

# The Village–Town (Köy–Kent) Model: A Methodological, Political, and Planning-Oriented Reformulation in the Context of Turkey and Azerbaijan for the Decentralized Anthropocene

**Prof. Dr. Aydın İbrahimov<sup>1\*</sup>, & Dr. Çağdaş Duman<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Baku State University, Azerbaijan

<sup>2</sup>Social Climate Association, Türkiye

**Corresponding Author:** Prof. Dr. Aydın İbrahimov, Baku State University, Azerbaijan.

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## **Abstract**

*This article provides a comprehensive and theoretically grounded reformulation of the Village–Town (Köy–Kent) model as a decentralized settlement and development framework suitable for the conditions of the Anthropocene. While dominant paradigms such as smart cities, resilient cities, eco-cities, and logistics cities have contributed to technological efficiency and infrastructural robustness within metropolitan cores, they continue to reproduce spatial centralization and territorial inequality. Drawing on political geography, spatial justice theory, political ecology, and regional planning literature, this study argues that sustainable and resilient futures require territorially distributed settlement networks that integrate rural and urban systems. Using Turkey and Azerbaijan as comparative contexts, the article develops a methodological and policy-oriented framework that positions the Village–Town model as a complementary, multi-scalar alternative to city-centered sustainability strategies. The study contributes to political geography and planning scholarship by demonstrating how decentralized settlement systems can support regional resilience, food sovereignty, post-conflict reconstruction, and socio-spatial stability in the Anthropocene.*

## **Keywords**

*Village–Town Model, Decentralized Planning, Smart City, Resilient City, Political Geography, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Anthropocene*

## **Introduction**

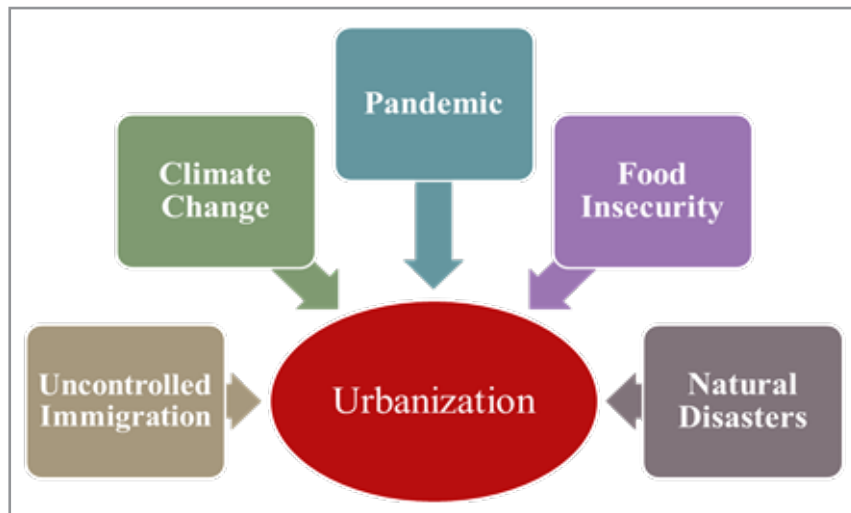
### **The Anthropocene and the Limits of City-Centered Sustainability**

The Anthropocene has emerged as a defining concept for understanding the contemporary convergence of environmental degradation, climate change, economic volatility, and geopolitical instability. Urban areas, which concentrate population, capital, and infrastructure, are both central drivers of these crises and primary sites where their impacts are most acutely experienced. As a result, urban sustainability paradigms have gained unprecedented prominence in planning and policy debates. Concepts such as smart cities, resilient cities, eco-cities, and logistics cit-

ies are widely promoted as solutions capable of optimizing resource use, enhancing adaptive capacity, and ensuring economic competitiveness.

Despite their contributions, these paradigms largely remain metropolitan-centered. They tend to treat rural regions as peripheral resource bases rather than as integral components of sustainable territorial systems. This spatial bias reinforces uneven development, accelerates rural depopulation, and increases the vulnerability of urban regions that depend on extended and fragile supply chains for food, energy, and labor. Political geography scholarship increasingly emphasizes that sustainability must be

understood as a territorial condition shaped by power relations, governance structures, and spatial organization.



This article revisits the Village–Town (Köy–Kent) model as a decentralized planning framework capable of addressing these challenges. Originally developed in the context of early Republican rural development debates in Turkey, the model is reformulated here through contemporary theoretical lenses and applied

comparatively to Turkey and Azerbaijan. The central argument is that decentralized settlement networks are not alternatives to cities, but necessary complements to urban sustainability in the Anthropocene.

