

A Sample for the Environmental Protection Implementation in Turkey: National Parks

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Abstract: The rapid population growth, extreme and unplanned consumption, in line with technological developments, cause intensive pressure upon natural sources. Likewise, the human values that have a global importance due to historical and cultural features face the similar problems. As one of the current global problems, environmental change and destruction urge to be taken some precautions. The conscious occurrence of the national parks, one of the precautions of environmental protection, goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century. The Yellowstone National Park, in the USA opened in 1872 can be seen as the official beginning of the environmental protection thought.

The natural and cultural sources are under serious danger in Turkey where its settlement is very old. The first legal regulations in Turkey as for the national parks were made at the end of the World War II. The first national park is Yozgat Camligi National Park opened in 1958. Today, the number of these park is 40 and the protection area reaches 897 657 hectares. It is seen that the 1.1 % of the whole area (814 578 km²) is under protection as national park field. Intense tourism pressure causes ignorance of protection approach which is the basis of sustainable environment understanding. Further, the restriction of economic benefit zones causes the local people to develop negative attitudes towards protection areas. However, the expectations of the local people should be taken into consideration by means of scientific planning so that sustainable environment understanding can reach the optimum results. In this study the legal regulations as for the national parks, national parks and their geographical distribution, the fundamental problems and suggestions were examined.

Keywords: Environmental protection, national park, sustainable development, Turkey

Introduction

The rapidly growing world population and technological developments result in the use of natural sources intensively. Especially the increase in manufacturing, the development of cities and the expansion of trade pave the way for the emergence of worldwide environmental problems. Environmental changes and impairment affect also the natural sources negatively in terms of causing their reduction and losing their quality. It began to be realized that environmental problems were reaching global level in 1960s. In this sense, almost every country began to get involved in attempts to contribute to providing sustainable progress and reducing the deterioration of natural balance. Scientific, social and economic benefits of nature protection zones began to be perceived apparently and as a consequence of this, the amount of the conserved area today is 1 billion ha (Demirel 2005: 7)

The idea of forming national park which is one of the approaches to protect the nature came into prominence in the second half of the 19th century. Yellowstone National Park which was taken under preservation in 1872 in the USA was the first practice of this idea. In the same period, the concept of nature conservation was adopted by countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Mexico.

The geographical location of Turkey paved the way for the affluence of Turkey in terms of both natural and cultural sources. However, the fact that the first settlement dates back to old times and the intense beneficial use of the area gave rise to many environmental problems. The idea to erect national parks in Turkey aiming at protecting rare species of plants and animals, cultural entities, land forms and hydrographical sources began

to develop in 1950s. The first legal regulation in Turkey regarding national parks was made with the article 25 of the Forest Law no 6831 which was implemented in 1956. Afterwards, the 2. article of National Parks Law no 2873 brought forward the concepts of nature protection zones, natural parks, natural monuments and recreation spots in addition to national parks. (Doğanay 2001:151-153, Turkey Environmental Organization 1999:335). In this article, the concept of national park is defined as the nature segments that own scientifically and aesthetically unique national and international natural and cultural values, and also recreation and tourism spots (Akınca 1996:222). By the regulations made in this field, today totaling 206 protection zones including the national parks (40), natural parks (30), natural monuments (105) and nature protection zones (31) are present in Turkey. The aggregate surface area of the aforementioned protection zones is 1028565 ha and the 897657 ha of which belong to national parks, and this constitutes 1.2 % of the country's total surface area. In 1993, protection zones (572395 ha) made up only 0.7 % of the total surface area of the country (Taşlıgil 1994:259). Just taking the national parks into consideration, it is seen that about 1.1 % of Turkey has been taken under preservation. This data reveals that there was an acceleration in the attempts to identify the protection zones after 1990. As a matter of fact, 19 of total 40 national parks were identified after 1990.

