability perspective in the face of increasing energy consumption and to assess the adequacy of existing public policies in terms of sustainable energy management. The persistent growth in energy demand

engenders complex environmental, economic, and social challenges. In response, public administrations must extend their focus beyond merely ensuring energy supply; they need to formulate comprehensive policies that uphold the principles of sustainability across energy production, distribution, and consumption.

The degree of adoption of sustainability principles within public energy policies can be evaluated through analyses of institutional strategic plans, implementation capacities, and legislative infrastructures. Accordingly, the research aims to examine the impact of energy consumption on public institutions and to reveal the extent to which concepts such as efficiency, renewable energy utilization, and energy conservation are integrated into public administration practices. Furthermore, the chapter aims to identify the structural, administrative, and political obstacles faced in achieving sustainable public management. Ultimately, this research aims to provide a holistic perspective on energy consumption and sustainability within the public administration discipline. Public administration is not only the implementer of energy policies but also one of the key actors ensuring their compatibility with sustainability principles. In this context, the fundamental question is: How is public administration transforming in the face of increasing energy demand, and to what extent does this transformation align with a sustainability perspective? While the literature discusses the role of public administration in environmental policymaking, analysis of managerial responses to specific issues such as energy supply security, energy justice, and energy efficiency is lacking. The main research question to be addressed within the scope of the chapter is: "How does the increase in energy consumption and demand impact sustainable public administration?" Other important questions include: "What role does public administration play in the implementation of sustainable energy policies?" and "How do public institutions in different countries develop strategies to combat increasing energy demand?"

1.3. The Significance of the Research

The rapid increase in energy consumption, recognized as one of the most critical global challenges of this century, has profound impacts on environmental sustainability, economic stability, and social well-being. In this context, how public administration manages energy resources determines both the current quality of life and the prospects of future generations. The concept of sustainable public administration reveals that energy policies are not solely technical matters but are inherently managerial, ethical, and strategic in nature. Therefore, this research aims to highlight an interdisciplinary dilemma by contributing to the development of public policies aligned with sustainable development goals.

Public institutions not only account for a substantial share of energy consumption but also bear the responsibility for implementing policies and

practices that serve as role models for society. Nevertheless, it is often observed that current practices disregard sustainability elements such as energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and carbon footprint reduction. This leads to both resource waste and environmental damage. This chapter seeks to identify these gaps and develop recommendations on how sustainability can be ensured in public administration processes.

Fundamentally, the role of public administration is becoming increasingly critical in the fight against climate change and in the green transformation process. This chapter aims to contribute to sustainability efforts at both the national and global levels by examining how a systematic transformation—particularly within strategic sectors such as energy consumption—can be realized through a sustainable public administration perspective.

1.4. Limitations of the Research

This research inevitably faces certain limitations. First, the relationship between energy consumption and sustainable public administration constitutes an enduring dilemma that cannot be permanently solved. While it is crucial to adopt an optimistic perspective regarding the broader implementation of sustainable public policies and the advancement of digital governance, it is equally important to acknowledge potential negative consequences. Although some quantitative data on energy consumption can be highlighted, it remains difficult at this stage to determine precise outcomes. Furthermore, the fairness of public policies, the extent to which they ensure equal treatment of stakeholders and conform to ethical principles cannot be directly measured through numerical indicators. For instance, measuring whether a social assistance policy is fair is limited to numerical data. Clearly, this chapter emphasizes such dilemmas, and, by their very nature, dilemmas are not subject to definitive resolution. Consequently, this constitutes a fundamental limitation of the research.

Second, the impact of environmental and social policies unfolds over years; therefore, their short-term effects are difficult to measure. For instance, a green space policy may only become evident in terms of environmental quality and public health 20 years later. Moreover, the availability of sufficient, reliable, and up-to-date data poses a significant challenge in developing sustainability indicators. Sustainability datasets, especially at the local government level, are limited.

Third, bureaucracy may occasionally resist innovation. The lack of change management processes can hinder the adoption of sustainable practices. Within a single country, differences among regions, municipalities, and government bodies—each led by officials with varying perspectives on innovation—create additional complexity. Such variations also abruptly create a limitation for the

research; consequently, it is distinctly an issue not to estimate or measure the opinions or implementation of bureaucracy.

1.5. Design of the Study

The study is structured as follows: The first section presents an introduction about the global increase in energy demand and its impact on public administration, states the problem, and underlines the limitations of the research. The second section examines the role of public administration in energy management from a theoretical perspective within the framework of sustainability principles and conceptualizes sustainability in public administration. The third section discusses the environmental impacts of technological developments and shows the aspects of the rapid development in technology and its profound effects on public administration, as in every field. In the fourth section, international country examples are given in order to show how other countries handle environmental issues in public administration. The fifth section focuses entirely on Türkiye's situation and its perspectives on sustainable public administration. The sixth section presents policy recommendations. Finally, the last section of the study explains the relationship between sustainable public management and energy consumption, which presents a complex and multifaceted dilemma rooted in reconciling conflicting objectives.

2. Conceptualizing Sustainability in Public Administration

Public administration broadly plays a critical role in maintaining order in societies, distributing resources fairly, and delivering public services effectively. However, in the last century, public administration has not only remained a functional field but has also gained a broader dimension with environmental, social and economic sustainability. The history of sustainable public management has been shaped by societies developing a more responsible management approach towards environmental, economic and social problems (Landum et al., 2023).

The concept of sustainability was broadly defined for the first time in 1987 in the *Our Common Future* report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission). The report recommended that sustainable development be defined as meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition does not limit the understanding of sustainable development only to environmental factors but also emphasizes its social and economic dimensions (Brundtland, 1987). However, the integration of the concept of sustainability with public administration dates back much earlier than the Brundtland Commission, especially to the beginning of the 20th century.

The historical development of public administration changed rapidly in parallel with industrialization. The industrial revolution had a great impact on shaping the understanding of public administration, especially in the Western world. During this period, public administration became a more centralized and bureaucratic structure. Towards the middle of the 19th century, German sociologist Max Weber defined the bureaucratic structure and the centralized functioning of the state and argued that these structures were quite efficient and effective in maintaining social order. The problems of this period were that the centralist management approach was insufficient to ensure the fair distribution of resources and environmental control.

In the early 20th century, especially after World War I, the role of the state was greatly redefined. In this period, public administration not only provided public services but also took on the function of monitoring the economic and social structure of society. However, during this period, sustainability was generally associated with economic development and growth. Environmental factors and social responsibilities were far from being among the focal points of public administration. After World War II, the area of state intervention expanded in different parts of the world and social welfare states emerged. The understanding of social democracy in Europe advocated that the state should not only ensure security but also take an active role in eliminating economic inequalities and poverty. In this period, sustainability was generally associated with policies aimed at reducing social inequalities as well as economic development; environmental problems still occupied a much smaller place (Figenschau, 2019).

However, the 1970s and 1980s mark the period when environmental concerns and the concept of sustainability were included in public administration discussions. The United Nations Environment Conference held in Stockholm in 1972 made environmental problems a global agenda item. In this conference, the need to protect the environment and leave a clean world to future generations was emphasized, and in parallel, the idea of sustainable development aimed to establish a balance between economic development and environmental protection. However, even in this period, the implementation of sustainable public management still faced difficulties. While public administration focused more on short-term economic goals and industrial growth, environmental factors generally remained in the background (Brundtland, 1987).

Our Common Future report, published in 1987, had a significant impact on the understanding of public administration by introducing the basic principles of sustainable development to the whole world. This report argued that states should produce more effective and long-term policies to protect the environment. This report of the United Nations emphasized that sustainability is a concept not only related to the environment but also to economic and social factors, and

encouraged public administration to adopt a balanced approach in these three dimensions.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, is another important turning point in which sustainable development principles were accepted worldwide. In this conference, the "Green Economy" approach was adopted for sustainable development and ways to maintain economic growth by reducing environmental impacts were discussed. One of the basic functions of public administration should be to combine environmental sustainability and economic development (Morin et al., 2024).

In the 2000s, sustainable public management began to be adopted by a wider audience all over the world. In developed countries, public administration focused on environmentally friendly policies, innovative energy solutions, and practices that promote social equity. While the European Union promoted environmentally friendly public management practices, many international agreements aiming at sustainable development were signed around the world. Today, sustainable public management is not limited to environmental problems alone, but also covers a broader range of issues such as social inequalities, education, healthcare and economic opportunities (Bailey, 2015).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, determined global sustainable development goals and revealed that public administrations should develop strategies to achieve these goals. These objectives span a wide range of areas, including economic growth, reducing inequalities, disseminating environmentally friendly technologies, and ensuring quality education and health services (Arora & Mishra, 2019).

Today, sustainable public management is no longer just an issue related to environmental protection or economic growth, but has also become an understanding linked to social justice, economic equality and social welfare. Managers in public administration develop longer-term and sustainable solutions for society by taking into account the environmental and social impacts of public policies. The historical development of the concept of sustainable public management has undergone a continuous evolution. From the Industrial Revolution until today, the idea that factors such as economic development, environment and social equality should be evaluated together has become stronger. This process reveals that public administration is not only a function of the state, but also an area that shapes the future of the entire society (Bailey, 2015).

3. The Environmental Impacts of Technological Developments

The rapid development of technology has profound effects on public administration, as in every field. Digitalization consequently makes public

administration more effective and closer to the public by offering advantages such as increasing efficiency, ensuring accessibility of services and accelerating decision-making processes.

3.1. Positive Outcomes of Technological Tools on Public Administration

3.1.1. Accessibility and Transparency

Technological tools greatly increase the accessibility of public services. Internet-based systems facilitate citizens' interaction with the state and eliminate geographical and temporal barriers in accessing public services. In particular, e-government applications allow citizens to carry out various transactions online. As a result, citizens can access services without wasting time and greater transparency is provided. As an example, the e-government application in Türkiye enables citizens to carry out government-related transactions digitally and also increases the traceability of the services provided by the government. Research shows that e-government applications increase the level of transparency of the state by increasing the trust between the state and the citizen (Çeliksoy & Canga, 2024).

3.1.2. Efficiency and Effectiveness

Technological tools allow public administration processes to operate faster and more efficiently. In particular, artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics and automation technologies shorten processing times in public administration and make resource use more effective. Thanks to these technologies, manual processes in government offices are reduced, error rates decrease and service quality increases. For example, data analytics systems equipped with artificial intelligence make it easier to make the right decisions by quickly analyzing data sets in public administration. In addition, automated processes ease staff burdens and allow public employees to focus on more strategic work. This improves the quality of public services by increasing the efficiency of public management processes (Çeliksoy & Canga, 2024).

3.1.3. Improving Decision-Making Processes

Technology also transforms decision-making processes in public administration. Data collection, analysis and reporting results can now be done faster and more reliably. Big data and data analytics tools provide public managers with more accurate and up-to-date information, making decision-making more objective and effective. In particular, social media, surveys and other digital platforms provide valuable data to managers by quickly collecting the public's opinions and demands. In this way, faster and more effective policies can be produced in line with the needs of citizens. Additionally, this efficiency provided by technology

helps the government respond to problems quickly (Mihai et al., 2022).

3.1.4. Innovative Solutions in Public Services

Technological innovations offer different and creative solutions to public services. For example, while smart city applications optimize infrastructure management, IoT (Internet of Things) devices are used to reduce traffic density and control environmental pollution (Ramli et al., 2024). Such technologies increase the sustainability of public services while also improving the quality of life. Another important innovation is blockchain technology. Blockchain ensures secure transactions and increases the accuracy of government transactions. The use of blockchain technology, especially in critical areas such as public finance and voter registration, will increase the security and accuracy of the system (Warkentin & Orgeron, 2020).

3.1.5. Education and Awareness Raising

Technological tools also increase the capacity of public administration to educate and raise awareness of citizens. Online education platforms make the state's processes of providing information and educating its citizens more accessible and effective. Especially during the pandemic period, providing training online has enabled citizens to easily access information**.** In addition, awareness campaigns and announcements regarding public services reach wider audiences through digital media. Such digital campaigns make the public more aware of government policies and management styles (Parlak, 2019).

The effects of technological tools on public administration not only improve the functioning of the state but also strengthen the relationship between the state and the public by facilitating citizens' access to services. As seen in this chapter, technology can make public administration more transparent, efficient, effective and innovative. In order to fully benefit from the opportunities offered by technology, it is necessary to increase the digital literacy of individuals in public administration and constantly improve the technological infrastructure.

3.2. Challenges Arising from Increasing Energy Demand

In recent years, worldwide energy demand has been increasing rapidly due to factors such as population growth, industrialization and digitalization. Increasing energy demand has become a major problem in both developed and developing countries. This demand brings with it many challenges such as renewing energy infrastructures, diversifying energy sources and managing environmental impacts. Today, the biggest problems caused by increasing energy demand are energy security, environmental impacts, energy supply and demand imbalance, depletion of fossil fuels and fluctuations in energy prices. These problems have made it necessary to develop sustainable energy policies around the world.

One of the most obvious effects of the increase in energy demand is the growing concern about the depletion of fossil fuels. Although fossil fuels continue to meet a large portion of the world's energy supply, the limited nature of these resources and their increasingly felt environmental impacts require the transformation of energy systems worldwide. Fossil fuels, the main source of carbon emissions that cause global warming, have been the biggest obstacle for many countries struggling with climate change. As of 2025, according to the United Nations' Climate Change Reports (United Nations, n.d.), approximately 80% of the world's energy demand is still met by fossil fuels. This rate both increases emissions that harm the environment and increases the risk of depletion of fossil fuels.

Another important issue concerns energy security. Increasing energy demand increases most countries' dependence on energy imports. This situation strengthens the impact of external factors that can lead to interruptions in energy supply. In particular, factors such as geopolitical crises, natural disasters and trade wars may threaten energy supply (Kumar et al., 2015). The Ukraine-Russia war in 2022 led to great uncertainty around the world regarding energy security. European Union countries experienced serious energy bottlenecks with the interruption of energy supply from Russia and began to look for alternative energy supply ways. Such situations once again demonstrated the importance of ensuring energy independence (International Energy Agency, 2021)

The increase in energy demand has also led to the necessity of strengthening energy infrastructures. Infrastructure deficiencies cause serious disruptions in energy supply, especially in developing regions. Most energy infrastructures in these regions have become overloaded and unable to meet current demands. Power outages, problems due to excessive demand, and aging energy grids are some of the biggest problems in these regions. In developed countries, infrastructure investments are of great importance to accelerate the transition to renewable energy. Although the share of renewable energy in total energy consumption increased to 29% worldwide by 2023 (International Energy Agency, 2023), the infrastructure investments required in this area are still quite large. Environmental impacts are also among the important problems of increasing energy demand. As long as energy production continues, especially with fossil fuels, serious environmental problems such as greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and contamination of water resources will occur (Romanelli, 2020).

Rapid industrial growth and urbanization have significantly contributed to air pollution. Air pollution negatively impacts environmental quality, causing serious harm to human health. In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that approximately 91% of the world's population lives in areas with pollution levels exceeding WHO air quality standards (World Health Organization, n.d.). This contributes to health problems such as stroke, lung cancer, respiratory

infections, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). It also causes approximately 7 million premature deaths worldwide each year and contributes to a 7% increase in respiratory and cardiovascular diseases (Kuncoro et al., 2022). According to the WHO, air pollution from the combustion of fossil fuels causes 7 million premature deaths worldwide each year. This figure is likely to rise further with increasing energy demand. Furthermore, while the use of renewable energy sources can reduce environmental impacts, it is important to remember that the environmental impacts of the production and storage processes of these resources must also be considered (Jiang et al., 2016).

Volatility in energy prices is another major impact of increased demand. The increase in energy prices, especially the rise in the prices of fossil fuels since the early 2020s, has led to economic crises around the world. The dramatic increase in energy prices in 2022 caused energy bills to rise significantly even in developed countries. While this situation makes it difficult for households to access energy, it also increases industrial production costs. In addition, the problem of access to energy has deepened further in low-income countries, and these countries face great difficulties due to both supply problems and high prices (Rostan & Rostan, 2021).

In parallel with the increasing energy demand, another important issue is that more efforts should be made on energy efficiency. Efficient energy use can both help reduce environmental impacts and relieve pressures on energy supply. However, energy efficiency practices are still not at the desired level in many countries. Old technology and low efficiency, especially in industries, increase energy consumption. The use of innovative and efficient technologies can play an important role in solving this problem (Rostan & Rostan, 2021).

Renewable energy sources should be increased in order to meet the growing energy demand. Renewable sources such as solar energy, wind energy, hydroelectricity and geothermal energy can provide as large an energy supply as fossil fuels. However, it is of great importance to make the necessary infrastructure investments for the use of these resources, to develop storage technologies, and to renew energy networks. According to BloombergNEF, in 2023, renewable energy investments worldwide began to exceed fossil fuel investments (BloombergNEF, 2024, January 30). This creates hope that energy systems will be cleaner and more sustainable in the future.

The increase in energy demand creates major challenges both environmentally and economically around the world. In order to overcome these problems, it is necessary to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, increase investments in renewable energy sources and prioritize energy efficiency. At the same time, energy security and infrastructure strengthening will play an important role in solving these problems in the long term (Zhang & Du, 2025).

The literature has largely addressed the relationship between public administration, energy demand, and sustainability through environmental impacts, focusing on issues such as carbon emissions, combating climate change, and depleting natural resources. However, within this trilateral framework, studies on public administration's institutional capacity, its alignment with energy policies, and its ability to develop long-term, holistic management strategies have been quite limited.

Public administration in Türkiye is under significant pressure to transform in the face of rising energy demand and sustainability goals. While the literature largely addresses this relationship within the framework of environmental impacts, the extent to which energy policies align with the institutional capacity of public institutions and how they are integrated into long-term strategic planning has not been adequately examined.

While local governments are becoming key actors in responding to increasing energy demand, existing literature primarily discusses this process through environmental impacts. However, areas such as developing local institutional capacity, ensuring policy alignment, and developing long-term management strategies have not been adequately studied.

4. International Examples

4.1. Germany

Germany is one of the leading countries in the world in both environmentally friendly technologies and digitalization. Germany's policy, known as the energy transition, aims to increase the use of renewable energy and reduce fossil fuel dependency. These policies are supported by sustainable energy solutions integrated with digitalization. Germany is a pioneer in renewable energy use worldwide. As of 2020, approximately 50% of the country's energy consumption came from renewable sources. Germany is investing in smart grid technologies to achieve maximum efficiency from renewable energy sources. This is a technology that increases energy efficiency by monitoring energy production and consumption data in real time. While Germany's energy transition process, or "Energiewende," initially emerged as a globally acclaimed and exemplary sustainability policy, it presents serious structural and administrative challenges when evaluated from a sustainable public administration perspective. Above all, the failure of the public administration to manage the process with a sufficiently holistic strategy has led to the neglect of fundamental elements such as energy supply security and cost-effectiveness. The rapid phase-out of nuclear energy and the phase-out of fossil fuels were implemented before the necessary infrastructure investments were completed and market regulations were fully aligned. This has led to both significant increases in energy prices and occasional instability in electricity

supply. At the societal level, practices such as the installation of wind turbines, particularly in rural areas, have encountered significant local opposition, and the social legitimacy of energy projects has become questionable. In this context, Germany's energy transition process has been criticized for lacking a public management approach that prioritizes not only environmental sustainability but also simultaneously considers social and economic sustainability. Ultimately, the German example demonstrates that achieving sustainability goals requires not only visionary decisions but also effective, cohesive, and multi-level public management capacity (Venghaus et al., 2022).