### Population Problem in the Crowded Cities



### Dominant Urban Models in Contemporary Planning Discourse

Smart city strategies prioritize the integration of information and communication technologies into urban governance, infrastructure, and service delivery. By emphasizing data-driven decision-making, smart grids, intelligent transportation systems, and digital platforms, these models aim to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impacts. However, critical scholars note that smart city initiatives often privilege corporate interests, reinforce surveillance, and exacerbate socio-spatial exclusion.

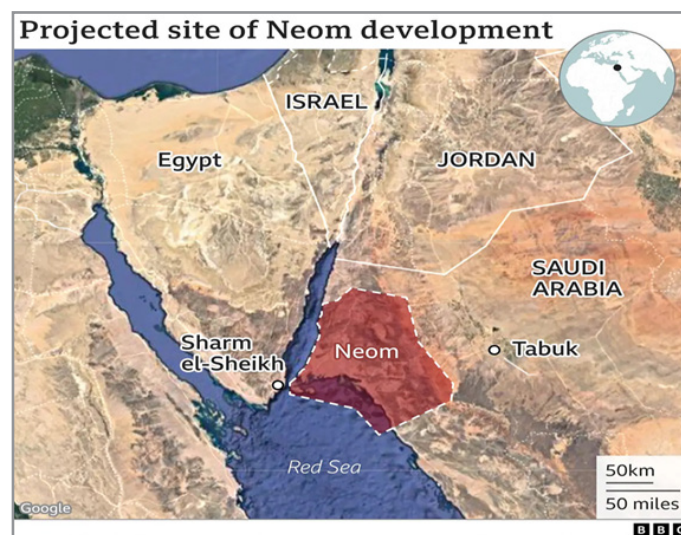
Resilient city frameworks focus on the capacity of urban systems to absorb, adapt to, and recover from shocks such as climate-related disasters, pandemics, and economic crises. While resilience thinking has broadened planning perspectives beyond efficiency, it frequently remains confined within metropolitan boundaries, overlooking the dependence of cities on rural hinterlands for essential resources.

## Modern Urban Models



Smart city approaches emphasize the integration of digital technologies, data-driven governance, and intelligent infrastructure in order to improve urban efficiency and sustainability [1, 2]. However, critical studies argue that smart city strategies may

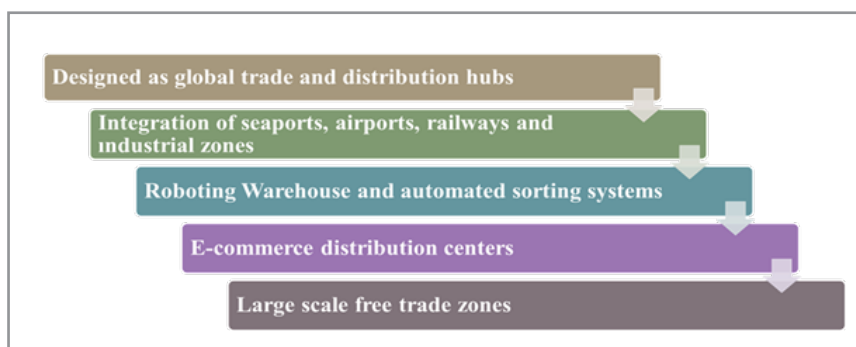
reinforce socio-spatial inequalities and corporate-led urbanism if not embedded within broader territorial justice frameworks [3, 4].



Logistics cities and corridor-based development models emphasize connectivity, mobility, and integration into global trade networks. Examples include hub-and-spoke logistics regions, port cities, and transnational corridors. Although these models can

stimulate economic growth, they often intensify territorial polarization by concentrating investment along strategic corridors while marginalizing peripheral regions.

### Main Principles of the Logistic Cities



Logistics city models prioritize connectivity, mobility, and integration into global production and trade networks. Corridor-based developments and logistics hubs can stimulate economic growth, yet they may also intensify territorial polarization by concentrating investment in strategic nodes [5, 6].

Resilient city frameworks focus on the capacity of cities to absorb, adapt to, and recover from shocks such as climate change, pandemics, and economic crises [7, 8]. While resilience thinking expands planning beyond efficiency concerns, it often remains metropolitan-centered and overlooks rural–urban interdependencies [17].

