

Multi-nuclear growth patterns in a rapidly changing Turkish city: a fringe-belt perspective

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Revised version received 17 May 2016

Abstract. *The fringe-belt concept provides a basis for connecting urban growth patterns to internal processes of urban transformation. However, multi-nuclear growth patterns and the associated fringe belts require greater attention. The development of fringe belts in Turkish cities is discussed with particular reference to the city of Mersin. Especial attention is given to the development of an outer fringe belt which forms an 'umbrella' over the multi-nuclear pattern of the metropolitan area.*

Keywords: urban growth, multi-nuclear, fringe belt, Mersin

The concept of the urban fringe belt is 'arguably the most important single contribution to urban morphology to arise out of the morphogenetic tradition' (Whitehand, 1987, p. 76). The recognition of fringe belts provides a basis for articulating the growth phases of cities (Whitehand and Morton, 2003). Such belts offer a historico-geographical means of connecting the patterns of urban growth at a city-wide scale to internal processes of physical change.

The growth of Turkish cities was not as great as that of the cities of Europe and the United States during much of the industrial age. However, İstanbul as capital of the Ottoman Empire, and port cities such as İzmir, Mersin, Samsun and Trabzon have experienced periods of rapid growth since the beginning of the twentieth century. In this paper, fringe-belt development is examined in cities that have grown by the coalescence of a number of settlements. The principal focus of attention is the city of Mersin, Turkey.

Fringe belts and urban growth cycles

The fringe-belt concept was formulated by Louis (1936) in Berlin. He identified different

residential zones that were separated from one another by belt-like relatively open spaces. The concept was developed by M. R. G. Conzen in his plan analyses of English towns and cities (Conzen, 1960, 1962, 1969). He defined a fringe belt as 'a belt-like zone originating from the temporarily stationary or very slowly advancing fringe of a town and composed of a characteristic mixture of land-use units seeking peripheral location' (Conzen, 1969, p. 125).

After Conzen's refinement, the fringe-belt concept became a means of explaining the complexity of urban development (Whitehand, 1987, p. 77). Such belts aided comprehensive assessments of the growth phases of cities and the physical forms associated with each of these phases (Whitehand and Morton, 2003). They are mostly unplanned entities arising from the decisions of property owners and developers. Each belt is formed of a variety of mainly extensive land uses and separates residential growth zones associated with different historical periods (Whitehand, 2001, p. 108). A striking aspect of the development of fringe belts is their continued existence long after they cease to be at the urban fringe.