4.2. Denmark

Denmark is an important example of sustainable city management. Copenhagen is known as one of the most environmentally friendly cities in the world and is known for its carbon neutrality goal. Denmark aims to increase sustainability with digitalization and smart city solutions. Denmark aims to be carbon neutral. To achieve this goal, it uses various technologies such as renewable energy, smart transportation systems and energy-efficient buildings. Denmark offers sustainable transportation solutions with smart traffic management systems and electric vehicle infrastructure. These systems aim to reduce carbon emissions while optimizing traffic flow (Androniceanu et al., 2024). The feasibility of this ambitious target is open to serious debate when evaluated from a sustainable public administration perspective. First, the transformation costs envisioned by the country to achieve this goal will largely fall on public resources and, indirectly, on taxpayers, presenting a worrying picture in terms of economic sustainability. Social justice is often overlooked in the financing of transformation projects, with low-income groups disproportionately bearing the financial burden of the energy transition.

4.3. South Korea

South Korea is a leading country in the world in technology and digitalization. The city of Seoul is an important example in smart cities and digital infrastructure. South Korea also supports sustainability goals such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. The country aims to increase energy efficiency in every area of the city by using advanced IoT (Internet of Things) based systems. Smart traffic management systems and energy monitoring systems are examples of these systems. South Korea attracts attention with its investments in renewable energy sources. The country aims to provide 20% of its electricity production from renewable energy sources by 2030 (Chuhao et al., 2025).

4.4. Estonia

Estonia is a pioneer in digitalization and open data management. It is one

of the world's leading countries in digitalization and open data management in sustainable public administration. Rajamae-Soosaar and Nikiforova (2024) examined the developments in Estonia's open data ecosystem and the progress of local governments in this area. The research shows that the country's success in digital management is supported by advances in the use of open data. Since the early 2000s, the country has aimed to increase the efficiency of public services and facilitate citizen interaction with the state by rapidly expanding e-government applications. The development of Estonia's open data ecosystem increases transparency and accountability in local government decision-making processes. Thanks to open data policies, citizens and the private sector can develop new services by providing easy access to public data. This supports both economic sustainability and increases the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration. Through digitalization, resource utilization is optimized, bureaucratic processes are shortened, and environmental impacts are reduced. Furthermore, Estonia's digital identity system and e-signature applications save time and resources when accessing public services. This approach is considered an innovative model of sustainable public administration (Rajamae-Soosaar & Nikiforova, 2024). While Estonia's digitalization process is cited as exemplary for its speed and transparency in public services, it has also sparked serious debates regarding data security and privacy. The vulnerability of centralized digital infrastructure to cyberattacks, the risk of personal data misuse, and the state's control over data have led to trust issues among citizens. Despite the technical success of digitalization, this has led to criticism regarding public legitimacy and rights-based governance.

4.5. Switzerland

Switzerland strives to achieve its sustainability goals by adopting participatory budgeting and data-driven decision-making processes in public administration. The participatory budgeting model plays a significant role in involving citizens in decision-making processes. This method ensures more effective and needs-based use of public resources. Directly gathering citizens' opinions enhances the legitimacy of public policies and improves service quality. Data-driven management, on the other hand, enables sustainable resource planning by ensuring the use of objective data in decision-making processes (Wellings et al., 2023). In Switzerland, local governments optimize urban planning, health, and environmental policies by analyzing large data sets through digital infrastructures. These practices contribute to social sustainability by increasing transparency and accountability in public administration. Furthermore, data-driven strategies have been developed to monitor and reduce environmental impacts. Switzerland's sustainable public administration is strengthened by democratic participation and the integration of technological infrastructure. A study conducted in Aarau, Switzerland, shows that participatory budgeting and data-driven decision-making are effective in

enhancing the legitimacy of public policies. Wellings et al. (2023) emphasize that citizen participation helps identify investments that improve quality of life.

4.6. Malaysia

Malaysia prioritizes good governance principles in sustainable public management. According to research by Zabidi et al. (2024), reforms have been implemented to increase transparency, accountability, and participation in the Malaysian public sector. These reforms are designed to improve the quality of public services and combat corruption. Public institutions in Malaysia have been made more efficient through electronic management systems and performance-based management approaches. Furthermore, citizens' access to services has been simplified and feedback mechanisms have been strengthened. Good governance practices contribute not only to economic sustainability but also to social justice and environmental sustainability. By adopting a holistic approach to public management, Malaysia aligns public policies with sustainable development goals. The reform process is supported by increased inter-institutional coordination and capacity-building programs. Thus, innovations in public administration have created a strong infrastructure that supports sustainable development (Zabidi et al., 2024).

4.7. Italy

Italy is making significant strides in sustainable public management, particularly in smart city applications and the preservation of cultural heritage. Smart city technologies enable the optimization of public services in areas such as energy efficiency, waste management, and transportation. This increases environmental sustainability and reduces carbon footprints. Furthermore, digitalization and participatory approaches encourage citizen participation in urban decision-making processes. Cultural heritage protection stands out as a policy area that combines elements of economic and social sustainability. In Italy, local governments are developing sustainable financing and management models to ensure the preservation of historical values, thereby contributing to tourism and the local economy. Thus, both cultural and environmental sustainability objectives are addressed in an integrated manner. The Italian city of Pavia has adopted sustainable public management through smart city applications. Magliacani (2023) emphasizes the importance of developing sustainable accounting and accountability systems for the sustainable management of cultural heritage in Pavia.

5. Türkiye's Situation

Sustainable public administration in Türkiye encompasses the balanced delivery of public services across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and the

enhancement of citizen satisfaction and governance quality. This approach centers on the efficient use of public resources, the generation of social benefits through long-term policies, and ecological responsibility. In this context, one might say that Türkiye strives to contribute to sustainability by implementing reforms at both the central and local levels. However, this process faces numerous challenges, including bureaucratic obstacles, financial inadequacies, and institutional capacity gaps.

5.1. Digital Transformation and E-Government

One of the key steps in the reform process in Turkish public administration is the expansion of e-government applications. The "e-Government Gateway" (turkiye.gov.tr) platform was launched in 2008, providing services to millions of users. According to the latest data, as of 2023, 7,415 services were offered through 1,001 public institutions, and nearly 64 million users had access to the e-government system.

The digital transformation process has not only facilitated citizens' access to services but has also been an effective tool in simplifying bureaucratic processes and increasing transparency and accountability. According to the European Commission's 2022 e-government comparison report, Türkiye ranks 16th out of 35 countries in the e-government maturity ranking with 72%, and it has risen to 12th place by demonstrating higher performance in transparency and participation (Babaoğlu, 2022).

To ensure that public services are carried out in accordance with strategic planning principles, the 5018 Law on Public Financial Management and Control (2003) was enacted. This law made strategic planning, performance-based budgeting, internal control, and reporting mechanisms legal requirements for public administrations. However, strategic planning, which has not been widely implemented in practice, has not achieved the effectiveness envisioned by the legislation (Önder & Aydın, 2020).

5.2. Personnel Management

Personnel management in Turkish public administration is also critical to sustainability. The failure to update standard staffing regulations in public institutions leads to unscientific, need-based employment planning, resulting in resource waste and inefficiency. Furthermore, increasing collaboration between universities and public institutions and ensuring the integration of theory and practice among faculty members through consulting or part-time work in public institutions will both provide institutions with expertise and pave the way for the practical application of academic knowledge (Çeliksoy & Canga, 2024).

Another significant human resources deficiency is the need to strengthen

human resources units in public institutions. The lack of subject matter experts in the management of these units hinders the development of visionary approaches. The effectiveness of these units needs to be increased through professional positions such as career specialists (Önder & Aydın, 2020). Furthermore, simplifying bureaucratic levels and implementing legislative reforms through a personnel empowerment approach can broaden staff authority and increase participation in processes.

5.3. Structural Challenges

The effectiveness of oversight and accountability mechanisms in the public sector is a fundamental requirement for sustainable management. However, the application of modern techniques in audit systems, the strengthening of internal control systems and the healthy operation of independent audit institutions still remain problems (Gürçam, 2025).

The most common problems in Turkish public administration include the complexity of the bureaucracy, the centralized structure, inadequate resource management, lack of transparency, and limited citizen participation. Complex bureaucratic processes slow down citizens' access to services, and centralized decision-making leads to the neglect of local needs. Inadequate resource management, in turn, leads to the failure to implement projects sustainably (Yaman, 2025).

5.4. The Climate Law and Environmental Transformation

Türkiye's first Climate Law Proposal was approved by the Grand National Assembly on July 2, 2025, and became the 7552 Climate Law (2025). With this legislation, Türkiye took a historic step forward in combating climate change with concrete policies and institutional structures. The law's foundation lies in its "green growth" vision, the 2053 Net Zero Emissions target, and the establishment of an institutional framework to combat climate change. Indeed, this can be considered a historic step in terms of both climate policies and Türkiye's environmental transformation. This step is not merely a symbolic regulation; it is a formal demonstration of the will to undertake a comprehensive transformation for the future. This step, taken in line with the country's climate change mitigation and net zero emissions goals, not only establishes a legal framework but also signals a synthesis of national development, technological advancement, social awareness, and just transition policies.

The definitions contained in this law are noteworthy: just transition, primary market, offsetting, ETS (Emissions Trading System), embedded greenhouse gas emissions, voluntary carbon markets, and climate justice. These terms are not merely jargon; each aims to establish a new order along different axes of social

transformation. Just transition means protecting those most affected by this transformation; climate justice, on the other hand, represents an approach that addresses social inequalities through a balanced sharing of resources and responsibilities. While offsetting and voluntary carbon markets provide flexibility, the ETS establishes the power to directly intervene in emissions (Gürçam, 2025).

The most concrete and impactful aspect of the law is the strong establishment of strategy and implementation pillars. The Climate Change Presidency, undertaking critical functions such as strategy development, action plan coordination, monitoring, auditing, and evaluation, forms the heart of a centralized system. The role of this institution is not only to ensure inter-institutional coordination but also to establish inter-regional coordination. The establishment of Provincial Climate Change Coordination Boards, chaired by governors in each province, demonstrates that this work can be implemented in layers, from the local to the central level. The development of action plans tailored to local needs outlines a transformation path enriched by local dynamics, as in developed countries.

The law stipulates the monitoring of new technological developments, such as carbon capture and storage and hydrogen technology, and the establishment of research and development centers in these areas. This will trigger innovation around a new product and service ecosystem and clean technologies. Türkiye is likely to benefit from this technological transformation in terms of both production and exports.

In the near future, the impact of this law may begin to be seen: low-carbon projects may be implemented in pilot provinces while local climate action plans are being prepared; the first industrial enterprises to receive emission permits through the ETS system may emerge; voluntary projects may receive support through the carbon credit mechanism; and climate-friendly curricula may be implemented in educational institutions.

The greatest strength of this law is its systemic comprehensiveness. It offers a broad transformation pipeline encompassing not just a single sector but industry, technology, education, agriculture, water management, disaster management, finance, and local governments. It provides institutional structure, lays the legal groundwork, and charts a roadmap for the future. With this law, Türkiye takes a strategic stance against the climate crisis, fulfilling its obligations and seizing opportunities.

Undoubtedly, several challenges accompany this process. These include issues such as implementation capacity, continuity of financial resources, the climate-focused transformation of the private sector, bureaucratic obstacles, the social adaptation process, and oversight gaps that require attention. Therefore, a structure that allows for continuous monitoring and revision must be established

to ensure the law's effectiveness. Despite these inherent risks, the adoption of the Climate Law represents a significant milestone. It signifies a strategic step forward for Türkiye in asserting its autonomy in addressing the climate crisis, translating international cooperation into localized benefits, and operationalizing green development and net-zero targets through tangible policy measures. Seeing the concrete contributions of this law to the national economy, environment, society, and regional development in the coming decades will indicate that a transformation beyond legal regulation has taken place.

5.5. Carbon Emissions and International Commitments

According to United Nation's website, "as environmental challenges reach unprecedented levels, UNEP (United Nation Environment Programme) works tirelessly across the globe to tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste." They are preparing a report called the Emissions Gap Report. These reports generally offer a general assessment covering all countries in the world; also, some annual reports may include specific data on a country basis.

However, the Emissions Gap Report does not typically present direct carbon emission data for Türkiye. Instead, it offers an assessment of Türkiye's relative contribution to global emissions and evaluates the country's progress toward its emission reduction targets. Türkiye's carbon emissions are mainly caused by sectors such as industry, transportation and energy production. Türkiye's emissions are largely caused by fossil fuel-based energy production. Türkiye, similar to other developing countries included in the 2023 Emissions Gap Report (United Nations Environment Programme, 2023), is among the countries that are emphasized to make more investments to achieve emission reduction targets.

As of 2023, Türkiye's emissions continue to increase. Its carbon footprint has increased significantly since 1990. Türkiye's carbon emissions per capita reached 4.7 tons as of 2019. Although Türkiye has made some progress in renewable energy (Wang et al., 2025), its carbon emissions are still high, making it difficult to achieve the Paris Agreement targets. Türkiye became a party to the Paris Agreement in 2021 and aims to reduce its emissions by 21% by 2030. While this target is a step towards closing the gap in Türkiye's emissions reduction, more progress is needed to achieve global emissions targets (United Nations Environment Programme, 2023).

Sustainable public administration in Türkiye is a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects digitalization, institutional capacity, participation, financial sustainability, and environmental responsibility. While e-government and open-source applications provide significant steps in digital transformation, exemplary practices such as water management embody the sustainability

perspective. However, bureaucracy, insufficient resources, lack of strategic planning, inadequate personnel management, and auditing problems are the major obstacles to this transformation (Atar et al., 2025). These obstacles must be overcome through integrated reforms, legal updates, and technology-focused policies.

6. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Public administration can focus on various solutions to manage the increasing energy consumption and environmental pollution risks associated with digitalization. To ensure that everyone benefits equally from the opportunities offered by digitalization, public administration should develop policies to reduce the digital divide. Such measures can prevent social inequalities by ensuring social sustainability.

For public administrations to develop sustainable policies in the face of growing energy consumption, both environmental and administrative transformations are necessary. In this context, it is crucial not only to diversify energy sources but also to restructure public administration structures with a strategic, holistic, and long-term approach. The following policy recommendations may support this transformation;

Renewable Energy Use: Renewable energy sources are a key solution for meeting the energy demands of technological infrastructures. Clean energy sources such as solar, wind and hydroelectric power can meet the energy needs of data centers and other digital infrastructures while reducing environmental pollution. Public administrations should increase the use of renewable energy resources in both energy production and consumption processes. Municipalities and local governments, in particular, can set an example for society by supporting projects involving resources such as solar energy, wind energy, and biomass. Practices such as installing solar panels on public institution roofs should be expanded.

Energy Efficiency and Zero Carbon Policies: The energy efficiency of digital technologies and public services is of great importance in this context. Sustainable infrastructure projects should be developed to achieve efficient energy use and zero carbon targets. In addition, energy-efficient software and hardware can be used to make digital services more efficient. Public institutions should develop energy efficiency-focused strategies to reduce energy consumption. Mandating practices such as thermal insulation, energy-efficient lighting systems, and smart automation technologies, particularly in public buildings, will both save energy and reduce costs in the long run.

Smart Technologies and Green Infrastructures: Smart cities, smart buildings and energy-efficient transportation systems play a critical role in

achieving sustainability goals in public administration. Such technologies can be leveraged to reduce energy consumption and minimize environmental impacts.

E-waste Management and Recycling: The rapid obsolescence of technological devices has created a serious e-waste problem. Therefore, developing recycling programs and ensuring proper e-waste processing can be an effective solution to prevent environmental pollution.

Legal and Institutional Reforms: Legal regulations directly related to energy management should be reviewed and revised in line with the principle of sustainability. Furthermore, the establishment of units responsible for sustainable energy management in central and local governments will ensure the institutionalization of these practices. Active participation of academia, civil society, and private sector representatives in the development of energy policies should be ensured. Participatory and transparent governance will accelerate the establishment of sustainability awareness within society.

7. Conclusion

The relationship between sustainable public management and energy consumption presents a complex and multifaceted dilemma rooted in reconciling conflicting objectives. On the one hand, ensuring the continuity and quality of public services—such as education, healthcare, security, and infrastructure—inevitably requires high levels of energy consumption. On the other hand, meeting this demand in a sustainable, environmentally friendly, and resource-efficient manner has become an urgent challenge. In the context of Türkiye, this tension is being addressed through normative regulations on energy use in public buildings, efficiency policies for public vehicles and appliances, and efforts to integrate sustainability into bureaucratic processes.

Strengthening sustainable public administration requires systemic reforms. Reducing centralization, enhancing the autonomy of local governments, adopting priority-based resource allocation, and effectively implementing strategic planning and performance-based budgeting are essential steps.

Digitalization policies, such as expanding e-government services, strengthening digital infrastructure, and promoting open-source solutions in the public sector, can accelerate this transformation. In human resources, updating the staffing system, increasing career- and motivation-enhancing practices, encouraging university-government collaboration, and empowering personnel will enhance institutional capacity. In parallel, modernizing audit systems, establishing independent and effective control mechanisms, reinforcing transparency and improving public relations can build trust between public institutions and citizens.

Energy efficiency policies must extend beyond technical measures to include behavioral and cultural dimensions such as demand management, public awareness, and sustainable consumption habits. Otherwise, the process that begins with efficiency can quickly devolve into consumption, leading to deviations from sustainability goals. This dilemma points to the need for public administration to design and internalize policies that go beyond simply reducing energy use.

The energy consumption dilemma in the context of sustainable public administration is a multi-layered problem with technical, economic, behavioral, and societal dimensions. Türkiye has achieved significant financial savings and performance improvements through energy efficiency in public services, supported by legal frameworks. However, complementary measures—such as demand management, public education, internalizing the principles of energy democracy and energy justice, and expanding integrated systems—are necessary to ensure long-term success.

It is critical to design and implement sustainability and efficiency goals in a way that balances each other. The search for solutions regarding the sustainability balance in public administration, the place of digitalization in environmental pollution and some inevitable risks have become an important issue in modern public administration (Kablan & Chouard, 2022).

Ultimately, the balance between sustainability and efficiency is not a choice between digitalization and environmental protection, but a question of integration. Renewable energy, efficient technologies, and well-designed policies can help reconcile this tension. For public administration, the central challenge is to institutionalize a holistic, fair, and forward-looking energy policy that maintains service quality while minimizing environmental impacts. In this respect, the sustainability–digitalization nexus will remain a defining issue for modern governance.