**Table 1:** Comparative Characteristics of Contemporary Settlement Models

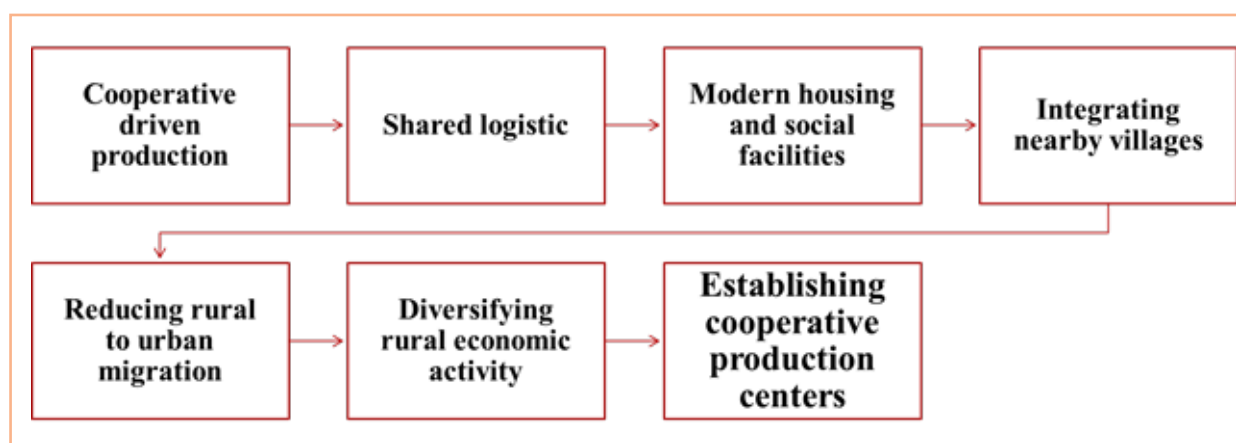
Model	Core Objective	Spatial Scale	Strengths	Key Limitations
Smart City	Efficiency & data optimization	Urban core	Technological innovation	Socio-spatial exclusion
Resilient City	Shock adaptation	Metropolitan	Risk management	Hinterland neglect
Logistics City	Connectivity & trade	Corridors	Economic integration	Territorial polarization
Village–Town	Territorial balance	Distributed network	Resilience & equity	Institutional capacity

**Theoretical Framework: Political Geography, Spatial Justice, and Decentralization**

The reformulation of the Village–Town model in this study is informed by three interrelated theoretical perspectives. Political geography highlights the spatial dimensions of power, governance, and territorial organization. From this perspective, settlement patterns are not neutral outcomes of economic processes, but politically produced spatial arrangements that shape access to resources and opportunities. Spatial justice theory emphasizes the equitable distribution of services, infrastructure, and environmental benefits across territories. It challenges planning approaches that concentrate investment in select urban centers

while externalizing social and ecological costs to peripheral regions. Political ecology further contributes by examining how environmental governance and resource management are embedded in power relations.

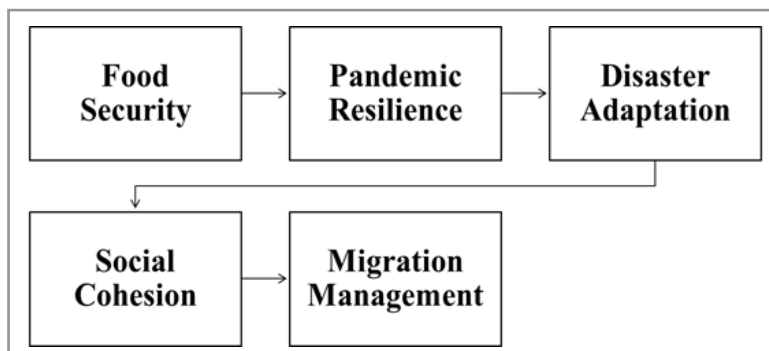
Decentralization theory, as applied here, extends beyond administrative devolution to encompass the restructuring of production, energy systems, and social reproduction across space. Within this framework, the Village–Town model is conceptualized as a networked settlement system that integrates rural and urban functions in a mutually supportive manner.



**Historical Origins and Evolution of the Village–Town Model**

The Village–Town (Köy–Kent) concept emerged during the early decades of the Turkish Republic as part of a broader effort to modernize rural society and achieve balanced national development. Influenced by cooperative movements, village institutes, and state-led planning, the model sought to transform villages into productive, socially integrated units with access to education, healthcare, and cultural services. Over time, shifts toward neoliberal economic policies, rapid urbanization, and the

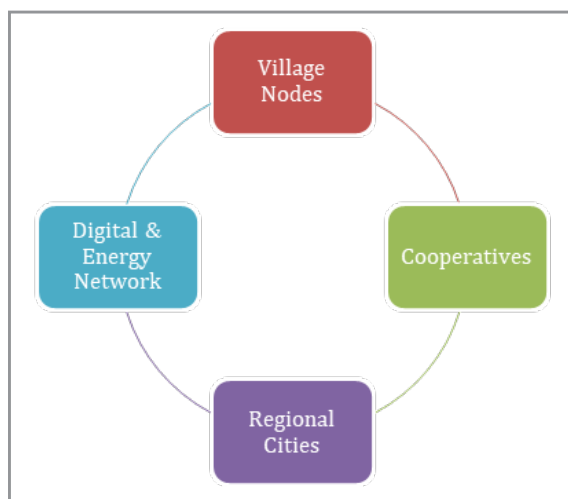
prioritization of metropolitan growth led to the marginalization of rural development strategies. The Village–Town model was largely abandoned in practice, although its underlying principles continued to resonate in academic and policy debates on regional inequality and rural depopulation. In this article, the model is reinterpreted not as a nostalgic return to ruralism, but as a forward-looking framework compatible with digital technologies, renewable energy systems, and contemporary governance practices.



