

THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION CENTER (UKOME) in the MANAGEMENT OF URBAN TRANSPORTATION*

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Introduction

The most important indicator of the age we live in is that living in the city is inevitable. More than half of the world's population lives in cities. Every problem that belongs to human beings also presents problems for the city. Transportation and traffic problems are the most important areas of concern that occupy the city's agenda. The quality of urban transportation also determines the quality of the city's life. For this purpose, local governments are responsible for planning, organizing, and establishing their policies for urban transportation. The urban transportation services neighbourhood is at the top of the list of common needs. For this purpose, local governments can apply a wide range of urban policy and application tools (Keleş 2016; Resmi Gazete 2005; UNDP 2016; United Nations 2018).

We can say that urban policy problem is generally affected by urban transportation system. In order to create healthy transportation system, the urban policy has a crucial function. In this study, urban policy is described with the general perspective that the policy is an instrument that local governments may prefer or not to use to solve urban social problems (Gül 2015; Knoepfel et al. 2007; Yıldız and Sobacı 2013).

For instance, urban transport policy includes topics such as planning, organizing, and controlling traffic in a traditional way while also targeting the development of transportation with smart urban systems using new technologies. New institutional regulations have also been needed to manage the whole process. Transport coordination centres (UKOME) established by the Metropolitan Municipality have an important role in the management of urban transportation.

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In this study, planning and coordinating urban transportation will address the organizational structures, duties, and responsibilities of the UKOMs. At the same time, in terms of urban transport, the decisions made for taxi arrangements, electric bicycle applications will be reviewed. The study is designed within the framework of qualitative research methods and content analysis approaches. Plans, strategy documents, and UKOME decisions, which are described as secondary data sources in the study, will be evaluated by code and categories prepared within the context analysis approach. In this way, the policies and practices developed by UKOME (Transportation Coordination Center), which is responsible for urban transport, will be analysed.

An Evaluation of Urban Transportation in the Context of Urban Policy

In general, urban policy is interested in local governmental conflicts or consensus during local election period and urban decision procedure. By accepting this assumption, urban policy is discussed in terms of local democracy, legitimacy, and participation. But far from this point, it focuses on who governs the city, how they determine which problem is more important than others, how they plan the urban services policy, and how they manage local fiscal policy (Çukurçayır 2008; Davies and Imbroscio 2017; Esen 2008; Tekeli 2008).

The world we live in is described as a "city world." 20 years ago, more than 1 million people lived in 371 cities, but today more than 700 cities have more than 1 million residents. When we look at Turkey's urbanization history, which began in the 1950s and gradually increased by the 1980s, we discover that the country has 90 percent of its population living in cities. As a result of urbanization, cities are not only the source of economic growth and prosperity but also the source of urban poverty, violence, and deprivation (Tekeli 2008; United Nations 2018).

The concentration of the population in cities has two broad effects, which are called positive or negative. In a positive way, Throughout the urbanization period, the city was thought of as a symbol of civilization. As a result of this reality, the city region generates most of the total production, and the cities create economic growth, employment, and access to healthy, educational, and recreational services.. In a negative way, cities are the root source of crime, poverty, violence, etc. Because of the growth of cities, transportation problems are major issues and challenges for urban policy and government. The priority agenda for almost all cities is the smooth management of the city's transportation system (Kourtit, Nijkamp, and Reid 2014; United Nations 2018; Yaman 2022).

To solve the transportation problem in cities, the transportation systems approach is based on sustainable development. From the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report, it is simply defined as "meeting the need

for mobility (mobility) by protecting and improving human and ecosystem health, economic development, and social justice for both today and the future. "From the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report, it is simply defined as "meeting the need for mobility (mobility) by protecting and improving human and ecosystem health, economic development, and social justice for both today and the future."

Transportation in cities is affected by a few factors, such as infrastructure, economic growth, the urban planning process, and city management. To manage all these effects, cities should have sustainable transportation goals and priorities. The goals and priorities of cities are generally seen and formulated in their strategic and action plans. At the same time, the national government would formulate and plan a systematic national transportation approach, which affects the cities' plans. For instance, Türkiye has defined the objectives and policies for the transportation sector. According to the Eleven Development Report, the transport sector is a sector directly affected by national and international developments that have a direct impact on the country's economy. The transportation systems consist of railway, airline, roadway, and urban transportation components. All these components should be planned with a holistic approach that takes into account international and regional economic and social developments (Mills and MacKinnon 1973; T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı 2018; Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2019).