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CHAPTER 7

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN THE COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Cem Ümit Beyoğlu[1]

1. Introduction

Climate change is not just an environmental issue—it is a threat to human rights, social justice, and the shared progress of communities around the world. Research shows that it worsens existing social, economic, and political inequalities (Gonzalez, 2021). The idea of climate justice involves the fair distribution of duties and resources and the protection of vulnerable groups. While natural events may be beyond our control, policy responses and governance can help address the climate crisis (Köçer, 2025).

1.1. Background of the Global Challenge of Climate Change

Climate change has become a major global concern, backed by research and clear environmental effects. Though the climate has changed naturally over time, human actions, especially since the industrial era, have accelarated these changes (Adger et al., 2003; Lesnikowski et al., 2011). Burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial activity have greatly increased greenhouse gas emissions, causing a global temperature rise of about 1.07°C by 2019, mostly due to human activity. The World Meteorological Organization (2024) reported that 2023 was the warmest year recorded, with temperatures 1.45°C ± 0.12°C above pre-industrial levels (Mechler et al., 2019)

Climate change causes rising sea levels, more frequent extreme weather events, and harm to important ecosystems. Compound weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, and floods have become more common, with more occurring in 2022 than in 2001-2021, showing the increased danger (Seekamp et al., 2020; Mariconda, 2023). Addressing these issues requires a broad, cooperative response. No single country can solve climate change alone; it needs global cooperation and long-term action from all nations (Breidenich et al., 1998; Park & Chae, 2023). There is no doubt that comparative legal data and discussions in the literature will contribute to public policies in Türkiye in terms of taking the necessary measures to counter the effects of climate change, which has a wide-ranging impact globally,

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on vulnerable groups. In this context, based on the data mentioned, it is necessary to ensure that the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups are guaranteed in Türkiye's policies to combat climate change.

1.2. Problem Statement

Climate change is a complex environmental issue. The year 2023 was the hottest on record, with temperatures above pre-industrial levels. This escalating warming trend is leading to a myriad of long-term ecological impacts, including rising air and sea temperatures, sea level rise, ocean acidification, intensifying storms, altered precipitation patterns and shifts in ocean currents, all of which contribute to ecosystem degradation and the proliferation of diseases (Van der Geest & Warner, 2020). Climate change impacts are widespread and often happen at the same time over large areas (Reckien & Petkova, 2019; Benevolenza & DeRigne, 2019).

While climate change affects everyone, it affects vulnerable people more severely, such as those facing poverty, discrimination, or disability. Communities that rely on natural resources, like coastal residents and farmers, struggle with the effects of climate change (McDonald, 2024). Extreme weather events increasingly threaten basic human rights: access to clean water, adequate housing, food security, and health. Natural disasters are destroying homes, displacing communities, and compromising access to essential resources (Köçer, 2025). In order to protect vulnerable groups within the scope of climate change policies, it is essential to adopt principles such as transparency, accountability, broad participation, cooperation with civil society and legitimacy in areas such as agriculture, irrigation, health, infrastructure and energy within the context of public governance.

This uneven distribution of impacts highlights the issue of climate injustice, where the majority of historical greenhouse gas emissions originate from the Global North, yet the most disproportionately affected states and people are those who have contributed least to the problem. Climate change exacerbates systemic inequalities, intersecting with longstanding issues such as poverty, structural racism, and environmental degradation (Benevolenza & DeRigne, 2019; Tvinnereim et al., 2020).

1.3. Research Gap

The devastating effects of climate change, encompassing social, economic and ecological dimensions, pose severe threats to fundamental human rights globally. These threats disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, including women, children, poor communities and indigenous people. In Türkiye, specific groups such as high-altitude communities, small-scale farmers, local populations, pastoralists, and mountaineers are particularly susceptible to climate-related

risks. Several critical research gaps have been identified: the lack of focused and granular analyses of vulnerable populations; unmet responsibilities within public administration; implementation deficits in sustainable governance; and the need for interdisciplinary, multi-level approaches (Çakır-Sümer, 2022).

While the general disproportionate effects of climate change on human rights and vulnerable groups are acknowledged, particularly in Türkiye, there is a primary focus on household-level risk perception. However, state institutions and other actors hold explicit responsibilities for implementing adaptation and mitigation measures to protect individuals and communities. Addressing the multifaceted nature of climate change requires a comprehensive, interdisciplinary governance framework. Key concepts such as climate justice, adaptation, sustainability, resilience, migration and social justice are central to climate change research (Benevolenza & DeRigne, 2019). Climate change is fundamentally an interdisciplinary problem. The intersection of human rights and the right to climate represents a "critical but less explored nexus" in the literature, indicating significant research gaps in this interdisciplinary domain. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive perspective and practical framework for protecting vulnerable populations, offering valuable guidance to both academics and policymakers in shaping equitable and effective climate policies. Unlike existing academic studies on climate change, this study refers to positive policy examples based on comparative law data, strives to offer effective solutions for public governance practices using theoretical analyses, and evaluates the problems caused by the widespread effects of climate change in order to propose these solutions.

1.4. Contribution of the Research

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on climate change and its impact on humanity. It focuses on susceptible populations, defines public administration's role, utilizes sustainable governance, and adopts an interdisciplinary method (Akbaş & Kırımlı, 2025). The study examines the disparate impact of climate change and proposes remedial solutions. It connects human rights with the interests of oppressed populations and considers ways of implementing state responsibilities. It evaluates policy challenges and recommends plans, providing practical insights. The study aims to provide solutions to public governance by identifying the causes of problems in the context of protecting vulnerable groups from the negative effects of climate change and evaluating possible and effective solutions. The proposed solutions for public governance offer a multidimensional perspective, as they are directed at the legislative, executive, judicial and administrative bodies. In this context, the necessary legislative changes, implementation and policy proposals, conceptual assessments and interpretative activities aimed at ensuring human rights by the judicial bodies should be considered as contributions of the study to the literature and practice.

By examining how sustainable governance could safeguard the vulnerable, this research brings insight into policy. It emphasizes collaborative governance in crafting effective climate responses. The research utilizes human rights, science, public administration, and social justice concepts to provide a complete picture of climate effects and remedies. The research also targets Türkiye's vulnerable regions, providing local adaptation and policy with data. It will provide a resource base for scholars as well as policymakers who seek to formulate just climate policies (Benevolenza & DeRigne, 2019; Çakır-Sümer, 2022).

In essence, this research contributes to studies on climate change with respect to human rights, public administration, and governance. It presents a framework for safeguarding vulnerable individuals and recommends how policymakers can formulate equitable climate policies. It will act as both a theoretical and methodological guide for the research community and offer practical recommendations and blueprints for policymakers to frame more inclusive, effective and practical climate policies. It should be emphasized that the following research questions form the basis for understanding the general structure, scope and direction of the study. Indeed, the study will examine these research questions in detail and seek to provide answers.

- How should the negative effects of climate change be understood in global and national terms?

- Which communities fall within the scope of vulnerable groups? How is it possible to reconcile measures specific to vulnerable groups with the principle of equality?

- Which rights and freedoms of vulnerable groups are violated by climate change? What measures should be taken to guarantee these rights and freedoms?

- What fundamental principles should be taken into account in protecting the rights of vulnerable groups in light of the principles of the rule of law and equality?

The study begins with a systematic examination of the concepts related to combating climate change and protecting vulnerable groups. Following this conceptual analysis, the study assesses the negative effects of climate change on the fundamental rights and freedoms of vulnerable groups. After discussing the issues related to the vulnerability of at-risk groups to climate change, the study refers to positive examples of climate change mitigation policies from a comparative law perspective. After identifying the problems throughout the study, the views put forward in the literature and in practice are discussed, and solutions are proposed for the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups in the context of climate change mitigation policies.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Studies on Climate Change in Türkiye

This study fills critical research gaps by focusing on how to protect vulnerable populations who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. It contextualizes this protection within the broader frameworks of fundamental rights, public administration responsibilities, and sustainable governance principles. Climate change continues to generate widespread socio-economic and ecological disruptions, posing acute threats to human rights, particularly for those already in vulnerable positions. Globally, these include women, children, impoverished communities, and indigenous peoples (Akbaş & Kırımlı, 2025). It is understood that comparative law data is not sufficiently included in evaluations conducted in academic studies in Türkiye, and that examples of good practice are not addressed. In addition, it has been determined that legal regulations and judicial interpretation activities are overlooked in policies to combat climate change. Indeed, the legitimacy of measures to combat climate change is an important issue.

Research in Türkiye has broadly covered climate change impacts and risk analysis, sustainability and climate policies, adaptation strategies, local and regional effects, and sector-specific impacts such as agriculture, water resources, health and energy. Urban areas like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir have been frequent subjects of these studies, examining aspects like greenhouse gas emissions, vulnerability, planning and climate awareness. However, despite this breadth, a systematic literature review on climate change risk perception in Türkiye highlights a significant gap: specific vulnerable sample groups, such as high mountain communities, farmers, local populations, pastoralists and mountaineers, remain underrepresented in the literature. This points to a critical need for more focused local-level studies to develop effective adaptation and mitigation policies tailored to these disproportionately affected communities in Türkiye (Akbaş & Kırımlı, 2025). While global trends in climate research increasingly prioritize justice, governance, and socio-political dimensions of vulnerability, Turkish literature remains limited in integrating these themes into the context of vulnerable groups. Consequently, this study seeks to bridge national and international discourses by offering a framework that incorporates public administration responsibilities and sustainable governance, specifically targeting the protection of at-risk populations in Türkiye. This suggests a need for Turkish research to follow global trends that focus on the social and justice-related aspects of climate change, particularly for at-risk populations. It fulfills those needs with an outline that incorporates fundamental rights, public administration responsibility, and sustainable governance concepts, with an emphasis on safeguarding vulnerable groups in Türkiye and supporting both scholarly research and practical policymaking (Çakır-Sümer, 2022). In order

to make effective academic contributions to policies combating climate change, it is important that studies take a multifaceted approach, adopt a comparative law perspective, identify problems using objective criteria, and address proposed solutions in a manner that requires interdisciplinary cooperation. In this context, academic studies should draw on data from different disciplines, refer to a comparative law perspective to understand best practices, and emphasize the importance of implementing measures to combat climate change within the framework of public governance, in line with the interaction between the state and civil society.

2.2. Development of the Concept of Climate Change and Vulnerable Groups

In order to effectively mitigate climate change, both a scientific and policy framework and an in-depth understanding of its impacts on various populations are needed. In this chapter, consideration is given to how the concept of climate change has developed over time and highlights the identification of populations at risk as an important component of adaptation plans and climate justice (Akerlof et al., 2015).

Climate change knowledge has grown tremendously, from small-scale science into an international policy issue. Current science indicates that the Earth's temperature is rising as a process directly caused by humans, with important research starting in the 1970s. Key points in this growth include recognizing the greenhouse effect, creating scientific bodies (mainly the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – IPCC, established in 1988 under the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization), and creating international policy plans (such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC in 1992, the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, and the Paris Agreement in 2015) (Van der Geest & Warner, 2020; Werners et al., 2021). Climate change has been viewed as an issue requiring action to alleviate its impact as well as to take advantage of potential opportunities. It indicates an obvious need for both adaptation and mitigation activities in order to stabilize carbon levels (Breidenich et al., 1998; Lesnikowski et al., 2011).

The concept of at-risk groups under climate change discourse has expanded from a general idea of susceptibility to damage into a more detailed strategy with social, economic, and human rights components. It is important for designing adaptation and mitigation measures that are fair and effective. At-risk groups are people with a higher likelihood of experiencing climate risks and lower capacity to adapt. These include women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, poverty-stricken people, migrants, and people in rural or climate-sensitive zones (Wood et al., 2021). Individuals with chronic illnesses

and people working in climate-dependent occupations are also regarded as at risk (Marzi et al., 2021).

The IPCC interprets vulnerability as the degree to which a system may be damaged or cannot cope with adverse impacts of climate change, such as climatic alterations and extremes (Van der Geest & Warner, 2020; Werners et al., 2021). It originates from contact, sensitivity, and adaptation capacity. Resilience, conversely, is regarded as the opposite, signifying a framework's capacity to absorb change, self-organize, and learn (Appleby et al., 2017).

Populations at risk that should be made aware of the need to promote climate justice when reducing climate change include: those with age-related vulnerabilities (children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities), financial vulnerabilities (the poor, low-income families, and people with limited access to resources), social minorities (indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities), geographic vulnerabilities (people in rural areas), migration-related vulnerabilities (migrants, asylum seekers, and those displaced by climate change), and health issues (people with chronic illnesses) (Darjee et al., 2023).

The discourse on at-risk populations is increasingly linked to climate justice, recognizing that climate change disproportionately affects marginalized groups. The concept of racial capitalism highlights how racialized communities have historically borne the brunt of fossil fuel-based economic systems, from resource extraction to climate change impacts. This recognition has led to a "rights turn" in climate change litigation, with a growing focus on human rights arguments to compel governments and corporations to take climate action. Cases in Pakistan (Leghari) and the Netherlands (Urgenda) exemplify how citizens' fundamental rights are invoked to challenge inadequate climate policies. While Urgenda did not find a direct human rights violation, it used rights-based arguments as an interpretive tool for the state's duty of care. The UNFCCC itself, at COP 16 in Cancún (2010), recognized that the adverse effects of climate change have direct and indirect implications for the effective enjoyment of human rights, particularly for those already vulnerable due to geography, gender, age, indigenous or minority status, or disability (Wamsler et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2024). In order to protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups in Türkiye against the long-term and widespread effects of climate change, it should be emphasized that a rights-based approach must be adopted in both legal regulations and judicial interpretation activities, based on the examples mentioned above.

Human rights obligations are increasingly central to protecting vulnerable groups, encompassing both substantive (requiring preventative and remedial measures for climate harm affecting rights to life, housing, food, and health) and procedural (demanding access to remedies, public participation, and information) duties. This approach aims to prevent "climate apartheid" and ensure vulnerable

voices are heard in policy-making. However, the application of human rights treaties to climate change mitigation faces challenges, as a single state's action may have a negligible impact on global emissions, and the benefits are diffuse and long-term, while costs are immediate and localized. This creates the "window of use" idea, suggesting that human rights agreements provide only a small window for general mitigation commitments, making states cooperate on mitigation only insofar as it supports the implementation of agreement-based rights in their area, without necessarily requiring full compliance with broader reduction goals (Kuran et al., 2020).

Overall, the development of the concept of climate change has moved from a scientific issue to a complex global challenge that requires joint action and careful consideration of its human rights implications. At the same time, the concept of at-risk groups has become more nuanced, emphasizing their varying exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, which are tied to social structures and historical inequalities. Linking these evolving concepts is essential for creating fair and effective climate mitigation and adaptation steps that prioritize protecting and helping the most vulnerable.

2.3. The Effects of Climate Change on Vulnerable Groups

The concept of vulnerable groups and its content have been discussed in the previous section. This conceptual analysis is particularly important in determining which communities' fundamental rights will be protected and guaranteed in the fight against climate change, especially in the context of the principle of equality and the rule of law. Following this determination, it would also be useful to assess which fundamental rights of vulnerable groups are more affected by the widespread impacts of climate change.

The right to life and health is especially threatened by climate change, which brings dangers such as rising temperatures, worsening air quality, insufficient water and food, spreading diseases, and natural disasters. These risks are intensified for at-risk people, including children, the elderly, and those with health problems. Also, the psychological impacts of climate change—such as uncertainty, stress, anxiety, and unhappiness—can cause major mental health problems.

Right to Shelter and Moving: Climate change undermines the right to safe shelter by causing mass migration and moving across countries. The concept of "climate refugee" underscores the difficulties these people face in securing legal status and protection.

Right to Self-Government: Climate change threatens the culture, ways of life, and land access of indigenous peoples. Projects such as renewable energy initiatives and fuel extraction may appropriate indigenous lands and harm

their cultures.

Rights to Information, Involvement, and Justice: At-risk communities are often excluded from climate decision-making, leading to their needs being overlooked. Ensuring access to environmental information and education, as well as participation in decision-making, is essential for safeguarding human rights.

3. Combating Climate Change in Comparative Law: Good Practice Examples

Adapting to climate change for vulnerable populations requires a shift toward sustainable governance based on partnership, cohesion, and localized actions. There are models in which government programs protect susceptible populations as part of climate change policy. These actions can be grouped by type (Benzie, 2014; Stepanov et al., 2021).

Delta (Canada): The Delta-RAC initiative involved stakeholders from local and provincial bodies, building capacity for decisions on long-term adaptation. This shows a collaborative approach to planning (Braithwaite et al., 2025).

Regional Cooperation (Caribbean Community): Since the late 1990s, the Caribbean Community has implemented regional projects to understand and reduce climate vulnerability, leading to national adaptation policies, monitoring mechanisms, and regional databases. This illustrates how regional groups can share resources to address shared challenges (Chambers, 2020).

Participatory Media for Engagement (Pacific Islands): Pilot projects using participatory media (e.g., video workshops, storytelling, songs) have empowered communities, especially marginalized groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, to discuss climate change impacts and share knowledge. This "bottom-up" approach ensures greater representation of community voices in policy development (Marshall, 2010).

Customized Policies and Adaptive Pathways (South Korea): In South Korea, risk assessments for air pollution highlight the need for customized policies targeting vulnerable groups (e.g., the elderly, youth, low-income populations). Adaptive pathways are developed to assess the effects of increased social adaptation funding. While capital regions may require strict emission controls, non-capital regions benefit from increased investment in social welfare policies. This exemplifies tailoring responses to specific regional vulnerabilities (Park et al., 2020; Park & Chae, 2023).

Greening Measures in Healthcare (Austria): The *Cool & Care* project in Austria integrates greening measures in nursing homes, considering both technical (building physics) and social/nursing science perspectives. Co-creative workshops

with residents, staff, and planners ensure that solutions address the subjective needs of vulnerable elderly residents. This demonstrates a multi-disciplinary approach to protecting a specific vulnerable group from heat impacts (Saeed et al., 2023).

Social Vulnerability Mapping (United States): Studies in the U.S. use the Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI) to identify disadvantaged coastal communities at risk from sea level rise and water shortages. This data-driven approach helps to understand where socially vulnerable populations would bear disproportionate costs of adaptation and where water shortages constitute an environmental injustice, informing tailored adaptation strategies (Breidenich et al., 1998; Martinich et al., 2013; Liddell et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2023).

Proactive Local Adaptation (Nepal): Rural families in Nepal have undertaken various proactive adaptations, such as agricultural diversification and the creation of small enterprises, in response to expected climatic effects. This indicates active engagement and the use of indigenous experience within local communities. It supports the promotion of such grassroots initiatives and their incorporation into policy (Saeed et al., 2023).

Governance Concerns (South Africa): South Africa has developed policy instruments such as the National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP) and the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS), but these have not been fully inclusive. The effectiveness of responsive policies relies heavily on strong partnerships (Ziervogel & Zermoglio, 2009; Chambers, 2020; Sibiya et al., 2022; Pedzisai et al., 2023).