National parks which are among the most efficient approaches to transferring natural and cultural sources to the next generations after preserving them consciously are of great importance for scientific studies besides their being the centre of attraction for tourists. Protection zones like national parks which are vitally important for sustainable environmental approach are facing some basic problems which need to be solved as expeditiously as possible. The negligence of the balance between preservation-utilization, and the high pressure of tourism are the greatest problems. Accordingly, primarily Turkey's national parks and their geographical distribution in conjunction with their causes are discussed in this study. Afterwards, the problems encountered in national park areas and in the neighboring areas are dealt with from the point of preservation- utilization balance, and local economy and are attempted to come to a conclusion.

National Parks and Their Geographical Distribution

The most common way of preserving the nature in the world is national parks. Because of their natural and cultural characteristics, that some geographical areas are protected and put into the service of human beings for cultural and touristic reasons forms the basis of the foundation of national parks (Doğaner 1985:119). Therefore, in accordance with the idea of sustainable environment, the idea to build up a balance between preservation and utilization is envisaged.

Turkey is the intersection point of the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. Additionally, the variety of land forms and its being surrounded with water provides Turkey with affluence in terms of both plant and animal existence. Nevertheless, the fact that the first settlement date goes long way back brought about the serious devastation of natural sources. Though it is estimated that 10000 years before B.C, 75 % of the area on which Turkey is located currently was covered with forest, today this rate has gone down to 25 %. Within the same period, wetland has receded from 6 % to 1 %. Related to the intense exploitation, while forest, moor and wetlands have diminished, agricultural and settlement areas have steadily increased. The alterations in the natural habitat resulted in the extinction of 12 kinds of endemic plant species and brought along 1189 more plant species to the verge of extinction (Demirel 2005:24).

It is getting more and more crucial to conserve the wealthy diversity of plants against the rising human activities. Protection zones like national parks undertake a pretty important function in conserving especially the endangered species.

The conservation and declaration of national parks are carried out by General Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks which is affiliated to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The first national park which was taken under protection in 1958 is Yozgat Çamlığı National Park (Figure 2). The latest national park is Yumurtalık Lagoon National Park which was declared in 2008 (Figure 3). The number of national parks in the country has reached 40 today. The grand total of the surface area of national parks is around 897657 ha. In our country, between the years 1950-1959 4, 1960-1969 5, 1970-1979 7, 1980-1989 5, 1990-1999 11, 2000-2009 8 national parks were identified and established (Table 1). Yozgat Çamlığı (264 ha) and Bird Paradise National Park (64 ha) are the ones with the smallest area (Arı, 2003: 9). Bird Paradise National Park, which was certified to have 64 ha surface area in 1959, was scaled up to 24047 ha in 2005. The largest one of all the national parks in Turkey is Beyşehir Lake National Park with its 88750 ha of surface area. Historical relics, geomorphological formations, flora, hydrological features and the presence of diverse bird species compose the value of this park. Ağrı Mountain National Park (87380 ha), Kızıl Mountain National Park (59400 ha), Aladağlar National Park (54524 ha) and Kaçkar Mountains National Park (51550 ha) are following the previously mentioned national park in the order of magnitude (Table1).

Natural, cultural, historical and archaeological values they possess are regarded in the process of

designating the national parks in Turkey (Figure 4). Just to give an example, while Gelibolu Peninsula National Park and Başkomutan Historical National Park have been taken under protection due to their importance in terms of war history, Güllük Mountain (Termessos), Karatepe-Aslantaş, Olimpos-Beydağları Beach, Köprülü Canyon, Boğazköy- Alacahöyük and Troya Historical National Parks have been designated as national parks for their high historical value areas and for harbouring archeological relics. We also have national parks which were designated as national parks because of their natural vegetation and wild life. Yedigöller National Park, Dilek Peninsula- Büyük Menderes Delta National Park, Ilgaz Mountain National Park, Kovada Lake National Park, İçneada Longoz Forests National Park, Tek Tek Mountains National Park and Yumurtalık Lagoon National Park are some examples of these kinds of national parks. Some of the national parks in Turkey come into focus with their different source of values. To illustrate this, Köprülü Canyon National Park owns rich flora besides archeological relics. Altındere Valley National Park, which is located in the Eastern part of Black Sea Region, is known for its embodying a universal archaeological and historical structure like Sümele Monastery in addition to its natural values (Doğanay, 2003: 43-64). Göreme Historical National Park has been declared as protection zone as it possesses amazing geological formations like fairy chimneys, old settlements, churches and a high tourism potential. Uludağ, Saklıkent, and Ilgaz Mountain National Parks are also of great importance as winter tourism centers.