**Reformulating the Village–Town Model for the Anthropocene**

The contemporary Village–Town model is envisioned as a network of semi-autonomous settlements connected through digital infrastructure, cooperative governance structures, and ecological systems. Rather than concentrating population and services in large urban centers, the model distributes them across territory in a manner that enhances systemic resilience. Key components include renewable energy micro-grids, smart and cli-

mate-adaptive agriculture, shared service centers, and digital platforms enabling education, healthcare, and governance. By shortening supply chains and embedding production within local ecosystems, the model contributes to food sovereignty and reduces vulnerability to global disruptions. Importantly, the Village–Town model incorporates appropriate forms of smartness. Precision agriculture, remote sensing, and digital marketplaces are employed in ways that support local livelihoods rather than replicating urban technological excess.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual representation of the networked Village–Town model.

**Empirical Context: Turkey**

Turkey’s development trajectory has been characterized by rapid urbanization, metropolitan concentration, and persistent regional inequality. Large-scale projects such as Kanal Istanbul have been accompanied by planning discourse that frames surrounding areas as potential smart city corridors integrating logistics, real estate, and digital infrastructure. While such projects aim to enhance global competitiveness, they also raise concerns regarding ecological risk and territorial imbalance. Within this context, the Village–Town model offers an alternative approach focused on revitalizing rural regions, strengthening cooperative economies, and reducing migration pressures on cities. By integrating decentralized settlements into national planning strategies, Turkey could enhance resilience across its territorial system. [9, 10].

**Empirical Context: Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan presents a parallel case of spatial concentration, with economic and demographic dominance centered on Baku. Following the Karabakh conflict, reconstruction efforts have emphasized smart city and smart village initiatives in reclaimed territories. Discussions regarding logistics cities along the Zangezur Corridor further illustrate the strategic role of spatial planning in regional integration. In this context, the Village–Town framework complements existing initiatives by promoting distributed settlement patterns that support agricultural revitalization, regional equity, and long-term stability [5, 6, 11-20].

**Discussion**

**Decentralization as Territorial Resilience**

The comparative analysis of Turkey and Azerbaijan demonstrates that decentralized settlement models are not incompatible

with smart or resilient city strategies. On the contrary, cities depend on resilient rural systems for food, energy, and ecological stability. The Village–Town model extends resilience beyond urban boundaries and embeds it within territorial networks. From a political geography perspective, such an approach redistributes power and resources across space, contributing to spatial justice and reducing vulnerability to systemic shocks. In the Anthropocene, resilience must be understood as a property of entire territorial systems rather than individual cities.

### Conclusion

This article has reformulated the Village–Town (Köy–Kent) model as a decentralized, network-based settlement framework suitable for the challenges of the Anthropocene. By integrating insights from smart city, resilient city, and logistics city literature with theories of political geography and spatial justice, the study demonstrates the continued relevance of decentralized planning approaches. For Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Village–Town model offers a strategic complement to urban-centered development, enhancing territorial resilience, food sovereignty, and socio-spatial equity. Future research should explore empirical implementation strategies and governance mechanisms capable of translating this framework into practice.

Beyond Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Village–Town (Köy–Kent) model holds particular relevance for post-conflict and migration-sensitive regions. In Syria, for example, the establishment of decentralized village–town networks within buffer zones could play a critical role in facilitating the voluntary return of refugees. By providing basic services, employment opportunities, and secure living environments, such settlements may contribute to long-term regional stability and reconstruction.

Similarly, the Zangezur Corridor represents a strategic geopolitical and economic link between Azerbaijan, Nakhchivan, and broader Eurasian trade networks. Integrating Village–Town principles into corridor development could prevent excessive spatial concentration and ensure balanced regional growth. Azerbaijan’s smart city initiative in the Zangilan region further demonstrates how digital technologies and decentralized planning can be combined to support sustainable reconstruction and regional equity.

In conclusion, the Village–Town model should be understood not as an alternative to smart or resilient cities, but as a complementary territorial framework. By extending sustainability and resilience beyond metropolitan centers, the model offers a pathway toward spatial justice, geopolitical stability, and adaptive capacity in the Anthropocene.

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