The best practice examples highlighted from a comparative law perspective demonstrate different governance and adaptation strategies aimed at protecting vulnerable populations in the context of climate change. The criteria important for these examples to serve as models include participation, multi-stakeholder governance, adaptive capacity, tailored interventions, inclusiveness, sustainability, long-term planning and cooperation, and information and resource sharing. These examples align with adaptive governance, climate justice, and social vulnerability theories in the context of climate change policies. Good practices can be classified within the scope of climate change mitigation strategies. For instance, the Delta-RAC and Pacific models, which consider the involvement of vulnerable populations in decision-making processes, can be characterized as participatory strategies. The Caribbean Community model, which integrates regional-scale strategies with national policies, represents a regional cooperation approach. The South Korean and Nepalese models, which combine local knowledge with scientific analysis, exemplify technical and social integration. The South Korean and Nepalese models also highlight adaptability and flexibility, incorporating policy development that responds to local dynamics and supports flexible social

systems. The Pacific and South African models, which take into account policy development and social inclusion within a climate justice framework, integrate an approach of inclusiveness and justice. Finally, the Delta-RAC model, which encompasses sustainable partnerships and permanent governance mechanisms, serves as a guiding principle for a long-term and sustainable planning approach.

The analysis conducted from a comparative law perspective provides a framework that engages with modern climate governance theories and social vulnerability approaches at both theoretical and practical levels. Accordingly, the application examples discussed are positioned as good models within the scope of climate justice and adaptive governance, offering systematically derived policy lessons. This provides a strong scientific basis for policies addressing climate vulnerability across diverse contexts and criteria. In short, protecting vulnerable populations in climate action ensures sustainability and the safeguarding of human rights. These populations are affected due to socio-economic, environmental, and institutional vulnerabilities. Public agencies must minimize these risks through inclusive, rights-based policies. This requires adaptive capacity, public consultation, resource access, and cooperative approaches (Bachtler & Begg, 2018; Werners et al., 2021; Braithwaite et al., 2025). Global cases suggest that governance with local-level consultation ensures collaboration and proactive adaptation. Protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring resilience rely on policy co-design and investment in governance, with the principle of "leaving no one behind". This principle serves both as an ethical guide and as a concrete policy objective in the context of climate justice and sustainable development. Measuring progress toward this goal requires comprehensive, multidimensional and participatory methodologies. Developing vulnerability indicators, disaggregating data, and ensuring active stakeholder participation make it possible to translate the normative goal into concrete, measurable outcomes. These methods help reduce social exclusion while enhancing policy effectiveness.

4. Discussion: Issues and Shortcomings

4.1. Essential Elements in Combating Climate Change: Climate Justice

Climate justice typically adopts David Schlosberg's stance, which includes three components:

- **Recognitional Justice** entails acknowledging that the welfare, knowledge, and perspectives of affected communities are significant in society. Common approaches to attaining this form of justice focus on identifying risk groups and examining how they suffer, yet often fail to adequately address underlying, longstanding injustices.
- **Distributional Justice** relates to the fair sharing of benefits, risks, and

costs. While aiming to improve access to services and resources, certain projects can bring about negative consequences, such as maladaptation, gentrification, or displacement (Joshi et al., 2021).

- **Procedural Justice** emphasizes the need for those affected to take part in decisions that directly impact them. Current initiatives often provide limited and isolated opportunities for involvement, which do not ensure full participation. Building trust, showing compassion, and giving enough time are key to inclusive planning. However, these requirements may conflict with government systems and the increasing urgency of climate change (Posner & Sunstein, 2008; Gonzalez, 2021; Forsyth & McDermott, 2022; Juhola et al., 2022; Brousseau et al., 2024).

When making climate policies, this structure should ensure that at-risk groups are informed, included in decision-making, and granted access to justice. The risk of maladaptation can arise if these groups are excluded from decision-making processes or if local risks are misunderstood (Benzie, 2014).

David Schlosberg's distributive justice approach is based on the fair sharing of the risks and opportunities associated with climate change. Regional cooperation within the Caribbean Community and South Korea's customized policies, cites as good practice examples, demonstrate balanced distribution of resources and risks among different population groups. However, as Joshi and colleagues (2021) point out, such projects may lead to harmful outcomes such as gentrification and displacement. To mitigate these risks, inclusive participation at the local level, strict regulation of displacement policies, and continuous assessment of socio-economic impacts are necessary.

4.2. The Role and Responsibilities of Public Governance in Combating Climate Change

Government plays a central role in protecting vulnerable groups through climate change responses. This role extends beyond environmental policy to include safeguarding rights, promoting equity, and strengthening social resilience (Mariconda, 2023). The theory of vulnerability should be considered in light of social, economic and environmental factors. The proactive local adaptation example in Nepal demonstrates how local initiatives reduce vulnerability through local knowledge and experience, while the South African example highlights a lack of inclusivity in existing policy tools. This contrast reveals the need for more equitable, inclusive, and stakeholder-focused governance models in policy-making based on vulnerability theory.

4.2.1. Implementation of Mitigation and Adaptation Measures

Governments must design plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

(mitigation) and adapt to the effects of climate change (adaptation). These plans should address the distinct needs of marginalized groups and enhance their resilience to climate threats (Lesnikowski et al., 2015; Mayer, 2021). Social protection programs are essential for reducing poverty and improving social well-being as the climate changes. Agencies such as the Ministry of Family and Social Services should develop social service models aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change (Peel & Osofsky, 2018; Vicens et al., 2018; Juhola et al., 2022).

4.2.2. Participatory and Transparent Decision-Making Processes

The participation of affected populations, mainly indigenous groups and local communities, should be guaranteed in the formulation of climate-related laws, policies, and programs. The principle of free, prior, and informed consent for indigenous groups, along with the inclusion of local perspectives, is key to making sure that decisions are made in a fair and inclusive manner. Failure to secure genuine and fair participation increases the likelihood of maladaptation and violations of fundamental rights (DellaValle & Czako, 2022).

4.2.3. Strengthening Access to Justice and Reparation Mechanisms

Governments should establish effective administrative and judicial remedies for rights violations arising from climate change or from mitigation and adaptation actions. These remedies should include prevention of violations, restoration of rights, restitution and compensation, as well as guarantees of non-repetition. Financial costs should not be used as an excuse for avoiding obligations when rights have been breached (Cheng & Sha, 2024). Among the risks associated with distributive justice is the displacement of low-income or vulnerable groups as a result of social transformations triggered by adaptation projects. To mitigate these risks, measures such as participatory planning, social protection programmes, legal mechanisms, rights-based approaches, and continuous monitoring and evaluation are required.

4.2.4. International Cooperation and Financial Support

Since climate change is a global challenge, nations should act collectively, prioritizing cooperation. Wealthier nations should support those least responsible for the climate crisis but who suffer its greatest impacts through financial assistance, capacity building, and technology transfer. G20 nations, as the primary contributors to global emissions, have a particularly critical responsibility (Manuamorn et al., 2020; Iacobuţă et al., 2022).

4.2.5. Ensuring an Equitable Transition

The transition to a decarbonized economy must not exacerbate existing inequalities but instead promote equity across gender, race, ethnicity, disability

and generations. Just transition plans for workers and communities affected by the fossil fuel industry should be developed and implemented alongside national and regional employment strategies, which should be based on social dialogue and full participation (Matthey-Junod et al., 2022; O'Leary et al., 2023). Stronger integration of human rights-based, inclusive and structurally transformative discussions into the focus areas of public governance will improve the effectiveness and fairness of public policies in combating climate change. This requires not only technical solutions but also a governance model based on the principles of democratic participation, accountability and equality. Such an approach will ensure the protection of vulnerable groups and the achievement of fair and sustainable policy outcomes.

4.2.6. Auditing Companies' Human Rights Responsibilities

States have an obligation to protect individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, from human rights violations, including those caused by climate change-related harms. Companies should conduct due diligence regarding the human rights impacts of their activities and supply chains. Meanwhile, states should effectively carry out regulatory, auditing, oversight, investigative and punitive processes (Gonzalez, 2021; De Jong, 2024).

4.3. Discussion

Climate change is one of the greatest environmental challenges we face today, and its impacts are no longer distant threats but present realities. This global crisis disproportionately affects disadvantaged communities and population groups, exacerbating existing inequalities and intensifying injustices worldwide. Unfortunately, legal responses to the climate crisis have been insufficient. This issue must also be addressed within the framework of environmental justice (Posner & Sunstein, 2008). In the face of climate change impacts, some groups are much more vulnerable than others. Vulnerable groups identified in the sources include the elderly, youth, the poor, single-person households, less-educated groups, women, children, minorities, individuals with disabilities, displaced persons and migrants, farmers, indigenous communities, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and low-income individuals. Those in high-risk geographical locations such as coastal areas, floodplains, rural areas, and informal settlements in disaster-prone urban areas are also highly susceptible (Wilts et al., 2021; Díaz-Cruces et al., 2024).

These groups are disproportionately affected by climate change due to factors such as pre-existing inequalities, limited adaptive capacity, social isolation, historical exclusion, and higher exposure. Climate change threatens fundamental human rights such as the right to life and the right to health. Traditionally, human rights law tends to consider the subject as "vulnerable," which can lead

to the exclusion of vulnerable groups. However, vulnerability theory posits that vulnerability caused by the climate crisis is universal but unequally distributed, emphasizing the importance of effective legal remedies as a fundamental part of responding to this vulnerability and building resilience. In the Global South, rights discourse is increasingly being used as a tool of empowerment, enabling marginalized groups to share ideas and participate more actively in decision-making (Grix & Watene, 2022).

States and public administrations bear both moral and legal obligations to safeguard their citizens, especially vulnerable populations, from the harm brought about by climate change. These commitments include implementing national adaptation plans, providing resources, and integrating climate action into development processes (Vicens et al., 2018; Park et al., 2020). For example, the South Korean government has prioritized targeting vulnerable groups in policymaking based on scientific evidence to reduce air pollution risk and ensure environmental justice. Furthermore, it is emphasized that the characteristics of vulnerable groups should be considered in heatwave policy.

For effective and equitable climate action, inclusive and shared plans are essential. Co-creation processes—engaging affected populations from needs assessment to solution design and implementation in disaster risk reduction (DRR)—are crucial. Digitized mechanisms like the AWARE platform promote anticipatory action through multi-stakeholder involvement. These processes require open communication, shared vision, inclusive participation, collaborative decision-making, capacity building, and institutional coordination. However, challenges include mutual understanding, addressing time and resource constraints, and equitable power distribution. Nevertheless, such projects offer unique opportunities to facilitate relationships among diverse stakeholders and ensure the necessary participation of citizens, including the most vulnerable (Grix & Watene, 2022). Combating climate change requires more than just technical solutions; it necessitates prioritizing the protection of vulnerable groups through a human rights-based, participatory, and transformative approach. Public administrations should adopt transparent, inclusive, and just governance principles to address structural factors that exacerbate vulnerabilities and to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders, especially marginalized groups, are heard and reflected in decisions. This is essential for effective, just and sustainable climate actions.

Public governance must be effective and inclusive not only procedurally but also normatively and structurally. Beyond extending material support through social protection schemes, policy instruments should be designed to facilitate greater social participation and empowerment. In this regard, policy mechanisms that enable programmes to improve social participation and empowerment will significantly increase the chances of success. In order to strengthen justice, legal

mechanisms must be implemented in line with the principles of democratic control, accountability and equality. In other words, ensuring justice requires not merely institutional presence but an inclusive and holistic approach. Multi-stakeholder processes and social participation must underpin the monitoring and enforcement of companies' human rights responsibilities. This broader perspective enables the assessment of corporate activities in relation to climate justice.

5. Conclusion: Policy Recommendations Within the Framework of Sustainable Governance Principles

Sustainable governance integrates public administration's role in addressing climate change with the principles of human rights and social justice. This requires a holistic, participatory, transparent, and accountable approach to management (Mechler et al., 2019). The disproportional effects of climate change on susceptible populations essentially violate their human rights, including the rights to health, dignity, life, food, and water. The principle of climate justice is central to addressing these inequalities, recognizing that vulnerabilities are shaped by social structures of power, crosscutting identities, and past obligations (Brousseau et al., 2024). It requires that climate action not only reduces environmental damage but also rectifies current injustices and guarantees proportionate burdens and benefits. Legal regimes increasingly acknowledge the judiciary's role in enforcing justified policy responses to human rights infringements, particularly where political branches refrain from pursuing climate objectives. The concept of *equality of standing* aims to ease admissibility requirements for vulnerable groups in legal processes, enabling collective action without evidentiary support of direct personal engagement (Díaz-Cruces et al., 2024). The Inter-American human rights system, for example, has an old tradition of recognizing procedural environmental rights and has received complaints from a number of victims about the rights of indigenous people and locals over their traditional lands (Sanchez et al., 2023). Emerging legal concepts such as the *rights of nature* further support the interconnection between human well-being and ecosystem health, recognizing that ecosystems themselves have rights to survival and preservation. This perspective highlights that socio-ecological interactions, especially among indigenous peoples, cannot be financialized, and that economic reparations for ecological damage may fail to restore essential community processes, thereby revealing their fragile state.

Public administration has an important role in safeguarding vulnerable groups from the effects of climate change, extending beyond rhetorical commitments to actively shaping public opinion and endorsing inclusive policy. Policies should be tailored to respond to the specific nature and requirements of different vulnerable populations. This includes formulating broad strategies to counter hazards (e.g., air pollution) while taking into account social vulnerability, socio-economic conditions, and institutional capacity. For example, in South Korea,

different regions require varied mitigation strategies, with some needing increased investment in social welfare policies for vulnerable populations, while others may benefit more from stricter emission controls. Effective protection requires moving beyond tokenistic consultation to genuine citizen and stakeholder participation in decision-making processes, giving them the authority to influence and enforce decisions (Lesnikowski et al., 2015; Grix & Watene, 2022). *Co-creation*, a democratic and deliberative format, engages diverse citizens in consensus-oriented decision-making, ensuring that solutions are relevant, usable, and address "real" demands. This bridges the gap between scientific and practical perspectives and aligns implemented actions with actual needs. Multi-stakeholder and public-private partnerships are crucial for sustainable governance, fostering collective action and leveraging society's full resources. Identifying key actors across government, non-state, and civil society sectors, including community leaders, is vital for a more participatory and effective management of mitigation and adaptation projects.

Public administration must actively confront underlying social polarization and isolation that exacerbate the impacts of climate hazards. Policymaking often reflects *strategic unknowing* or *non-knowledge*, by denying, dismissing, diverting attention from, or displacing uncomfortable truths about gender, power, and indigenous rights. For instance, policies that treat citizens as abstract legal persons without ethnicity, gender, or race overlook lived realities and reinforce existing hierarchies. A feminist decolonial intervention is required to question these practices and ensure policymaking incorporates cultural contexts, values, and the legacies of colonialism that have constructed today's society. This involves creating space for diverse groups to be seen and involved in climate action to ensure its effectiveness and justice. Although climate finance has increased, it frequently fails to reach grassroots recipients and initiatives. Public administrations should encourage and facilitate direct modalities of access to climate funds, reducing vertical gaps between fund providers and local civil society organizations, especially where civil society governance remains weak. This ensures that financial resources and decision-making authority are transferred to local-level actors, enabling place-specific adaptation.

5.1. Integrated Approach

Combating climate change is not merely an ecological or economic matter. It should be addressed at individual, community, national, and international levels, with consideration of human rights and social justice. In order to enable the intersectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation that this method requires, coordination among sectors such as health, extension services, disaster response, social services, and urban planning must be improved (Scott et al., 2024). Equal participation, fair distribution of benefits, and the recognition of cultural values and traditions should be guaranteed through the explicit integration of

procedural and substantive justice in all stages of climate policy and adaptation planning (Costella et al., 2024; Attoh & Amarnath, 2025). Research should also comprehensively analyze how intersecting identity categories (e.g., gender, age, location, disability) generate overlapping vulnerabilities, ensuring that policies are responsive to the daily conditions of all affected populations.

5.2. Vulnerability Analyses and Target-Oriented Policies

Identifying susceptible populations and places, performing vulnerability assessments, and designing policy responses to specific needs are essential for mitigating and eliminating the adverse impacts of climate change. These efforts should be supported by environmentally sensitive legislation and regulations (Van der Geest & Warner, 2020; Darjee et al., 2023). Health, housing, and social services in at-risk neighborhoods should be prioritized and made accessible. For sustained engagement in adaptation planning, it is important to establish long-term stakeholder advisory boards or committees in which the marginalized groups are equally represented.

The official recognition and protection of indigenous peoples' land and resource rights, and ensuring their free, prior and informed consent in climate-related interventions affecting their lands, are important for the legitimacy of combating climate change (Grix & Watene, 2022). Legal mechanisms that grant rights to ecosystems should be further researched and implemented, thereby protecting natural resources essential to human well-being and directly linking environmental protection with human rights.

5.3. Psychosocial Support and Awareness

Social workers play a vital role in addressing the psychosocial impacts of climate change, such as eco-anxiety, stress, and hopelessness. Public administrations should raise awareness of climate change and integrate it into educational curricula. Additionally, post-disaster psychosocial support mechanisms should be strengthened. Plans should include regular monitoring of the impacts of climate change on at-risk groups, alongside targeted support for adapting to the increasing frequency and intensity of climate events (Ebi, 2008).

5.4. The Role of Local Governments

Local governments should consider the impacts of climate change on areas such as urban planning, disaster risk reduction, transportation, and waste management, while developing local adaptation plans. Special measures must be adopted to help at-risk people in adapting effectively to climate change (Manuamorn et al., 2020). Crucially, measures must be in place to prevent the displacement of marginalized populations as a consequence of adaptation projects (Cooper et al., 2023). Moreover, a greater share of international and national climate finance should be

directly accessible to and managed by local communities and community-based organizations, thus leveraging indigenous knowledge and practices.

5.5. Cooperation with Civil Society in Ensuring Climate Justice

Public administration should adopt a climate justice-based perspective and recognize that humanity must redefine its relationship with nature. It should raise social awareness and strengthen rights-based struggles by cooperating with non-profit and civil society organizations. "Green social work" and social solidarity networks should be encouraged (Marzi et al., 2021). Methodologies must be applied to systematically identify key actors at national, provincial and local levels, including governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and local communities. Also, diverse perspectives must be included from project design to evaluation.

The adoption of co-creation as a standard practice in climate policymaking and early warning systems is a crucial element in combating climate change. Co-creation fosters trust and prevents "symbolic behavior" by ensuring genuine citizen participation, shared authority, and two-way communication (Mayrhofer, 2024). Governments, civil society, and communities should promote continuous social learning processes that enhance adaptation and multi-level learning, thereby supporting knowledge exchange and behavioral change.

5.6. Strengthening Health and Social Service Systems

Health systems should increase their capacity to cope with the health impacts of climate change, ensuring access to healthcare services, especially for vulnerable groups. Social services should be able to respond rapidly during disasters and crises (McMichael, 2012). Policymaking should avoid strategic ignorance by making explicit the socio-political assumptions underlying climate policies and ensuring accountability for how justice and equity are addressed (Ebi, 2008; Lesnikowski et al., 2011; Jabakhanji et al., 2022).