Taking a look at the regional distribution of national parks, it is vividly seen that 31 of 40 national parks are situated in the regions on the coast. Mediterranean (11) is the region with the most national parks. Black Sea (8), Marmara (7), Egean (5), Central Anatolia (4), Eastern Anatolia (3) and Southeastern Anatolia (2) are the regions coming after it (Figure 1, Table 1). Morphological characteristics, diverse flora, historical and cultural values are the reasons why national parks are situated mostly in coastal regions (Yaşar, 2000: 185).

	Name	Region	Province	Area (ha)	Date	Source Value
1	Aladağlar N.P.	Mediterranean	Niğde, Adana, Kayseri	54524	1995	- Geological and geomorphological structure - Flora and fauna
2	Yumurtalık Lagoon N.P.	Mediterranean	Adana	16430	2008	- Bird existence - Sea turtle and Flora
3	Nemrut Mountain N.P.	Southeastern Anatolia	Adıyaman	13850	1988	- Historical open air museum - Watching sunrise
4	Başkomutan Historical N.P.	Aegean	Afyon, Kütahya, Uşak	40742	1981	- Cultural values
5	Ağrı Mountain N.P.	Eastern Anatolia	Ağrı, Iğdır	87380	2004	- Cultural values - Flora and fauna
6	Soğuksu N.P.	Black Sea	Ankara	1195	1959	-Flora - Recreation and entertainment
7	Güllük Mountain (Termessos)N.P.	Mediterranean	Antalya	6702	1970	-Archaeological relics -Flora - Recreation and entertainment
8	Olimpos-Beydağları Coast N.P.	Mediterranean	Antalya	34425	1972	- Archaeological relics -Flora - Recreation and entertainment
9	Köprülü Canyon N.P.	Mediterranean	Antalya	36614	1973	- Archaeological relics -Flora - Geological formations
10	Altınbeşik Cave N.P.	Mediterranean	Antalya	1156	1994	- Geological and geomorphological formations - Cave ecosystems
11	Hatila Valley N.P.	Black Sea	Artvin	17138	1994	- Geological and geomorphological formations - Flora and fauna
12	Karagöl-Sahara N.P.	Black Sea	Artvin	3766	1994	- Hydrographical structure -Flora
13	Dilek Peninsula-Büyük Menderes Delta N.P.	Aegean	Aydın	27675	1966	- Well protected maquis flora of the Mediterranean - Geological structure - Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment
14	Bird Paradise N.P.	Marmara	Balıkesir	24047	1959	- Diverse bird species -Flora - Bird observation