Within the scope of the research, I investigated the urban transportation management policy and institutional implementation tools in terms of the transportation coordination center (UKOME). Municipalities are mainly responsible for urban planning and the management of urban public services. In this regard, municipalities play a key role in meeting the needs of residents and businesses. In Türkiye, local authorities are regulated by legal and administrative decisions such as the Constitution, laws, etc. Municipalities' activities and responsibilities are governed by national and local laws. The subject of urban development is comprised of policies and practices that aim to improve the social and economic well-being of a city's residents, in addition to the city's physical development. Urban spatial planning and policy implementations define the urban development process (Eraydın 2006; Ersoy 2007; Yaman 2021).

According to Metropolitan and Municipality Law No. 5393, 5216, everyone is a citizen of the town in which he dwells. Residents should be able to participate in municipal services and decision-making, as well as obtain information about what the government is doing and assistance from the government.(Erençin 2006; Resmi Gazete 2004, 2005). To manage urban transportation system, municipalities use transportation master plans which is suitable the plans of

1/25.000, and 1/5.000 scale within the plan hierarchy. All plans aim to diminish the city's transportation problems and effectively utilize the city's resources (Ulvi 2019; Ünlü 2017; Yaman 2020).

The Role and Importance of the Transportation and Coordination Center

Türkiye's public administration structure consists of three divisions called: central, provincial, and local government. The public administration system is changing due to local, regional, and global factors. Meanwhile, urban social and economic circumstances are affected by internal and external variables such as migration, economic activities, poverty, etc. Above all, the urban transportation system directly impacts the urban and national growth and well-being of the residents (Erençin 2006; Esen 2008; Gözübüyük and Tan 2001).

Urban transportation services are among the most important services run by the metropolitan municipalities, according to Metropolitan and Municipality Law No, 5216. Transportation services are given to metropolitan municipalities' responsibility (Karaca 2022).

Metropolitan municipalities responsibilities have defined in wide frame. For this reason, Municipalities functions are as below:

- prepare special plans,
- approve the implementation plans,
- draw up transportation master plan,
- build parks, recreation areas,
- provide firefighting and emergency rescue services (Resmi Gazete 2004).

According to Metropolitan and Municipality Law No. 3030, Infrastructure and transportation services can be provided through coordination centres, which include representatives from public institutions and organizations (Alicı and Özaslan 2020; Resmi Gazete 1984). The role and importance of the transportation coordination center has been defined at Metropolitan and Municipality Law No. 5216 and the Regulation of Metropolitan Municipalities Coordination Centres. The regulation is about infrastructure coordination centres (AYKOME) and transportation coordination centres (UKOME). This study contributes to our understanding of the transportation coordination centres (UKOME). In accordance with Law 5216, the establishment of transportation coordination centres is required to provide coordination of transportation services across all of Turkey's metropolitan municipalities (Resmi Gazete 2004). With this law, the planning, coordination, and route of traffic services to the metropolitan municipality is conducted by the transportation coordination center (UKOME).

At the same time, UKOME determines parking spaces for taxis and public transport and the number of these vehicles (Alıcı 2017; Resmi Gazete 2004).

Figure 1 displays an overview of the structure of transportation coordination centres. Looking at Figure 1, it is apparent that the UKOME can be managed by the majority of national government representatives even if its responsibilities is directly related to local common needs.