5.7. Transparency and Accountability: Information Generation, Data Sharing and Science-Based Policy

Public administrations should encourage the generation of reliable climate data, ensure its transparent dissemination, and ground decision-making processes in scientific evidence. Including vulnerable groups in policymaking is necessary to produce effective and equitable solutions (Zorn et al., 2023). Higher education and research institutions, policymakers and practitioners should be encouraged to develop specialized support and training programmes to build the skills required to address the complex, interdisciplinary dimensions of climate change, particularly those related to social justice.

Success in combating climate change requires scientific and technological solutions and a strong focus on human rights and climate justice. Governments should respond to the disproportionate effects of the climate emergency on vulnerable populations and uphold their duty to safeguard the rights to life, health, shelter, food, and water. Sustainable governance, rooted in participation, transparency, accountability, equity, and non-discrimination, forms the foundation for addressing the negative effects of climate change and building an inclusive, equitable society (Walker et al., 2024). It safeguards the rights of both present and future generations. Safety for susceptible groups should be prioritized in ensuring climate justice and human rights (Sormunen, 2023). Protecting vulnerable groups from the effects of climate change is not merely a welfare concern but a fundamental human rights and environmental issue. Public administrations have a profound responsibility to lead this effort by adopting inclusive, adaptive, and rights-based governance approaches. By dismantling systemic barriers, empowering affected communities through meaningful participation, and proactively addressing root causes of vulnerability, societies can develop climate policies that are not only effective but also just and truly transformative.

5.8. Specific Measures to Protect Vulnerable Groups

In the context of combating climate change, targeted measures should be designed to address the specific characteristics of vulnerable groups. This requires particular attention to women, children, elderly individuals, climate refugees, the poor, and people living in rural areas (De Jong, 2024). While all demographic groups are affected by climate change and disasters in different ways, women and girls often face greater risks, burdens and impacts. Crisis situations exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, disproportionately affecting women living in poverty, women from ethnic or racial minorities, women with disabilities, refugee and migrant women, rural women, and older women.

Women's human rights are supported and protected by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in all stages of climate change and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and adaptation processes. The CEDAW Committee provides special guidance to States Parties on reducing disaster risk and implementing their obligations related to climate change. This guidance is based on three fundamental principles: material equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment, and accountability and access to justice. Ensuring gender equality is a prerequisite for protecting women in combating climate change and strengthening social resilience to climate change, as well as for achieving comprehensive and sustainable development goals (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Governments must identify the specific risks and harms faced by girls and women and design and implement policies and allocate resources based on real fairness, participation, empowerment,

accountability, and access to justice. Such a plan will safeguard women's rights and help build a more equal, sustainable, and resilient future for all (Arora-Jonsson & Wahlström, 2023). It is essential that women have opportunities to participate in disaster risk reduction and climate change initiatives, assume leadership roles, and contribute to decision-making processes. Governments should adopt targeted policies, including temporary special measures such as quotas, within the framework of a strategy to ensure women's equal participation in all decision-making and development planning processes related to disaster risk reduction and climate change. It is also important to involve civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, and to develop programmes aimed at ensuring women's participation and leadership in political life.

Climate change directly threatens the fundamental elements and rights of children's lives by increasing the frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Public governance has a comprehensive responsibility to protect the fundamental rights of children by addressing the devastating effects of climate change on them. Sustainable governance requires a comprehensive approach to protect children from the effects of climate change. Considering the current and future catastrophic effects of global warming on children, it is important that public governance adopt proactive, comprehensive, and child-centered strategies. The safeguarding of children's fundamental rights can be achieved through cooperation among all relevant stakeholders and active participation of children, in line with the principles of sustainable governance. These initiatives will impact not only children's present well-being but also the future of climate-resilient and equitable societies. Public administration needs to consider children not only as recipients of the effects of climate change but also as effective agents of change, ensuring that their voices are reflected in policies. Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), and local communities need to work together to effectively counter the impacts of climate change on children and their rights. Such collaboration should facilitate programming at the national and local levels (Wood et al., 2021). Children should be recognized as active participants in the design and implementation of climate change policies and programmes. They should be given opportunities to freely express their views and have a say in matters that affect them. The agency and understanding of children in these areas may provide insights beyond adults' expectations. Interconnection and coordination among various sectors such as education, health, disaster management, and rural development are required to address climate justice. Schools should play a crucial role in engaging children and youth in climate action to increase community resilience.

Older individuals may have special needs in their daily lives due to chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, hearing and vision impairments, and other

conditions. These factors negatively impact their health during emergencies and natural disasters, particularly in extreme situations such as heatwaves, cold spells, and outbreaks, leaving them in need of special protection. Public administration has an important role in reducing older adults' vulnerability to climate change while also supporting their potential contributions. It has a responsibility to protect the fundamental rights of older people and place them at the center of climate justice (Mills et al., 2018). Their role in combating climate change can be strengthened with inclusive policies, communication plans oriented towards older people, economic assistance, intergenerational collaboration, and effective disaster response mechanisms. This approach will not only ensure safety for the elderly but also facilitate the establishment of an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future. Future studies should explore other cultural contexts and design specific incentive programmes to strengthen the role of older citizens in climate action through intergenerational partnerships. Directly involving older adults as stakeholders in policy processes ensures that their needs are reflected in policies. This is essential for safeguarding their rights in the face of climate change and ensuring climate justice. Engagement of older adults in climate campaigns, drawing upon their experience, wisdom and reputation in their communities, can bring tangible benefits at the individual, regional and national levels. In particular, sharing knowledge and experience with younger generations fosters mutual learning. Older people have expressed concerns about inconsistencies and a lack of transparency in government climate policies (Bukvic et al., 2018). Governments should encourage public participation by offering clear incentives and accountability mechanisms through a more consistent and transparent approach. Involving older people in climate action contributes to building social resilience. Quality health services and social protection systems should increase resilience by considering the effects of climate change.

Migration can be considered a voluntary adaptation measure to secure physical safety and access to life-sustaining resources. Public governance should adopt policies that facilitate the safe and dignified relocation of individuals from conditions that threaten their lives (e.g., contaminated water, inadequate food, storm hazards) to environments where health and well-being are guaranteed. Migration is not merely an act of escape but can also be understood as a powerful strategy for change and innovation in climate-affected regions (Ide, 2025). Migration may increase the resilience of communities through financial remittances and the transfer of social and cultural knowledge (e.g., skills such as tailoring, cooking, and electrical repair). Governments should work to prevent forced displacement while enhancing climate change adaptation by facilitating regular migration routes. Climate change is creating a profound and disproportionate human rights crisis, particularly affecting millions of people who are already marginalized. Public governance plays an indispensable role in

protecting these vulnerable groups and implementing the principles of climate justice. The sensitivity of terms such as "climate refugee" and the absence of their equivalents in international law underscore the need to prioritize action over terminology. Under principles of sustainable governance, public policies should adopt a person-centered, transparent, inclusive, and forward-looking approach (Saraswat & Kumar, 2016). This approach should focus on preparedness, promote adaptive mobility, and fully utilize migration's potential as a climate adaptation strategy. Also, addressing the basic needs of at-risk people—such as housing, health, education, and social networks— must be central to these policies. International cooperation is essential in addressing the global effects of climate change. This integrated approach will both protect human rights and build more resilient and equitable societies against future impacts of climate change. Involving older people in climate action contributes to building social resilience. Quality health services and social protection systems should increase resilience by considering the effects of climate change. Improving cultural competence in the health sector—such as utilizing migrants' languages and cultural knowledge—can enhance the capacity of health systems. An intersectionality analysis should be applied to address the injustices arising from climate change impacts and interventions. Current adaptation infrastructures, such as urban climate shelters, do not adequately address the intersecting vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, including low-income migrants and migrants from the Global South. More specialized and culturally appropriate approaches are needed for these populations. International cooperation is essential to ensure the protection of individuals displaced by climate change (Gonzalez, 2021). These strategies and plans must be jointly developed between high-emission states and poorer states.

The effects of climate change vary across socio-economic groups, with vulnerable communities disproportionately impacted. Protecting the fundamental rights of these groups defines the essence of climate justice. European rural regions experience rising transport poverty due to their heavy reliance on private transport, which adversely affects the quality of life among non-users of private transport (Sandmann et al., 2024). Transport dependency among older adults in rural communities and the high share of household budgets spent on transport among low-income populations pose major challenges (Peroni & Pappalardo, 2024). Environmentally induced pollution disproportionately affects low-income populations, driving them into deeper poverty and increasing their risk of emigration. Governments should improve the ecological conditions of towns and cities and minimize the adverse repercussions of environmental degradation to prevent brain-drain from cities (Mares, 2013). Strategic location planning, inclusive service design, and effective communication are key conditions for the successful implementation of sustainable mobility services in rural regions. Cities need to embrace nature-based solutions (NBS) in designing their urban constructed

environments, making them environmentally risk-resilient (Benmarhnia et al., 2015). This requires collaboration among urban planners, innovation brokers, environmental offices, architects, and landscape architects. Cities must take the lead in promoting NBS with stricter targets and criteria, such as carbon footprint assertions, green space multipliers, and energy efficiency categories (Barron et al., 2012). Environmental justice is increasingly examined through spatial analyses of environmental inequalities related to air pollution, green infrastructure distribution, heat, and industrial hazards, particularly in Latin American cities (Savaresi & Setzer, 2022). The rights of poor and vulnerable groups to climate change adaptation must be clearly defined and rigorously enforced.

Current methods and tools often silence the voices of marginalized people. It is therefore important to distinguish and analyze differences based on age, gender, ethnicity and other social factors. Research should be supported to enable marginalized groups to form coalitions, strengthen themselves and create effective accountability mechanisms. Public participation (information, consultation, inclusion, collaboration and empowerment) increases the legitimacy and ownership of decisions. Future research should explore different cultural contexts, design tailored incentive schemes, and investigate how intergenerational collaboration can enhance the role of vulnerable groups in climate action. This comprehensive approach will not only protect the rights of vulnerable groups but also contribute to building a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

It should be emphasized that, based on best practice examples discussed in the study from a comparative law perspective, the common denominators of successful governance models are participatory understanding, sensitivity, adaptability, and multi-stakeholder cooperation. Based on both theoretical assessments and the examination of best practice examples, the following policy recommendations can be considered to ensure the protection of vulnerable groups in the fight against climate change:

- **Comprehensive Participation Mechanisms at the Local Level:** Transparent and accountable decision-making platforms should be established where the most vulnerable groups are represented.
- **Consideration of Regional Differences:** For example, as in the case of South Korea, while strict emission control policies should be implemented in capital regions, social protection and welfare-enhancing investments should be prioritized in rural and low-income regions.
- **Long-Term and Flexible Adaptation Plans:** Risk assessments should be regularly updated, and policies should be reshaped according to evolving socio-economic realities.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Governance Models:** Coordination and cooperation mechanisms between public, private, and civil society organizations should be strengthened to ensure the effective use of resources.
- **Rule of Law and Human Rights-Based Approach:** Protective regulations should be developed to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups and protect them from displacement and inequality.

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CHAPTER 8

PARADIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND SISTER CITY APPLICATIONS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE EXAMPLE OF TOKAT PROVINCE*

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1. Introduction

As international communication intensifies and becomes increasingly interactive, central and local governments converge on issues such as economics, social affairs, politics, volunteerism, and humanitarian aid. These convergences, which transcend local and national borders, have rapidly spread across the globe, resulting in the emergence of global policies that also prevail at the local level. As a natural consequence of globalization, the increase in cross-border administrative and financial cooperation has led local governments to take on more active roles in foreign relations and to ensure integration with central government policies through these relations. Thus, foreign contacts that began at the local level have brought a new foreign policy process to the agenda, outside the traditional understanding of diplomacy.

Along with the globalization process, the absolute determinism of the state in international relations has been increasingly questioned, and governance has evolved into a multi-actor structure. The theoretical foundations of this transformation can be explained to a significant extent by James N. Rosenau's (2009) conceptualizations of "sub-national" and "trans-national" governance. Rosenau (2009) argues that the traditional spheres of state sovereignty are eroding; in contrast, cities, micro-regions, and civil society organizations are becoming more visible in global decision-making processes. This situation goes beyond the classical understanding that foreign policy is conducted solely by central governments, enabling local governments to become active and effective actors in foreign relations. Therefore, the concept of *paradiplomacy* has entered the literature to describe this development.

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As stated by Duchacek (1990, p. 32), the prefix "para" added to the concept of "diplomacy" is used to describe the foreign relations of sub-state units that may be parallel, coordinated, or complementary to the international policies of the central government, but may also conflict with these policies.

In this context, this study examines the increasingly important roles of local governments in international relations and how these roles are shaped within the framework of the concept of paradiplomacy. Given the differences in the structural organization of states, how local units establish foreign relations also differs in unitary or federal systems; these relations are sometimes kept under strict control, while at other times they are conducted based on a model of controlled freedom. Interactions that partially exclude the central government are considered national security issues in countries with a dominant national structure. In contrast, such interactions are viewed more favorably in federal systems with local state structures that determine their own policies. International contacts, which are accelerating and becoming easier due to the impact of international integration, have created an alternative situation by integrating local governments into the classic foreign policies pursued by the central government.

Paradiplomatic activities also bring with them practices that can be defined as citizen diplomacy. In this sense, citizen diplomacy stands out as an alternative form of diplomacy in which non-state individuals, institutions, and especially local governments play an active role in international relations, deriving their legitimacy from social support. This form of diplomacy reflects a multi-level governance approach not limited to official representatives but somewhat shaped by the direct or indirect influence of civil actors.

Drawing strength from their own social bases, local governments have become institutional carriers of citizen diplomacy. Diplomatic interactions conducted locally through various means, such as sister city relationships, cultural collaborations, environmental policies, or humanitarian aid activities, are not merely symbolic; they can also yield economic, social, and political outcomes.

Today, cities and local governments are not limited to providing local public services but are also actively participating in internationalization processes through citizen diplomacy. Citizen diplomacy is defined as a multi-actor and multi-level form of diplomacy that includes not only political institutions in the process of policymaking in international relations shaped through individual initiatives, civil society activities, and transnational local interactions, but also the entire public, private sector, and local governments. (McDonald, 1991; Sharp, 2009; Heine, 2013; Anton & Moise, 2021, as cited in Lee, 2019, pp. 127-147).

Theoretical approaches to paradiplomacy and citizen diplomacy in the international literature are increasingly diversifying and deepening. However,

discussions of these concepts through concrete examples in the Turkish context remain limited. In particular, the scarcity of application-oriented studies narrows the knowledge base in this field and prevents theoretical developments from sufficiently converging with practice. This study aims to address this gap by presenting an assessment that combines international governance theories and local governance practices in Türkiye. The existing literature on paradiplomacy focuses on metropolitan municipalities. These studies, which center on metropolises such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir (Akman & Akman, 2017; Aktulun, 2015), do not sufficiently highlight the position of medium-sized cities in international relations. However, these cities also play an increasingly important role in cross-border cooperation. From this perspective, analyzing the paradiplomacy experience of a medium-sized city like Tokat offers an opportunity to address the scale imbalance in the literature and to present a new perspective.

Studies on paradiplomacy and sister city applications have become a notable area of research in recent years, both in international relations literature and in local government studies. In this context:

Prasittisopin et al. (2024) state that there are 90 sister city agreements from 38 provinces in Thailand, but these agreements cannot be fully implemented despite being signed. The reason for this is the lack of harmony between the parties, which manifests in inadequate regulations, unclear planning, inappropriate alliances, frequent leadership changes, resistance to change, resource constraints, and a lack of evaluation mechanisms.

Atanga et al. (2024) evaluate the outcomes of sister city agreements made by cities in Ghana and Tanzania, particularly with cities in Europe and North America. The study also argues that there is a lack of literature on North-South paradiplomacy involving developing cities, as academic research on this topic is heavily skewed in favor of large and megacities. By comparing sister city partnerships with sustainable development, the study adds an environmental dimension to the existing theoretical stance, which typically considers only the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of sister city partnerships.

Noormansyah et al. (2024) analyze the sister city cooperation between Magelang City and Tula City within the framework of paradiplomacy. The study emphasizes that the relevant regional offices did not implement the cooperation beyond the agreement stage.

Erdem (2023) conducted the most comprehensive quantitative study in this field, using a large dataset covering 2,051 sister city protocols in Türkiye. The research reveals that the matches were shaped based on population size, geographical proximity, and historical-cultural ties, clearly revealing the rational dynamics of intercity relations. Furthermore, Ankara's equivalence-focused

strategy with capital cities is a notable example.

Akman and Akman (2017), in their study conducted on four metropolitan cities, showed that despite the numerical increase in sister city relationships, they lacked strategic depth. The study emphasizes that the practices largely remained symbolic, failed to transform into functional collaborations, and created a sustainability problem.

Ergün et al. (2020) examined the sister city protocol between Erzurum and Urumiye, focusing on how cultural, economic, and bureaucratic interactions took shape. The originality of the study lies in the fact that it is one of the first examples focusing on sister city practices with Iran and analyzes issues related to comparative administrative structures. The clash between the flexibility of local governments in Türkiye and the centralist structure in Iran leads to significant differences in practice.

Gezici and Kocaoğlu (2018) have approached sister city relations as local manifestations of globalization. The study argues that these relationships are not merely symbolic: when conducted through strategic planning, they can become tools that contribute to local development and international peace. It draws attention by emphasizing the "qualitative" dimension, which is often overlooked in the literature.

The report *Marmara's Local Diplomacy Analysis: Local Governments' Global Connections* (Demirtaş, 2024) reveals the Marmara Region's experience of regional analysis, where sister city applications are carried out in the form of project-based and concrete collaborations rather than symbolic protocols. This study stands out for assessing the level of institutionalization of local diplomacy through institutional capacity, financing, and network memberships.

Studies on paradiplomacy mainly focus on large cities. In Türkiye, studies are primarily conducted on large cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. This situation has led to the invisibility of the internationalization practices of medium-sized cities. The present study also aims to fill this gap by using the example of Tokat province. Tokat is not a metropolitan city; therefore, its experience in international relations is important in showing that paradiplomacy is not limited to large cities. Thus, the research highlights the role of medium-sized cities in paradiplomacy and brings a new perspective to the scale-based imbalance in the existing literature.

Qualitative data analysis was chosen as the method for this study. The international relations, sister city protocols, and international memberships of municipalities operating in the province of Tokat were evaluated using document review and comparative analysis techniques. In this context, the study hypothesizes that although the paradiplomatic activities carried out by local governments in

Tokat province are limited in scope compared to metropolitan municipalities, they show an orientation that coincides with national foreign policy objectives in some thematic areas (cultural cooperation, sister city protocols, international organization memberships) and that these relations support export volume.