15	Kazdağı N.P.	Marmara	Balıkesir	21300	1993	-Flora and fauna - Multiplicity of tourism
16	Küre Mountain N.P.	Black Sea	Kastamonu, Bartın	37172	2000	- Flora and fauna - Geological and geomorphological formations
17	Yedigöller N.P.	Black Sea	Bolu, Zonguldak	2019	1965	- Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment
18	Uludağ N.P.	Marmara	Bursa	12732	1961	- Geological formations - Flora - Mountain and winter sports
19	Gelibolu Peninsula Historical N.P.	Marmara	Çanakkale	33000	1973	- War history - Flora and fauna - Geomorphological formations
20	Troya Historical N.P.	Marmara	Çanakkale	13350	1996	- Historical relics - Geological structure
21	Ilgaz Mountain N.P.	Black Sea	Çankırı, Kastamonu	1088	1976	-Flora - Mountain and winter sports - Recreation and entertainment
22	Boğazköy-Alacahöyük N.P.	Central Anatolia	Çorum	2634	1988	- Archaeological relics (Hittite state center)
23	Honaz Mountain N.P.	Aegean	Denizli	9616	1995	- Geological and geomorphological formations - Archaeological relics -Flora (endemic species)
24	Gala Lake N.P.	Marmara	Edirne	6090	2005	- Wetland areas - Lake and forest ecosystems - Diverse bird species
25	Sarıkaş-Allahuekber Mountain N.P.	Eastern Anatolia	Kars, Erzurum	22980	2004	- Historical relics and war history -Flora (Pinus sylvestris forests) - Mountain and winter sports
26	Kızıldağ N.P.	Mediterranean	Isparta	59400	1969	-Flora - Recreation and entertainment
27	Kovada Lake N.P.	Mediterranean	Isparta	6534	1970	- Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment
28	Sultansazlığı N.P.	Central Anatolia	Kayseri	24523	2006	- Fresh and salty water ecosystems - Diverse bird species
29	İğneada Longoz Forests N.P.	Marmara	Kırklareli	3115	2007	- Longoz forest - Mountain and forest sports
30	Beyşehir Lake N.P.	Mediterranean	Konya	88750	1993	- Historical relics - Geomorphological formations -Flora - Hydrological features - Diverse bird species
31	Spil Mountain N.P.	Aegean	Manisa	6694	1968	- Geological structure - Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment
32	Marmaris N.P.	Aegean	Muğla	33350	1996	- Geomorphological formations - Flora and fauna - Historical relics
33	Saklıkent N.P.	Mediterranean	Muğla, Antalya	12390	1996	- Geomorphological formations - Flora and fauna
34	Göreme Historical N.P.	Central Anatolia	Nevşehir	9572	1986	- Historical settlements - Geological formations (Fairy Chimney) - Recreation and entertainment
35	Karatepe-Aslantaş N.P.	Mediterranean	Osmaniye	7715	1958	- Archaeological relics -Flora - Recreation and entertainment

36	Kaçkar Mountain N.P.	Black Sea	Rize	51550	1994	- Geological and geomorphological structure - Flora and fauna - Mountain and winter sports
37	Tek Tek Mountain N.P.	Southeastern Anatolia	Şanlıurfa	19335	2007	- Flora and fauna - Historical and archaeological characteristics
38	Altındere Valley N.P.	Black Sea	Trabzon	4800	1987	- Cultural values (Sümela Monastery) - Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment
39	Munzur Valley N.P.	Eastern Anatolia	Tunceli	42000	1971	- Geological structure - Flora and fauna
40	Yozgat Çamlığı N.P.	Central Anatolia	Yozgat	264	1958	- Flora and fauna - Recreation and entertainment

Table 1: National parks in Turkey, 1958-2009 (<http://www.milliparklar.gov.tr-20.04.2009>).