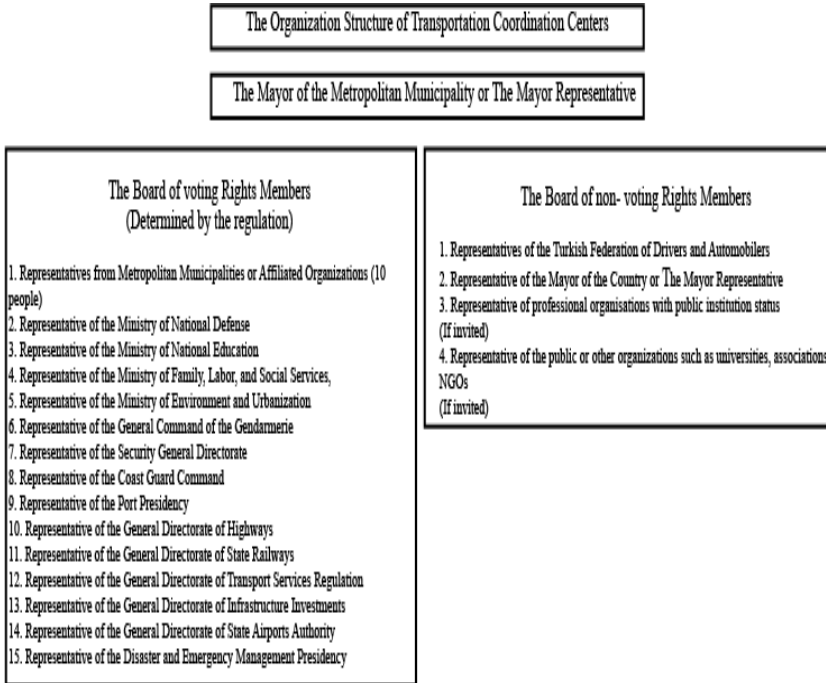


Figure 1. The Organization Structure of Transportation Coordination Centres

The UKOME's structure and decisions have been widely debated in public. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB) has tried to regulate taxi drivers and taxi services because customers have complained about the unruly manner of the taxi drivers in Istanbul. The demand of taxi is increasing day by day but the number of the taxi is inadequate for the Istanbul's residents and tourists. To solve these urban social problems, the municipalities urge to increase the numbers of the new taxis but the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality UKOME has not approved this demand of the mayor (Dailysabah 2022).

There was a regulation approved in 2020. This regulation changed the structure of the UKOME. Before the regulation, the mayor of each metropolitan municipality and its representatives had gotten the majority of the votes in the assembly of the UKOME (Resmi Gazete 2020). This regulation was changed the structure of the representative of the UKOME to national government benefit.

Even if the structure of the UKOME was changed, The UKOME is the primarily responsible to manage urban transportation system. This is an ongoing debate that what is an important problem for İstanbul. This discussion is not related directly to our research but the structure of the UKOME is a key role to manage urban transportation system.

Another discussed subject is related to electrical scooters. The UKOMEs are responsible for regulating and planning the e-scooter routes and park spaces in the city. According to İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality's activity plan for 2021, the İstanbul UKOME determined that 75.195 e-scooters (elektrikli skuter) were owned by E-Scooter Businesses, which applied to the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure in order to provide urban alternative transportation services for urban residents. The UKOME accepted the application of the twelve companies with 52.182 e-scooters (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi 2021).

The UKOME also decides and approves the limited-practice certificate (work permit). For instance, the actors who are operating in the transportation industry, such as school bus drivers, taxi drivers, and public transportation providers (dolmus), must apply to the UKOME to get permission (İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi 2021; Mersin Büyükşehir Belediyesi 2021; Resmi Gazete 2020). The results of the UKOME's activity show that cities' transportation systems are managed by the UKOME's decisions. The management procedure is determined by the regulation, which is changing in 2020. Consequent to this regulation, the voting proportion in the UKOME's general assembly was changed in favour of the national government representatives.

In lieu of Conclusion

Urbanization is an output of our civilization that is realized throughout the human history. Even if the city is a key element to developing the urban social and economic structure, it causes economic and social inequalities, environmental problem. Furthermore, the concentration of the population in the city is a display of urbanization. According to the United Nations report, 75 percent of the world's population lives in cities. People go to the city to find a new job and get access to a comfortable life. The urbanization process brings us serious problem in the city. One of the most significant issues is related to urban transportation, because people want to go from home to work or vice versa. The urban transportation system is getting more complex day by day.

To manage the urban transportation problem, the local government creates a management organization and defines the role and responsibilities of this organization. This paper focuses on the role and importance of the UKOME. The paper presents a descriptive view of UKOME based on the regulations and laws.

First, the UKOME was created to carry out the management of the urban transportation in accordance with coordination. To do that, its members are composed of different actors who work for the public, non-governmental organizations, and sector representatives. All these actors' main objective is to regulate the urban transportation system. There is a critical amendment which changed the members number of the UKOME in 2020. With this regulation, the voting proportion in the UKOME's general assembly was changed in favour of the national government representatives.

This new situation causes some problems. For instance, the local government is responsible for meeting the common needs of the residents. Residents are entitled to participate in local decision-making processes. With the new membership structure of the UKOME, the national government's representatives have the majority, so the local common needs cannot be determined by municipalities. As a result of the new situation, the UKOME no longer fulfils their own roles and activities in favour of local common needs. The local policy decision mechanism is affected by the conflict between local and national government relationships.

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