The study presents conceptual discussions on paradiplomacy as a theoretical background, explains the administrative structure in the Turkish context, and evaluates the current status of sister city practices using the example of Tokat province. Subsequent sections address the legal framework and forms of implementation in this area by local governments in Türkiye. Applications specific to Tokat were analyzed using information obtained from legislative documents, statistical data, and secondary sources. Export data published by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (İTO) were also used in this process. In the final section, a general assessment is made in light of the findings, and recommendations for policies that can be developed at the local level are presented. In this context, the study questions how paradiplomacy operates at the local level through the sister city practices of local governments in Tokat, what tools are used to implement it, and what limitations it has. While the literature on paradiplomacy in Türkiye focuses mainly on metropolitan municipalities, this study offers a unique contribution at the provincial level through the case of Tokat.

The study's main contribution is that it focuses on the search for conceptual clarity and structures sister city applications as the most functional tool of paradiplomacy. In this respect, the study provides a basis for classifying theoretical uncertainties. Furthermore, the findings have the potential to provide concrete data for policy development at the local level for implementing institutions and aim to develop recommendations that are applicable at the local level for decision-makers.

2. The Concept and Development of Paradiplomacy

According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), diplomacy is "the whole set of agreements regulating international treaties, the task and art of representing one's country in a foreign country and at international meetings, and the skill and dexterity displayed during a difficult negotiation." Another definition states that diplomacy is the peaceful activity of states in international relations through direct or indirect negotiation (Berridge, 2010, p. 1).

The term *paradiplomacy*, derived from the Latin prefix *para-*, refers to the formal cross-border relations between local and regional administrations (Karvounis, 2023). The Greek prefix "para" adds meanings such as "alongside," "in addition," "instead of," or "supportive" to the word it is attached to. Therefore, the concept of paradiplomacy also refers to a form of practice that supports, complements, corrects, repeats, or falls outside the scope of the diplomatic activities of nation-

states, and even occasionally opposes them (Erdoğan, 2020, p. 498).

Paradiplomacy is a concept used in the literature to describe the activities carried out by subnational actors, such as regional administrations, municipalities, or other local authorities, in areas falling within their remit and sphere of interest, in fields such as international relations, political science, and public administration (Erdoğan & Atar, 2023, p. 430).

When it first emerged, paradiplomacy was defined primarily in terms of the representation of federated structures in foreign relations. However, over time, it has come to define a multi-actor, multi-level form of foreign relations that is not limited to official diplomatic missions. This transformation has brought with it not only a conceptual but also a normative expansion. For example, Neves (2010) positions paradiplomacy as an expression of soft power, while Duchacek (1990) and Soldatos (as cited in Ünal, 2025) focus more on the potential of sub-state structures to shape foreign policy. Within this framework, paradiplomacy has begun to be evaluated not only in terms of foreign trade and cultural interaction but also as a challenge to the central state's monopoly on foreign policy.

This approach has also given rise to different lines of literature. On the one hand, the "cooperative" perspective defines paradiplomacy as a complement to the state and part of global governance. On the other hand, more critical, even confrontational approaches have developed, particularly in the context of separatist tendencies, combined with the concept of "proto-diplomacy" (Lecours, 2008; Fathun, 2022). Proto-diplomacy describes diplomatic contacts conducted by ethnic or regional movements aiming to secede from the nation-state. At the same time, the concept of paradiplomacy is broader, encompassing activities often conducted in coordination with the center.

For example, Hong Kong's direct trade agreements since the 1950s and Quebec's cultural cooperation with France have demonstrated that paradiplomacy can create tension with the central government (Neves, 2010). On the other hand, waste management practices implemented in the Bantaeng region of Indonesia, which resulted in an award-winning partnership with India, emphasize the aspect of paradiplomacy that can yield tangible benefits at the local level (Çelebi & Alkan, 2022). These examples show that normative assessments of the function of paradiplomacy vary depending on the context.

The concepts of "multi-level governance," "globalization," and "internationalization," which are often mentioned in conjunction with paradiplomacy, are frequently used interchangeably in the literature; however, the boundaries between them often remain blurred. Multi-level governance refers to the institutional pluralism that makes paradiplomacy possible, while globalization describes the structural transformations that give rise to this multi-actor structure.

On the other hand, internationalization refers more to processes of opening up to the outside world at the institutional level, and paradiplomacy can be considered a type of this. In this context, although paradiplomacy draws on these three concepts, it is a field of application that encompasses and transcends them.

Kuznetsov (2015) emphasize that paradiplomacy is not only a foreign policy tool but also an indicator explaining the transformation of the nation-state. According to this view, paradiplomacy is linked to multi-layered objectives such as the global actorization of cities, efforts to create competitive advantages, and identity construction. Thus, paradiplomacy produces not only economic but also political and cultural autonomy.

However, the institutional framework of paradiplomacy varies according to the form of government of each country. In federal systems (e.g., Belgium, Germany, Canada), constitutional power sharing grants sub-state units the ability to conduct official foreign policy. For example, in Belgium, under the principle of *in foro interno, in foro externo,* federated structures can enter international agreements in areas such as energy and the environment (Criekemans, 2010). In contrast, the legal basis for paradiplomacy is much more uncertain in unitary systems, particularly in countries such as Türkiye. This situation makes the concept's applicability controversial at both the technical and political levels.

In conclusion, the debates surrounding the concept of paradiplomacy are based not only on differences in practice but also on normative, legal, and ideological distinctions. Elaborating on these debates clarifies the conceptual boundaries of paradiplomacy and its relationship with other approaches. The role that medium-sized cities such as Tokat play in this context will be understood through local capacities and their responses to these global debates.

2.1. Paradiplomacy and the Development Process of Local Government Cooperation

Türkiye joined the partnership, which emerged with institutional changes aimed at economic development and ultimately political union through practices such as economic development, the common market, and the customs union, and which proposed regulations in the areas of governance, law, human rights, and democracy, and which eventually became known as the European Union, with the Ankara Agreement of September 12, 1963.

With Article 2 of the Ankara Agreement, which established Türkiye's partnership with Europe, "taking into account the need to ensure the rapid development of its economy and the improvement of the employment level and living conditions of the Turkish people, the parties shall encourage the continuous and balanced strengthening of commercial and economic relations between them," the legal foundation for relations was established.

With the entry into force of the Additional Protocol, which was considered a transition period in relations between Türkiye and the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1970s, the completion of the Customs Union was targeted through the free movement of industrial products, agricultural products, and persons. However, following the military coup of September 12, 1980, Türkiye-EEC relations were frozen. This process began to revive with the reestablishment of civilian rule and Türkiye's adoption of an outward-looking strategy, abandoning its import-substitution industrial policies starting in 1984. In this context, Türkiye-European Union relations gained momentum; Türkiye officially began accession negotiations with the European Union at the Intergovernmental Conference held in Luxembourg on October 3, 2005.

The European Union membership process has brought about economic and political integration. During this process, local administrations at the village, district, and provincial levels, which operate in areas directly affecting citizens' lives, have been able to establish contact with their counterparts in other member countries; a process of mutual interaction has developed in many areas, primarily financial support mechanisms and cooperation projects. In parallel with globalization and European Union integration, various regulations have been introduced in legislation concerning local governments, and the internationalization potential of these institutions has been incorporated into the legal framework.

In this context, Article 127 of the 1982 Constitution defines local governments as "public legal entities established to meet the local common needs of the people of a province, municipality, or village, whose founding principles are specified by law and whose decision-making bodies are formed by election by voters, as specified by law." In line with this provision, local governments in Türkiye consist of provincial special administrations, municipalities, and villages, and have become important actors in both domestic governance and international cooperation.

An examination of the legislation governing the relevant units reveals that provisions concerning the establishment of international relations by local governments are regulated under the heading of "foreign relations." The foreign relations of provincial special administrations, which occupy an important place within the Turkish local government system, are regulated in Article 62 of the 5302 Law on Special Provincial Administration (2005), adopted on February 22, 2005, as follows:

"The provincial special administration may become a founding member or member of international organizations and bodies operating in areas related to its field of activity, subject to the decision of the provincial general assembly. The provincial special administration may conduct joint activities and service projects with these organizations and institutions. Activities to be carried out per

the first and second paragraphs must be conducted in line with foreign policy and international agreements, and prior permission from the Ministry of Interior must be obtained."

The first paragraph of Article 10 of the relevant law, which regulates the duties and powers of the provincial general assembly, states that "deciding on cooperation with local administrations and local administration unions within and outside the country" is also among the duties and powers of this assembly. Although the necessary legal provisions have been made, it is noteworthy that, in practice, provincial special administrations do not establish as intensive relations with international organizations as municipalities do.

The international relations that municipalities can establish are regulated in Article 74 of the 5393 Law on Municipalities (2005), adopted on July 3, 2005, under the heading "Foreign Relations," as follows:

"The municipality may become a founding member or member of international associations and organizations operating in areas related to its field of activity, subject to the decision of the municipal council. The municipality may conduct joint activities and service projects with these associations, organizations, and foreign local administrations, or establish sister city relationships.[4] Activities to be carried out per the first and second paragraphs must be conducted in line with foreign policy and international agreements, and prior permission must be obtained from the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. Pursuant to this article, municipalities may also establish international relations with organizations operating abroad, subject to the decision of their decision-making bodies, the municipal councils, and the permission of the relevant ministry in the central administration."

In paragraph (p) of the first clause of Article 18 of the aforementioned law, which regulates the duties and authorities of the municipal council:

"Establishing cooperation with municipalities and local administrative unions within the country and, with the permission of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, abroad; establishing sister city relationships, carrying out activities and projects in areas such as culture, arts, and sports to develop economic and social relations; deciding to build, have built, rent, or allocate land, buildings, and similar facilities within this framework"

are among the duties and powers of the municipal council. Both articles state that municipalities can establish multifaceted relations with municipalities abroad, particularly through sister city programs.

In accordance with the mandatory provisions of the 1173 Law on the Execution

4 The relevant ministry was formerly the Ministry of Interior, but was changed to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change by Article 28 (28/23) of Law No. 7153 dated November 29, 2018.

and Coordination of International Relations (1969), all public institutions and organizations, including local government units, must inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the contacts they establish and the collaborations they undertake at the international level.

2.2. Local Authorities and Sister City Programs on the Path to Internationalization

According to the *United Nations World Urbanization Prospects 2018 Revision* report, the world's total population and urbanization rate were 34% in 1960, while data for 2023 show that the world's total population and urbanization rate are 57% (World Bank, n.d.). "The report focuses on current and future population trends in cities around the world, using population estimates and projections" (Ökten, 2022, p.189).

The rapid urbanization process has led to significant changes that profoundly affect the structures of cities, their economic and financial functions, population densities, and social and cultural fabrics. Increasing population and urbanization boost economic and social mobility in cities but also encourage cities to move beyond being merely local service providers and engage in global cooperation with international organizations on issues such as migration, climate change, sustainability, and human rights (Creutz, 2023, pp. 3-5).

In this context, the transformation in the roles and responsibilities of cities has highlighted the need for local governments and communities to adapt to and interact with global dynamics. From a socio-economic and cultural perspective, the transformation in cities presents various opportunities and challenges, forcing local communities and governments to redefine themselves and adapt to changing conditions.

Population growth and intensified urbanization have exposed cities to influences beyond national borders. This situation has made cities important actors at the local and global levels, drawing the attention of city administrators and researchers in various disciplines to ensure the visibility of cities in the international community.

Ökten (2022) describes this situation as follows:

"Along with industrialization, globalization and technological and economic developments have also led to rapid growth in city populations... Such a situation has resulted in intense mobility in cities and intensified cooperation in the global arena. In response to this situation, it has been observed that cities' roles, capabilities, and responsibilities, especially at the local level, have gone beyond the traditional order and necessitated a transformation in their spheres of influence, along with different opportunities in both the socio-economic and cultural fields.

Population growth and intensified urbanization in cities have begun to have transnational effects."

The international activities of local governments emerge in different dimensions based on internationalization. While interacting with similar examples worldwide while firmly adhering to the goal of preserving local structures is "internationalization," contact with similar examples without preserving local structures is "globalization." In this context, local foreign policy contributes to multi-actor and multifaceted international diplomacy and significantly affects the relationships of local governments with other units around the world. "Large cities around the world can be more populous than some states and have greater budgetary and spending power than some states. This situation makes local governments one of the important actors in diplomacy." (Tavares, 2016, as cited in Çelebi Zengin & Alkan, 2022, p. 440)

Local governments must implement policies consistent with national policies and public diplomacy, as they carry out policies that reflect economic, social, health, tourism, culture/arts, education, political, and public diplomacy under the umbrella of national security, which has transnational implications.

Although Türkiye's centralized administrative system was modeled after the French system, it has failed to effectively solve the problems of rapid, disorderly, and unplanned urbanization. One of the fundamental characteristics of this system, centralization, has limited the authority and resources of local governments, preventing them from meeting the financial, administrative, and political burdens brought about by urbanization. The management of large cities, in particular, has been left to municipalities lacking sufficient financial and administrative power, causing severe disruptions in the urbanization process. As a result, it has become clear that the current management model is inadequate to solve these problems, and new approaches have been sought to create a more effective local government structure (Sezer & Torlak, 2005, p. 522).

With the establishment of metropolitan municipalities, local government units, whose influence grew stronger, began to play an active role locally and internationally, and it is known that they started to establish cooperation protocols, primarily in Istanbul, as of 1960.

3. The Concept of Sister Cities and Its Origins

The historical origins of the sister city practice are based on the cooperation between Paderborn in Germany and Le Mans in France in 836. However, it is known that the first modern agreement related to this practice was signed in 1920 between Keighley in the United Kingdom and Poix-du-Nord in France. It is noted that sister cities in the modern sense began to be established after World War II and gained momentum with the globalization process (Çelebi Zengin &

Alkan, 2022, p. 455).

UNESCO, known as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, acts according to the principle adopted in its founding charter that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." According to UNESCO, peace "must be founded on the moral and intellectual solidarity of mankind." As defined in the founding document that came into force in 1946, the mission of creating the conditions for coexistence in international peace involves working on a new worldview based on a revised vision of humanity and spreading that vision through global cooperation (UNESCO, 2024).

Free market-oriented economic policies have increased their influence worldwide since the 1980s, and the global pressures that these policies have brought with them have led to a marked weakening of nation-state structures and a downsizing of the state's organizational framework. This situation has led to new forms of nationalism that are less tied to traditional state-building and more concerned with creating collective action capacity in government and civil society in the face of the global market. The free movement of capital and the rise of multinational corporations have eroded the capacity of states to manage national economies, making it even more difficult to speak of national economies. Furthermore, the dominance of a global culture has weakened national cultures and the role of states in supporting and protecting them. As a result of these developments, development coalitions have emerged in some regions, striving to manage their regions' integration into the global market on the one hand, and to control the socially divisive effects of this market. In this context, cities have become a key factor in the relationship between society and the global market, creating political arenas for debate and systems for collective action (Keating, 2013, pp. 1-3).

"The reestablishment of peace in cities has gradually led to the development of economic and cultural dialogues between cities. As the scope of relations between cities in different countries has broadened, the types of relationships established and the structures of actors have also begun to change. Relations between cities have evolved into a multi-actor structure at the local level." (Erdem & Ersavaş Kavanoz, 2021, as cited in Ökten, 2022, p. 190).

This multi-actor relationship between sister cities, districts, or states has manifested itself as a partnership based on a mutually agreed protocol prepared in advance by the parties, covering activities and projects in thematic areas such as broad-based, long-term art-culture, commercial-economic, social development, socially oriented, youth and education, disaster management, conflict resolution, knowledge and experience sharing, and competition between two municipalities/city administrations in two countries.

Sister city relationships began to increase through the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), established in Paris in 1951 with the participation of 39 countries, particularly after World War II, to reorganize democracy and ensure integration in fragmented European cities.

One example contributing to institutionalizing these multi-level and thematically focused relationships is Sister Cities International, based in the United States. Founded in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Sister Cities International is known to be a neutral, non-profit organization serving as a national membership organization for sister cities, counties, and states in the United States, bringing together tens of thousands of citizen diplomats and volunteers in over 300 member communities with more than 2,000 partnerships in over 140 countries (Sister Cities International, n.d.).

Due to the growing desire in Türkiye to establish contacts with other countries in foreign policy, many initiatives have been undertaken, primarily at the municipal level. It is known that Türkiye's first sister city relationship was established in 1964 when Bergama Municipality, affiliated with Izmir, signed a sister city agreement with Böblingen Municipality in Germany. Twin city practices in Türkiye initially followed a somewhat limited course; however, they gained significant momentum with the adoption of the Metropolitan Municipality Law in 1984 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Following these developments, sister city agreements began to be signed intensively between Turkish municipalities and many municipalities in the former Soviet Union, particularly in the Balkans (Bay & Çalışkan, 2020, p. 75).

On the other hand, Türkiye's first sister city agreement in terms of terminology, which was carried out with the approval of the relevant ministry in the legal process regulating sister city relations, was made between Izmir and Melbourne, Australia, in 1992 (Ökten, 2022, p. 217).

3.1. An Overview of Sister City Applications as an Example of Paradiplomacy in Municipalities and Examples from Türkiye

In the context of international contacts evolving into a multi-actor structure at the local level, the cooperation relationships titled *sister city* carried out by municipalities responsible for urban service delivery have been given a legal framework under the heading "Foreign Relations" within the scope of Article 74 of the 5393 Law on Municipalities (2005), adopted on July 3, 2005, as follows:

"The municipality may become a founding member or member of international associations and organizations operating in areas related to its field of activity, subject to the decision of the municipal council. The municipality may conduct joint activities and service projects with these associations, organizations, and foreign local administrations, or establish sister city relationships. Activities to

be carried out per the first and second paragraphs must be conducted in line with foreign policy and international agreements, and prior permission must be obtained from the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. Pursuant to this article, municipalities may also establish international relations with organizations operating abroad, subject to the decision of their decision-making bodies, the municipal councils, and the permission of the relevant ministry in the central administration."

The Ministry of Interior was changed to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change with Article 28 (28/23) of Law No. 7153 dated November 29, 2018. Furthermore, pursuant to paragraph (p) of the first clause of Article 18 of this law, which regulates the duties and powers of the municipal council, the duties and powers of the municipal council are listed as follows:

"To establish cooperation with municipalities and local administrative unions within the country and, with the permission of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, abroad; to establish sister city relationships, to carry out activities and projects in areas such as culture, arts, and sports to develop economic and social relations; and to decide on the construction, commissioning, leasing, or allocation of land, buildings, and similar facilities within this framework."

As emphasized in both legal regulations, municipalities can establish cooperative relationships with counterpart institutions abroad, including sister city programs. Indeed, it is observed that sister city relationships established by municipalities today are much more widespread and intensive than memberships in international organizations.

When evaluating the relevant articles of the law from the perspective of Türkiye, it is seen that both the local government legislation in the country and the EU harmonization process requiring local government reform, as well as international developments and regulations such as the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European Urban Charter, aim to enable local governments to establish paradiplomatic relations and maintain these relations in the long term.

In order to better understand the structure and scope of local governments' institutionalized relations in the international arena, examining statistical data on the membership of municipalities and local government associations in international organizations is an important requirement for analyzing current trends and assessing the continuity and impact of these relations. The following section examines the nature and prevalence of these relationships in light of statistical data on the international organizations to which local governments from Türkiye and around the world belong.