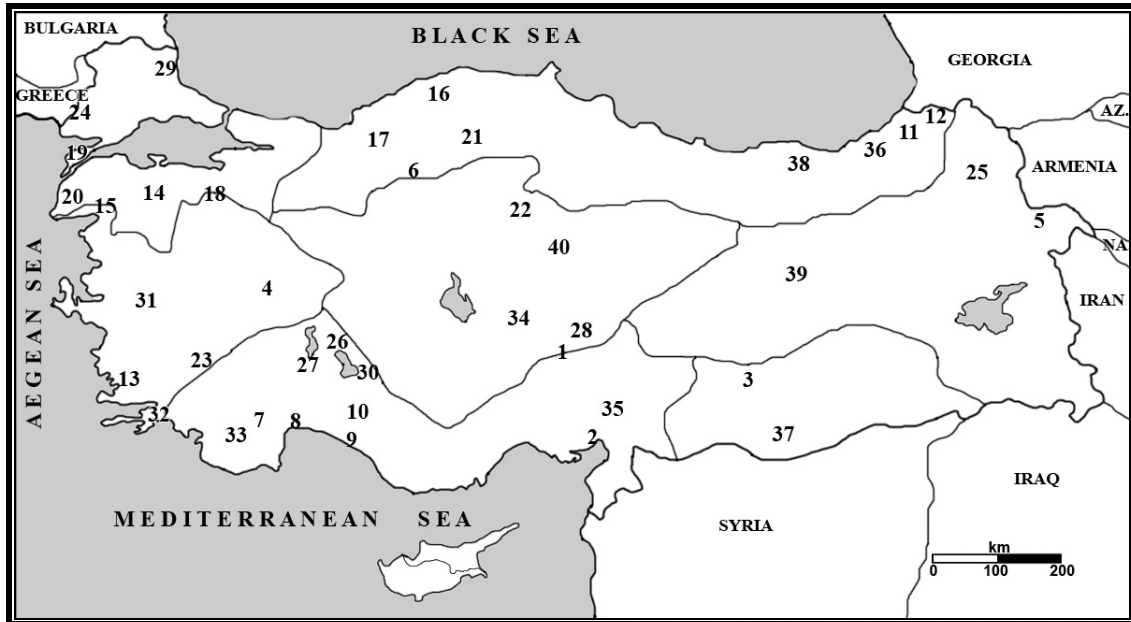


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of national parks in Turkey (2009).

National Parks:

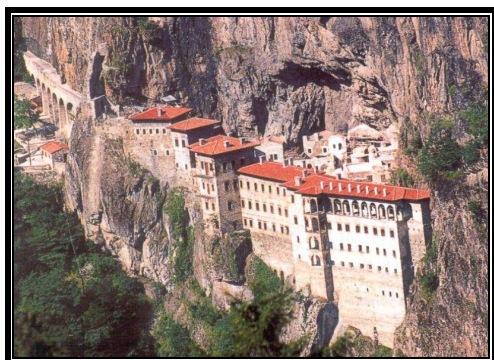
1. Aladağlar N.P. 2. Yumurtalık Lagoon N.P. 3. Nemrut Mountain N.P. 4. Başkomutan Historical N.P. 5. Ağrı Mountain N.P. 6. Soğuksu N.P. 7. Güllük Mountain (Termessos) N.P. 8. Olimpos-Beydağları Coast N.P. 9. Köprülü Canyon N.P. 10. Altınbeşik Cave N.P. 11. Hatila Valley N.P. 12. Karagöl-Sahara N.P. 13. Dilek Peninsula-Büyük Menderes Delta N.P. 14. Bird Paradise N.P. 15. Kazdağı N.P. 16. Küre Mountain N.P. 17. Yedigöller N.P. 18. Uludağ N.P. 19. Gelibolu Peninsula Historical N.P. 20. Troya Historical N.P. 21. İlgaz Mountain N.P. 22. Boğazköy-Alacahöyük N.P. 23. Honaz Mountain N.P. 24. Gala Lake N.P. 25. Sankamuş-Allahuekber Mountain N.P. 26. Kızıldağ N.P. 27. Kovada Lake N.P. 28. Sultansazlığı N.P. 29. İğneada Longoz Forests N.P. 30. Beyşehir Lake N.P. 31. Spil Mountain N.P. 32. Marmaris N.P. 33. Saklıkent N.P. 34. Göreme Historical N.P. 35. Karatepe-Aslantaş N.P. 36. Kaçkar Mountain N.P. 37. Tek Tek Mountain N.P. 38. Altındere Valley N.P. 39. Munzur Valley N.P. 40. Yozgat Çamlığı N.P.



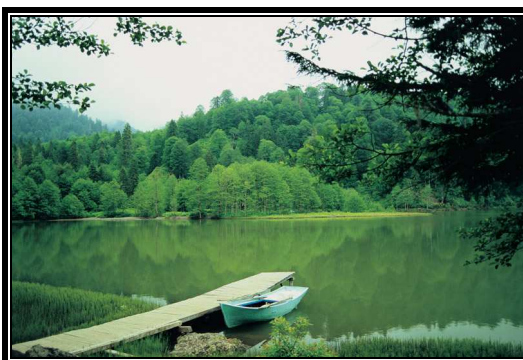
Figure 2: Yozgat Çamlığı N.P.



Figure 3: Yumurtalık Lagoon N.P.



Altındere Valley N.P.