3.2. Statistical Data on Municipalities' and Local Administration Unions' Memberships in International Organizations

While the internationalization process is making the participation of local governments in global governance networks increasingly visible, it is observed that metropolitan municipalities and municipalities in Türkiye have achieved membership in various international institutions and organizations. In this context, the institutional memberships of municipalities across the country at the international level were statistically evaluated; subsequently, municipalities within the borders of Tokat province that have secured membership were examined in detail based on data published on the website of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change's General Directorate of Local Governments. However, no examples were found of provincial special administrations, which are local government units, having membership in international institutions and organizations within the framework of the current legislation.

In this context, an important development that stands out is taking shape within the framework of World Metropolitan Day, which has been celebrated since 1985 in collaboration with Metropolis and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). This global campaign, which aims to build more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous metropolises, highlights the role and responsibility of local governments at the international level. For Türkiye, the integration of local governments into international networks at the institutional level gained concrete form in 1995, when the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality became a member of the World Association of Major Metropolises (Metropolis). This membership is considered an important milestone in the field of local diplomacy in Türkiye and symbolizes the opening of municipalities to international platforms.

Official documents titled *Statistical Data on Municipal Memberships in International Organizations* published by the General Directorate of Local Administration of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change also reveal the development of this process with concrete data.

The statistical data table on municipalities' memberships in international organizations shows the international relations established by metropolitan municipalities, municipalities, and municipal unions. In this regard:

Table 1.

Memberships of Municipalities and Local Government Unions in International Organizations – 2023

No	Province	Municipality	Organization	Ministry Approval Date
1	Amasya	Merzifon	Local Governments for Sustainability	24.03.2023
2	Amasya	Merzifon	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy	16.06.2023
3	Antalya	Finike	Cittaslow – The Network of Good Living Cities	6.03.2023
4	Balıkesir	Bandırma	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy	11.01.2023
5	Denizli	Çameli	FAI Hang Gliding and Paragliding Commission	11.05.2023
6	Eskişehir	Metropolitan	Local Governments for Sustainability	11.05.2023
7	Gaziantep	Metropolitan	Asia Pacific Network of Science and Technology Centers	24.01.2023
8	İstanbul	Beşiktaş	European Network of Innovation for Inclusion	19.04.2023
9	İstanbul	Metropolitan	International Committee of Historic House Museums	06.03.2023
10	İstanbul	Metropolitan	Asian Mayors Forum	12.04.2023
11	İstanbul	Kadıköy	European Construction Technology Platform	06.04.2023
12	İstanbul	Metropolitan	Global Sustainable Tourism Council	10.04.2023

13	İstanbul	Kadıköy	European Institute of Innovation and Technology	11.01.2023
14	İzmir	Metropolitan	Global Sustainable Tourism Council	01.06.2023
15	Konya	Metropolitan	Metropolis: World Association of Major Metropolises	24.05.2023
16	Marmara Municipalities Union	Union	Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance	11.05.2023
17	Mersin	Mezitli	Local Governments for Sustainability	24.03.2023
18	Mersin	Mezitli	UN Global Compact	24.03.2023
19	Mersin	Mezitli	Milan Urban Food Policy Pact	24.03.2023
20	Mersin	Yenişehir	Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy	06.03.2023
21	Muğla	Bodrum	Union for the Mediterranean	24.01.2023

Note. Data from Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, General Directorate of Local Administrations (n.d.).

According to data published on the website of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, General Directorate of Local Administration, and accessed on June 28, 2024, various municipalities in Türkiye continue to hold memberships in international organizations around different themes. Considering the approval dates for 2023, it is noteworthy that local governments have focused on specific thematic areas in their outreach processes.

As shown in the table, municipalities and associations in Türkiye have joined various international networks throughout 2023. These memberships mainly focus on sustainability, climate, energy, tourism, and cultural heritage. Metropolitan municipalities, especially Istanbul, Izmir, and Konya, have become more visible actors in international organizations. The networks they join are generally at the

global governance level and focus on themes such as tourism, water, climate, and metropolitan management. District municipalities have mostly joined thematic and focused networks.

As of 2023, the international organization memberships of municipalities in Türkiye have gone beyond symbolic participation and gained thematic and strategic depth. These memberships reflect the willingness of local governments to actively integrate into global governance processes; at the same time, they empower municipalities to strengthen their institutional capacities and produce local solutions to global-scale problems.

4. International Sister City Relations and Memberships in International Organizations Among Municipalities in Tokat Province

4.1. Sister City Relations of Tokat Municipality on an International Scale

The area of Tokat province is 10,072 square kilometers, and its population is 612,674 according to 2024 data (www.tuik.gov.tr), with an average elevation of 623 meters. Due to its location on the historical Silk Road, featuring inns, caravanserais, well-maintained roads, and bridges that once hosted major caravans, Tokat has been particularly notable in trade and economic history (www.tokattso.org.tr).

With a history dating back to 5500 BC, Tokat, where 14 states and 5 principalities lived and ruled, is located in the inner east of the Central Black Sea region of the Black Sea Region and has been known throughout history as Comano Pontika, Komana, Evdoksia, Dokia, Dokat, Kah-Cun, Sobaru, Darün-Nusret, and Darün-Nasr (Tokat Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, n.d.).

Data filtered from the statistics section of the website of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, General Directorate of Local Administration, show that Niksar Municipality, located within the borders of Tokat, was included in the World Association of Historic Towns with the approval of the Ministry (Ministry of Interior) dated March 16, 2021, and the World Association of Fortified Cities on February 18, 2008, with the approval of the Ministry (Ministry of Interior).

It is observed that municipalities in Türkiye attach greater importance to international inter-city relations than to those at the national level. According to Bay and Çalışkan (2021, p. 125), when examining the numerical distribution of sister city agreements signed by municipalities, it was found that there were 1,651 sister city relationships at the international level, compared to 1,391 at the national level. This situation can be interpreted as indicating that municipalities have a stronger tendency towards international cooperation. In the same study,

when the data for Tokat province as of 2018 were examined, it was stated that the municipalities established in Tokat province had a total of fifteen sister city relationships, including six international and nine national ones (Bay & Çalışkan, 2021, pp. 125-249). Recently, Tokat Central Municipality has been seen to be taking serious steps to develop sister city relations and has reached the protocol stage with the city of Mosul (Tokat Haber 60, 2025).

Based on data obtained from municipal officials in 2025 and utilizing information from the previous study, the final data showing the international paradiplomatic relations of Tokat province are presented in the table below.

Table 2.

International Sister City Agreements of Municipalities in Tokat Province

No	Municipality	Sister City	Country	Year
1	Tokat Municipality	Simferopol	Ukrayna	2002
		Guemcheon-Gu	Güney Kore	2020
		Komrat	Moldova	2020
2	Erbaa Municipality	Bahçeşehir	Ukrayna	2002
3	Niksar Municipality	Sovyetsky	Ukrayna	2012
		Foça-Ustikolina	Bosna Hersek	2016
4	Zile Municipality	Canköy	Ukrayna	2022
		Mamuşa	Kosova	-

Note. The information was obtained through face-to-face interviews with staff of the Social and Cultural Affairs Directorate, Tokat Municipality, and recompiled using relevant sections of Türkiye's Sister Cities (Bay & Çalışkan, 2021).

Table 2 examines the sister city relationships established by municipalities affiliated with the province of Tokat, revealing that these relationships exhibit geographical and historical diversity. In particular, the Municipality of Tokat has signed sister city protocols with three countries (Ukraine, South Korea, and Moldova), demonstrating that this municipality has a more active paradiplomatic local government profile internationally. When evaluated in light of the existing data in Table 2 mentioned earlier, it is seen that Tokat's membership strategies are based more on cultural heritage-based organizations (European Association of Historic Towns, Association of Walled Cities). This situation shows that,

unlike the themes of climate, energy, and sustainability that are predominantly highlighted in the table, Tokat prefers to internationalize through its historical identity and cultural diplomacy. At the same time, large cities such as Istanbul and Izmir participate in policymaking by being part of global networks, while medium-sized cities such as Tokat structure their memberships around preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

The sister city relationships established by the municipalities of Erbaa, Niksar, and Zile with countries with large populations of Turkish descent reveal the efforts of local administrations in Tokat province to establish cultural and social cooperation at the international level. In this context, it is noteworthy that Ukraine is the country with which the most frequent relationships are established. The fact that multiple municipalities have developed partnerships with different cities in Ukraine is noteworthy regarding the intensity of historical, ethnic and strategic ties at the regional level.

When the dates of the establishment of sister city relationships are evaluated chronologically, it is understood that the paradiplomacy of municipalities in the province of Tokat began to become more visible from the early 2000s. It has been observed that these relations have continued and diversified in the post-2020 period. This situation shows that local administrations are increasingly involved in global diplomacy and are striving for internationalization through cultural interaction.

Membership in associations formed by cities with historical and cultural heritage coming together at the international level constitutes an important dimension of the internationalization strategies of some municipalities in Türkiye. Membership in organizations such as the World Association of Fortified Cities (now known as the European Association of Fortified Cities- EWT) and the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR) reflects efforts to integrate into multilateral platforms that aim to develop cultural cooperation at the European level by highlighting the historical identities of cities. It is evident that through such associations, local governments not only strengthen their external relations but also gain opportunities to develop joint projects in areas such as preserving historical environments, promoting cultural heritage, and sustainable urban planning.

The European Association of Castles (EWT) has shaped its vision and mission to develop cultural cooperation between countries and cities. The association's main objective is to preserve, support, and promote the castle structures in Europe's historic cities as cultural heritage at an international level (Akman, 2017, pp. 485–510). In this context, activities such as encouraging friendly relations between cities with castles, preparing and supporting joint projects with various sources, primarily European Union funds, and organizing regular symposiums in

member cities are carried out. In addition, the union's priorities include developing common strategies for planning and preserving historical areas, ensuring the sharing of knowledge and experience among member cities, and expanding the network structure.

The visibility of local governments in international relations has increased, especially since the 2000s; after 2020, these relations have further developed in terms of thematic diversity and institutionalization. This process has not been limited to bilateral sister city agreements; it has evolved into multilateral cooperation models through participation in international associations active in cultural heritage, environment, sustainability, and governance. Thus, the interest of local governments in paradiplomatic contacts and initiatives at the global level has increased significantly.

In this regard, it has been observed that cities with historical castle structures have become more visible in international cultural heritage networks. The fact that local governments such as Tokat Niksar Municipality, Zonguldak Karadeniz Ereğli Municipality, Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, and Antalya Alanya Municipality have become members of international associations to preserve and promote their historical identities demonstrates the institutionalization of multilateral cooperation on cultural heritage. These memberships are also a concrete expression of local governments' efforts to bring historical values to international platforms.

One of the prominent international organizations in this context is the Association of Historic Towns and Regions of Europe (EAHTR), established in 1987. Also known to the public as the "European Historic Towns Union," this structure aims to support the multidimensional development of historic towns and cities in Europe. EAHTR's primary objectives include the following (European Association of Historic Towns and Regions, n.d.)

Developing international cooperation: Encouraging multi-level and institutional interaction between historic towns and cultural heritage institutions.

Sharing knowledge and experience: Ensuring the mutual transfer of best practices and managerial experience among member settlements.

Sustainable city management: Supporting holistic approaches based on the livability, economic dynamism, and environmental sustainability of historic settlements.

In addition, the association develops policy recommendations for protecting, restoring, and transmitting cultural heritage to future generations and contributes to disseminating best practices.

Table 3

Turkish Cities that are Members of the World Association of Walled Towns

	Province	Municipality	The Union of Historical Towns	Membership Date
1	Antalya	Alanya	The Union of Historical Towns	23.02.2011
2	Bursa	Büyükşehir	The Union of Historical Towns	26.02.2010
3	Diyarbakır	Büyükşehir	The Union of Historical Towns	19.10.2011
4	Tokat	Niksar	The Union of Historical Towns	18.02.2008
5	Zonguldak	Karadeniz Ereğli		5.11.2010

Note. Compiled from data published on the official website of the Directorate General of Local Authorities under the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change.

Table 3 shows the membership of some municipalities in Türkiye in the World Fortified Cities Association (now known as the European Fortified Cities Association- EWT) in historical order and concretizes the participation of local governments in international cultural collaborations through this association. It can be seen that the Municipality of Niksar achieved the first membership in the province of Tokat on February 18, 2008. This early membership indicates Niksar's pioneering efforts to promote and protect its historical heritage internationally. Subsequent memberships were achieved in 2010 and 2011 by the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, Zonguldak Karadeniz Ereğli Municipality, Antalya Alanya Municipality, and Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, respectively.

The common feature of these municipalities is the presence of historical castle structures within their city limits and local government visions for preserving this cultural heritage. Thanks to these memberships in the World Association of Fortified Cities, municipalities not only promote their own historical identities at the international level but also gain the opportunity to share knowledge and experience with other European cities with similar structural features.

In this context, the interest of local governments in Türkiye in international associations based on cultural heritage increased significantly between 2008 and 2011, based on their membership dates. This trend shows that internationalization efforts at the local level in Türkiye have diversified through participation in cultural heritage-focused networks and that global interaction capacity has developed. However, it has not provided sufficient development at the national level.

When the international sister city relationships established by municipalities within the borders of Tokat province are evaluated in terms of promoting mutual economic mobility, one of the thematic objectives of sister city protocols, examining these relationships through the export values of the relevant municipalities, provides a meaningful framework. In this context, considering that sister city protocols have the potential to increase cultural and social interaction and develop economic cooperation, this study attempts to analyze the possible interactions between the export performance of municipalities in Tokat province and these international relationships.

4.2. Method, Findings, and Evaluation

In this study, a qualitative data analysis method was adopted to evaluate the change in the export performance of Tokat Province to the countries with which it has established sister city relations over time. The analysis covers 22 years from 2002 to 2023 (data for 2010 could not be obtained). The data set was obtained from the foreign trade statistics of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce. The export data, compiled annually, are in US dollars (USD) and classified by country.

The research is limited to the province of Tokat and certain municipalities. The sister city relationships and foreign trade data examined cover 2002 to 2024. Ministry-approved official internet sources, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT-TÜİK), the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and İTO data were used as the basis for the municipalities' international organization memberships and sister city relationships. The research is limited to paradiplomacy, sister city relationships, and the impact of these relationships on exports.

5. Export Data Within the Scope of Sister City Applications

The export performance of Tokat province to the countries with which it has established sister city relations is as follows.

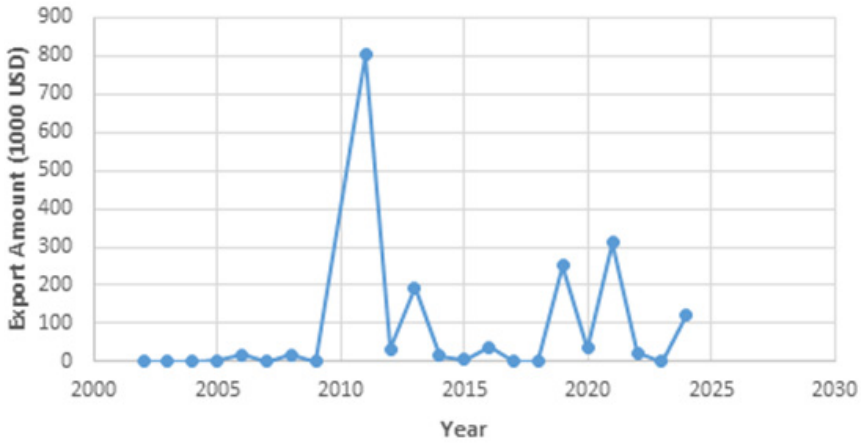
Table 4

Annual Exports from Tokat to Ukraine (2002-2024) (Thousand US Dollars)

Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value
2002	0	2008	17	2015	4	2021	311
2003	0	2009	0	2016	37	2022	22
2004	0	2011	802	2017	0	2023	0
2005	2	2012	32	2018	0	2024	124
2006	19	2013	194	2019	251		
2007	0	2014	15	2020	35	Total	1.865

Figure 1

Annual Export Timeline from Tokat to Ukraine



In order to evaluate the economic impact of paradiplomatic relations, especially sister city relations, on local trade, the export performance of Tokat province to Ukraine was analyzed over 22 years between 2002 and 2024 (excluding 2010, for which data were unavailable). Tokat's total export volume to Ukraine amounted to 1,865 thousand US dollars during this period. Exports remained at zero from 2002 to 2004, slightly increased in 2005 (USD 2 thousand), and reached a short-term peak in 2006 (USD 19 thousand). The lack of data for 2010 makes it difficult to determine the continuity trends for that year. A significant increase was observed in 2011, reaching USD 802 thousand, the highest annual export figure in the entire data set. A sharp decline followed this increase, but moderate export activity continued until 2015. This situation signals the beginning of more structured economic ties, influenced by diplomatic or institutional developments. Export volumes were inconsistent between 2016 and 2020. Significant fluctuations were recorded, with exports peaking at USD 251 thousand in 2019 but falling to USD 35 thousand in 2020. Another significant increase occurred in 2021, with exports reaching USD 311 thousand, followed by a significant drop to USD 22 thousand in 2022 and a complete halt in 2023. A moderate recovery was seen in 2024, with exports reaching USD 124 thousand. The data show that Tokat's economic relations with Ukraine remained limited in the early 2000s but showed signs of growth following institutional developments such as sister city agreements. The peak in exports in 2011 coincides with the general increase in Turkish municipalities' efforts to establish paradiplomatic relations during the same period. Subsequent fluctuations can be interpreted as evidence of fragile but developing trade relations, aided by paradiplomatic ties.

While the irregularity of trade volume may increase the visibility and intent of paradiplomacy, it does not always translate into stable or steadily growing economic outcomes. It has been observed that the sister city relationships established by municipalities in Tokat province with Ukraine have been accompanied by increases in exports in some periods, with particularly noticeable leaps in the first few years after the establishment of the relationship. However, these increases are generally not sustainable but rather volatile and susceptible to external factors (e.g., political crises, economic sanctions, war, epidemics, etc.).

When examining the total export volume, the timeline of Tokat's exports to Ukraine shows distinct peaks associated with increased local international participation periods. These results support the idea that sister city relationships and other paradiplomatic forms can contribute to increased trade activity, even in a complex environment affected by external variables.

Tokat province's foreign trade relations with South Korea followed a somewhat limited course between 2002 and 2019, with exports remaining at zero or low levels in most years. In particular, there was no export activity between 2002 and 2007. A slight increase, starting with USD 31 thousand in 2013, followed a fluctuating but upward trend between 2015 and 2019. However, a clear transformation was observed in 2020 following the signing of the protocol with Guemcheon-Gu (Mynet, 2019). In 2020, exports reached their highest level at USD 1,610 thousand. The zero exports in 2022 can be attributed to possible external factors (the impact of the pandemic, economic fluctuations, sectoral changes, etc.). This is noteworthy as it is the year the sister city relationship was established. However, the fact that exports fell to zero again in 2022 and 2024 shows that the institutionalization of this relationship has not yet achieved a stable structure.

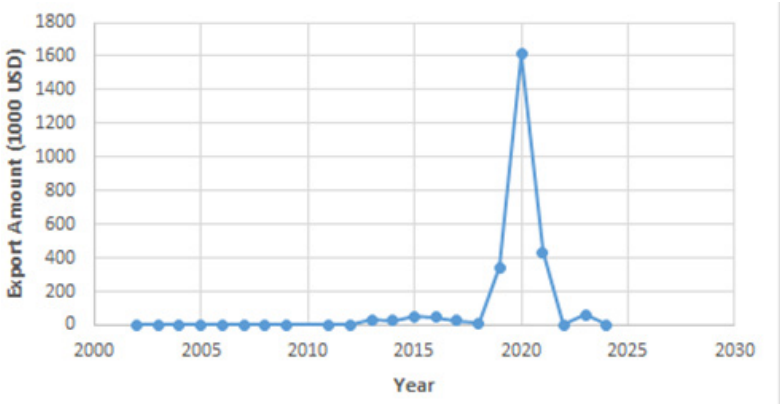
Table 5

Annual Exports from Tokat to South Korea (2002-2024) (Thousand US Dollars)

Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value
2002	0	2008	0	2015	51	2021	432
2003	0	2009	0	2016	45	2022	0
2004	0	2011	0	2017	25	2023	63
2005	0	2012	0	2018	12	2024	0
2006	0	2013	31	2019	342		
2007	0	2014	29	2020	1.610	Total	2.640

Figure 2

Annual Export Timeline from Tokat to South Korea



Tokat province's export relations with Moldova were limited between 2002 and 2019. However, following the signing of the sister city protocol with Comrat in 2020, there was a notable increase in export volume. This trend may offer meaningful clues about the economic effects of paradiplomacy. In 2020, when the sister city relationship was established, exports rose to USD 16 thousand. A remarkable export increase has been observed since 2020, when the sister city protocol was established between Tokat and Comrat. In particular, exports peaked at USD 165 thousand in 2021. This increase suggests that sister city relations contribute to economic interaction. Although a decline was observed in 2022 and subsequent years, this can be attributed to factors such as the effects of the pandemic, regional economic fluctuations, or foreign policy developments.

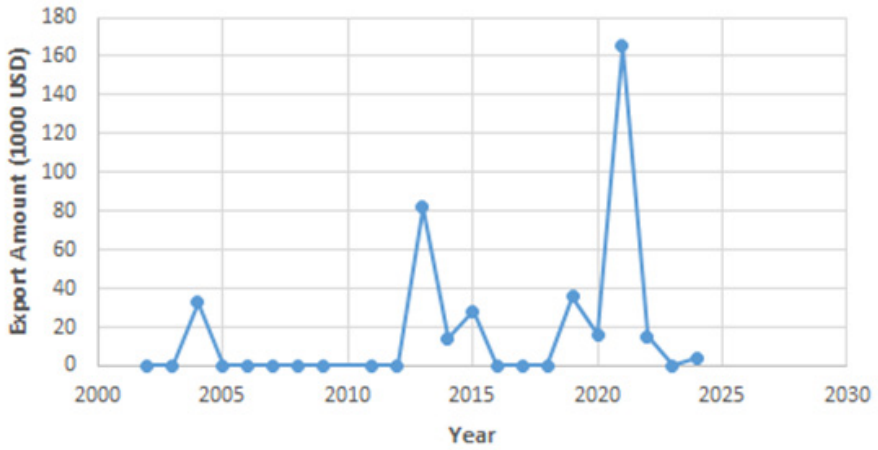
Table 6

Annual Exports from Tokat to Moldova (2002-2024) (Thousand US Dollars)

Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value
2002	0	2008	0	2015	28	2021	165
2003	0	2009	0	2016	0	2022	15
2004	33	2011	0	2017	0	2023	0
2005	0	2012	0	2018	3.5	2024	4
2006	0	2013	82	2019	36		
2007	0	2014	14	2020	16	Toplam	316,9

Figure 3

Annual Export Timeline from Tokat to Moldova



The trade dynamics between Tokat and Bosnia and Herzegovina reveal a distinct evolutionary pattern that closely corresponds to the development of paradiplomatic relations. The pre-protocol period (2002–2015) was marked by extremely limited and sporadic export activity. Apart from modest export peaks of USD 110 thousand in 2007, 155 thousand in 2008, and 270 thousand in 2011, the majority of years recorded zero trade flows, demonstrating the absence of a consistent or sustainable commercial relationship prior to formal cooperation.

A significant inflection point emerged in 2016, coinciding with the signing of the sister city protocol, when exports sharply increased to USD 375 thousand—the highest level observed throughout the entire 2002–2024 period. This temporal concurrence strongly suggests that the paradiplomatic initiative acted as a direct catalyst for enhanced economic interaction between Tokat and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The post-protocol period (2016–2024) exhibits a more structured yet fluctuating pattern of trade. While exports slightly declined to USD 250 thousand in 2017 and 235 thousand in 2018, they remained well above pre-protocol averages, indicating a more resilient baseline of commercial engagement. After a brief interruption in 2019, exports resumed with USD 120 thousand in 2020, followed by USD 200 thousand in 2021, 150 thousand in 2022, a temporary decline to zero in 2023, and a moderate recovery to USD 140 thousand in 2024.

Despite ongoing volatility, the overall trend in the post-2016 period demonstrates continuity and stabilization rather than the intermittent, negligible activity characteristic of earlier years. The isolated zero-export year in 2023 can

thus be interpreted as a short-term fluctuation rather than a structural regression.

In conclusion, the empirical data substantiate the view that the sister city protocol has had a transformative impact on Tokat's trade relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. While total export volumes (amounting to USD 2.365 million over 2002–2024) remain variable, the shift from inactivity to consistent engagement underscores the role of paradiplomacy as a mechanism for fostering enduring subnational economic ties.

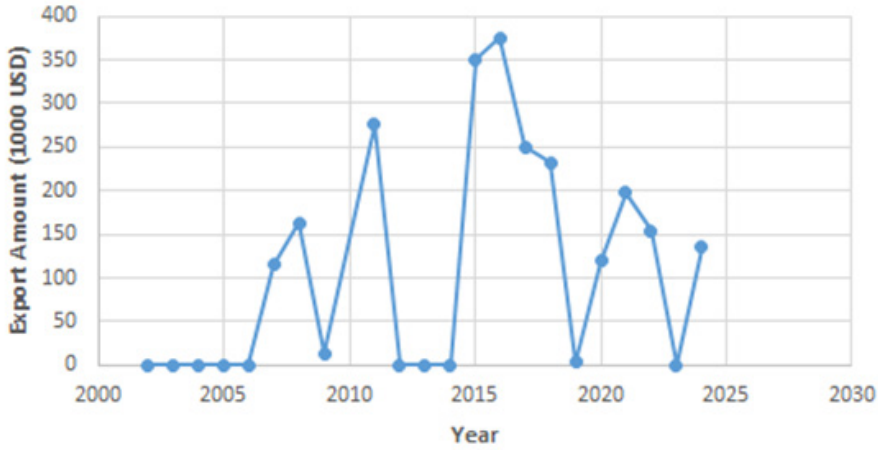
Table 7

Annual Exports from Tokat to Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002-2024) (Thousand US Dollars)

Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value
2002	0	2008	155	2015	350	2021	200
2003	0	2009	10	2016	375	2022	150
2004	0	2011	270	2017	250	2023	0
2005	0	2012	0	2018	235	2024	140
2006	0	2013	0	2019	0		
2007	110	2014	0	2020	120	Total	2.365

Figure 4

Annual Export Timeline from Tokat to Bosnia and Herzegovina



Since no specific date was indicated for the sister city protocol with Kosovo, all years were considered. Trade relations with Kosovo began to increase significantly in 2013. The period between 2013 and 2020 saw the highest total exports from Tokat province to Kosovo. After 2021, exports began to decline significantly. This may be related to weakening local relations, regional conditions, or foreign trade policies.

Table 8

Annual Exports from Tokat to Kosovo (2002-2024) (Thousand US Dollars)

Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value	Year	Export Value
2002	0	2008	0	2015	266	2021	143
2003	0	2009	5	2016	345	2022	21
2004	0	2011	4	2017	283	2023	76
2005	21	2012	5	2018	493	2024	21
2006	0	2013	341	2019	165		
2007	0	2014	277	2020	289	Toplam	2.750

Figure 5

Annual Export Timeline from Tokat to Kosovo

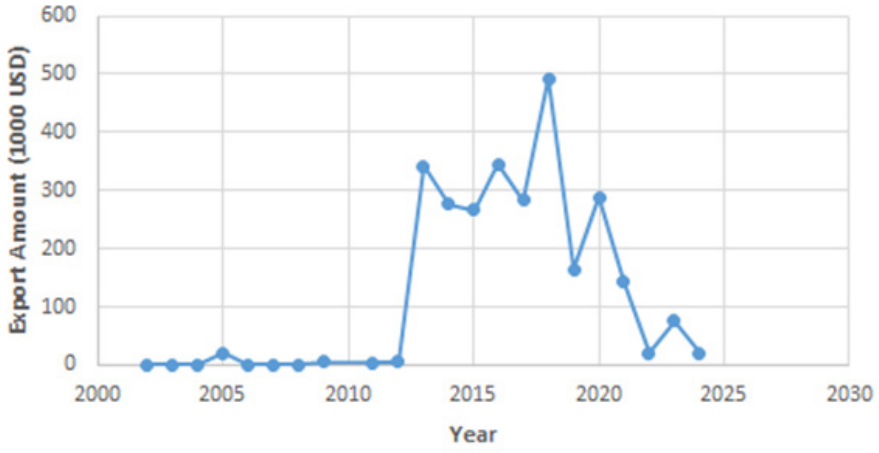


Table 9 evaluates the average export performance over the three years following the signing of the sister city protocol compared to the previous period. The analysis aims to reveal whether these relationships create lasting momentum in foreign trade. The example of Moldova is noteworthy, with an approximately 187% increase in exports recorded in the post-protocol period. This situation shows that paradiplomatic initiatives can positively affect economic interaction in the short term. On the other hand, despite relatively high export levels before the protocol with South Korea and Ukraine, significant declines were experienced in the following three years; this suggests that sister city relations alone may not provide lasting commercial benefits. These sharp declines show that sister city agreements alone may be insufficient to ensure economic growth and that external factors (global crises, war, political uncertainty, pandemic) can be decisive for export performance. In the case of Ukraine in particular, it is clear that regional security issues and war have narrowed export channels. Similarly, although high exports were achieved in the first year of the relationship established with Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was an average 60% decrease in export volume in subsequent years. This situation reveals that paradiplomacy is not the sole determinant of economic performance, despite cultural proximity and historical ties. The findings show that, in some cases, sister city relationships contributed to short-term increases in exports, but this effect was mostly limited to a short period.

Table 9

Continuity of the Sister City Effect

Country	Impact Year	Previous Year Exports (Thousand USD)	3-Year Average (Thousand USD)	Difference	Percentage Change
South Korea	2020	1.610	123,75	↓ -1.486	-92,31%
Moldova	2020	16	46,00	↑ +30	+187,5%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2016	375	151,50	↓ -223	-59,60%
Ukraine	2011	802	61,25	↓ -740	-92,36%

Note. Kosovo was not included as no specific date for a sister city protocol could be identified.

The study's findings indicate that the economic contribution of paradiplomacy is limited in the province of Tokat and that external factors mainly influence

fluctuations in export data. However, paradiplomacy plays a noteworthy role in terms of international visibility and the participation of local governments in global networks. Therefore, the fundamental strength of paradiplomacy lies not so much in economic outputs as in the symbolic and institutional contributions it makes to the internationalization processes of cities.

6. Conclusion

This study examined paradiplomacy activities in the province of Tokat through sister city relationships and international organization memberships and revealed how these relationships intersect with export data. The findings show that, as seen in Table 9, exports were positively affected by relations with Moldova, while a decline was observed in cases such as South Korea and Ukraine. This situation reveals that the economic impact of paradiplomacy is not felt directly and intensely, but that it provides symbolic and institutional contributions in terms of international visibility, cultural cooperation, and the internationalization of local governments.

This analysis, explicitly conducted for Tokat, complements the metropolitan-focused trend in the literature. The study removes paradiplomacy from being a form of diplomacy conducted only by large-scale municipalities and shows how medium-sized cities can also be included in global cooperation processes. In this respect, the study fills the scale-based gap in the literature and offers a new perspective on how paradiplomacy works in different city typologies. The analysis is limited to export data; other areas such as tourism, education, cultural diplomacy, and investment attractiveness are excluded. Furthermore, the impact of external factors such as global crises, pandemics, wars, and regional trade agreements on exports has been disregarded. These limitations remind us that the results achieved are interpreted solely through specific indicators.

The findings obtained throughout the study reveal that while sister city protocols hold potential in terms of economic cooperation, this potential can only be realized through structural institutionalization, appropriate sectoral matching, and the implementation of complementary local-international strategies. In other words, to achieve lasting benefits in foreign trade through paradiplomacy, local governments must plan this process beyond mere representative relations, aligning it with economic objectives.

Although Tokat province is not a metropolitan city, it offers a unique example of paradiplomacy with its geographical location and historical-cultural identity. The sister city protocols established by Tokat Municipality with Ukraine, South Korea, and Moldova demonstrate that a medium-sized city can participate in international networks and that paradiplomacy is not limited to metropolitan areas. Continuing its paradiplomatic activities, Tokat Municipality recently launched a sister city

project with Mosul Municipality. The study reveals that international relations established at the local level can contribute to local development, particularly when strategically designed in the field of trade. However, for this contribution to be sustainable, sister city relations must be actively monitored, mutual projects developed, sector-based collaborations established, and coordination with the central administration maintained.

Overall, it has been found that there has been significant commercial activity with certain countries (such as Moldova and South Korea) following sister city protocols. This demonstrates that a medium-sized city can participate in economic and cultural interactions through paradiplomacy. It is understood that sister city and paradiplomatic relations can directly and immediately affect exports. Still, this effect must be reinforced with institutional support, strategic planning, and multi-actor collaborations for sustainability. In light of these findings, the hypothesis presented in the study, that sister city relations support export volume, has been confirmed. However, sister city relations should not be limited to cultural and diplomatic gains; they should be designed to support economic development at the local level, thereby making strategic contributions to the paradiplomatic processes of local governments. In this context, the sister city practices carried out in the province of Tokat can be restructured in line with a more holistic development vision in the future and used more effectively as a local foreign policy tool.

In summary, paradiplomacy and sister city programs are essential for establishing partnerships to create sustainable cities and societies. The continuous growth of the world's population makes the need to create livable spaces for everyone increasingly urgent. In this regard, constructing modern, environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and economically accessible cities is one of the fundamental conditions for achieving sustainable development goals. Innovative and holistic urban planning is needed to ensure that everyone can access safe, resilient, culturally enriching, and inspiring living spaces. In this context, and in line with the 11th Sustainable Development Goal, "Sustainable Cities and Communities," paradiplomacy and sister city initiatives are among the essential tools contributing to this transformation process by strengthening global cooperation among local governments. Such international local relations spread sustainable urbanization from the local to the global level through knowledge sharing, the transfer of best practices, and cultural interaction.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can be developed:

- Sister city relationships should not be limited to symbolic protocols; they should be supported by strategic plans with concrete objectives. Municipal international relations departments should play an active role in directing these collaborations according to sectoral needs.

- Countries or cities with which sister city relationships are to be established should have sectors compatible with the export capacity of Tokat province. For example, cooperation opportunities can be developed in areas where Tokat is strong, such as agriculture, food, or textiles.

- Performance indicators should be defined to monitor and evaluate the concrete outcomes of signed sister city protocols; regular reporting should be conducted. This will enable the economic contribution of these relationships to be measured with concrete data.

- Municipalities should be encouraged to participate not only in bilateral protocols but also in thematic international networks. This will enable the development of broader projects in areas such as cultural heritage, sustainable urbanism, and the environment.

- For sister city relations to be maintained more effectively and efficiently, municipalities must first clearly define their objectives, expectations, and the parties with whom they will cooperate. In this process, the residents of the town or city should be sufficiently informed, and their active participation in the cooperation should be ensured. Municipalities should make existing best practices more visible and prioritize increasing the resources allocated from the budget to strengthen these relationships. Undoubtedly, mayors and municipal employees should be sensitive in directing the allocated funds to planned areas that serve the public interest rather than for personal gain. In addition, a council of technical experts should be established to support sister city activities, and the activities carried out should be shared with the public in digital environments. Local control mechanisms should be used more effectively regarding the success of the established sisterhood relationships, controls should be tightened, and existing legal deficiencies should be addressed. In this process, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should also take on a more selective, guiding, and supportive role (Zeren & Aktulun, 2018, pp. 12-13).

Future research should extend beyond the effects of paradiplomacy on exports to examine different dimensions such as job creation, tourism revenues, investment attractiveness, and cultural diplomacy outputs. In other words, future studies aiming to increase the economic impact of paradiplomacy should evaluate economic indicators alongside cultural, tourism, and education-focused outputs. Furthermore, collecting qualitative data through field research and interviews, rather than relying solely on numerical data, will significantly contribute to understanding how paradiplomacy is perceived and implemented locally.

In this study, the paradiplomatic activities of local administrations in Tokat province, particularly sister city agreements and international memberships, were

correlated with export data. However, when evaluating the findings, it should be noted that changes in export volume cannot be explained solely by sister city protocols. External factors such as global economic crises, regional trade agreements, war, and pandemics directly affect export performance. Therefore, the links between sister city practices and economic data have been treated only as a supporting indicator; establishing a causal relationship has been avoided. This is among the methodological limitations of the study.

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SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND URBAN GOVERNANCE

GLOBAL TRENDS, COMPARATIVE ANALYSES, AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

In an era defined by rapid urbanization, climate uncertainty, and deepening social inequality, the question of how public institutions can be governed sustainably has become a central challenge of contemporary governance. Sustainable Public Administration and Urban Governance: Global Trends, Comparative Analyses, and Strategic Approaches approaches this question from a multidimensional and comparative perspective, combining theoretical frameworks with policy and practice-based insights.

The book explores how sustainability principles can be effectively integrated into public administration systems, focusing on the development of transparent, participatory, and resilient governance models. Drawing upon interdisciplinary approaches such as governance theory, sustainable transformation, and urban political ecology, it conceptualizes sustainability as a transformative paradigm that reshapes institutional, social, and environmental dimensions. Through analyses ranging from global frameworks to local practices, it reveals how cities and institutions adapt to complex crises such as climate change, migration, energy transition, and digitalization within the framework of justice, equality, and inclusiveness.

By presenting case studies from Türkiye, Europe, and other regions, the book examines the evolving nature of sustainable governance in both theoretical and practical contexts. It highlights that achieving sustainability requires not only environmental sensitivity but also democratic participation, gender equality, and institutional accountability.

Beyond being an academic contribution, this volume serves as a practical guide for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, offering evidence-based insights for building adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking governance systems. Ultimately, it argues that sustainable governance is not merely an administrative agenda but a transformative vision aimed at constructing fair, resilient, and livable urban futures.

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