Karagöl-Sahara N. P.



Gala Lake N.P



Troya Historical N.P



Başkomutan Historical N.P.



Dilek Peninsula-Büyük Menderes Delta N.P.



Nemrut Mountain N.P.



Ağrı Mountain N.P.

Figure 4: Views of some national parks in Turkey.

Discussion and Conclusion

The greatest threat the world faces today is the deterioration of the natural environment. The fact that environmental problems have ascended to desperate straits in the global scale entails international collaboration. Almost every country in the world aims at developing by establishing a balance between human being and natural sources, and also without depleting the natural sources. With this purpose in mind, sustainable growth is given a lot of importance with respect to social, ecological, economic, locational and cultural dimensions.

The diverse natural and cultural sources Turkey contains are witnessing a heavy exploitation of them. Because of this, a balance policy between preservation and utilization related to the use of them without contaminating, mutilating and depleting has been adopted. In this sense, national parks also draw attention. Nevertheless, there are some problems present which need to be solved as urgently as possible for the protection of source values of national park zones, reforming them and increasing their significance in terms of tourism.

Common problems regarding national parks are managerial, legal, economic and educational (Demirel, 2005: 394-401). Furthermore, that intense tourism pressure and local inhabitants can't be associated with protection zones threatens preservation and utilization balance. The duty of the management of national parks is carried out by General Directorate of Nature Protection and National Parks which is directly affiliated to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. A large number of organizations take it upon themselves to protect the nature directly or indirectly. This kind of administrative structure creates lack of coordination and it hampers the practicality of plans in protection zones. To resolve the problem, a new restructuring in which there are expert staff who can devise the source values national parks own is required. The protection zones in our country are protected with 6 different laws. This indicates that protection zones are in great legal disorder. Nature Protection Law which embraces all other laws is needed immediately in this field. High cost and scarcity of grant is one of the burning issues in the process of protection. In order to dispose of this issue, more fund should be allocated to national parks and the revenue generated out of national parks should be submitted to park administration. Financial affairs have downgraded national parks in terms of trained staff and equipment. The existing problems are the utmost hurdles on the way to the protection of the source values national parks have and their enhancement.

It is a common belief in developed countries that natural environment must be protected. However, the sense of responsibility to protect the nature is too low in countries like Turkey. For this reason, the best solution to this problem is educating individuals regarding the issue of environment and its protection. All the classes that constitute our country should lay claim to preservation policy in collaboration.

One of the burning problems of national parks is high tourism pressure. Therefore, the idea of exploitation wins out over the preservation and utilization balance in the institutions which were established with the idea of providing this balance. With the above stated approach, it is not likely to conserve the source values of national parks and to improve them too. This situation gives the illusion that the national parks of the country were established with the intention of serving tourism. For Turkey to get rid of this dilemma, an elaborate plan of national parks must be prepared. In these plans, source values and their importance must be identified thoroughly. Additionally, the zones which are not available to people and the zones the source values of which will be taken under protection, and the zones which are available for daily use should be determined. Accordingly, tourist facilities must be deployed outside national park zones.

One of the major deficiencies of the idea of preservation in Turkey is that local population can't be associated with protection zones. The traditional perception model which restricts human activities and

anticipates the migration of human beings that are within the borders of protection zone or their utilizing natural sources is being abandoned. Instead of this, there is an attempt in which local elements can get involved in the decision making process and with their lifestyles, they can become an integral part of source utilization strategies (Arı, 2003: 29). Protection zones in our country generally constrain locals' economic utilization zones. Due to financial difficulty, this paves the way for migration and locals' developing negative attitude towards protection zones. Bearing this in mind, making the locals an integral part of preservation, allowing them to utilize the source values of national parks economically without damaging them will be a modern approach.

The most efficient way to preserve historical and cultural values and pass them down to future generations without depleting and devastating them is national parks. Collaborating with one another, all groups of people in the society should develop an integrated approach that can meet the expectations. This approach which also forms the basis of sustainable progress will be a milestone in determining not only our nation's but also the common future of whole humanity.

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