

The Evolution of Development Agendas: A Content Analysis of World Bank Projects in Türkiye

Şeyda GÜDEK-GÖLÇEK¹

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Abstract: The loans provided by the World Bank on project bases play a significant role in shaping both international and national policy practices. This study conducts a content analysis of the 308 projects funded by World Bank loans in Türkiye. Covering all projects from the first one accepted in 1951 to those still in the pipeline as of 2025, the analysis is based on the projects' objectives and content. MAXQDA software was used for the analysis and visualization of results. The findings reveal that the development goals of the projects between Türkiye and the World Bank have been predominantly shaped by the international policy agenda. There is a noticeable shift in project objectives from infrastructure and industry-focused initiatives toward themes like economic liberalization, social development, and environmental sustainability. Türkiye's priorities and unique conditions, however, are mainly reflected in projects addressing economic crises, natural disasters, and refugee support. Future projects are likely to focus on areas emphasized by the global policy agenda, such as climate resilience, energy transitions, and digital innovation, with continued emphasis on sustainable and inclusive development.

Keywords: World Bank, Content Analysis, MAXQDA, Development

Jel Codes: H54, O13, O19

Kalkınma Gündemlerinin Evrimi: Türkiye'deki Dünya Bankası Projeleri Üzerine Bir İçerik Analizi

Öz: Dünya Bankası'nın proje bazlı sağladığı krediler uluslararası ve ulusal politika pratiklerinin şekillenmesinde etkili olmaktadır. Türkiye'nin, Dünya Bankası kredilerinden yararlandığı projelerin içerik analizinin yapıldığı bu çalışmada 308 proje analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma ilk projenin kabul edildiği 1951 yılından başlayarak, 2025 yılında henüz hazırlık aşamasında olan tüm projeleri kapsamaktadır. İçerik analizi projelerin amaçları ve içerikleri üzerinden yapılmış, analiz ve sonuçların görselleştirilmesi için MAXQDA bilgisayar yazılımı kullanılmıştır. Sonuçta, Türkiye ve Dünya Bankası arasındaki projelerin kalkınma hedeflerinde, uluslararası politika gündeminin ağırlıklı olarak belirleyici olduğu görülmüştür. Projelerin amaçlarında altyapı ve sanayi odaklı girişimlerden ekonomik liberalleşme, sosyal kalkınma ve çevresel sürdürülebilirlik gibi temalara doğru belirgin bir kayma olduğunu görülmektedir. Türkiye'nin öncelikleri ve özgül koşulları ise ancak ekonomik kriz, doğal afet ve mülteci desteği içeren projelerde izlenmiştir. Gelecek projelerin, iklim direnci, enerji geçişleri ve dijital inovasyon gibi küresel politika gündeminin vurguladığı alanlara odaklanması ve kalkınmanın sürdürülebilir ve kapsayıcılığı üzerindeki vurgunun sürdürülmesi muhtemel görünmektedir.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Dünya Bankası, İçerik Analizi, MAXQDA, Kalkınma

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1. Introduction

After the Cold War, the World Bank (WB) became a significant actor in international macroeconomic policymaking and implementation, with its activities expanding rapidly

since the 1980s. From the 1990s onward, the framework of global governance, constructed to address global issues, has increased the influence of international actors, particularly the United Nations, in resolving various national and international problems. Within this framework, the WB provides financial support to many actors, from local to international levels, in addressing socioeconomic issues. Through project-based loans, the WB brings together national actors such as central governments, local administrations, and civil society organizations with international actors like regional organizations and multinational corporations. It aims to meet the needs required for the development process, such as joint project development, investment incentives, financing, and consultancy, within the framework of global governance (World Bank, 2024a). The policy tools it employs and the areas in which they are applied vary depending on the region and country.

When examining the projects supported by the WB, Latin America and the Caribbean emerge as the leading region in terms of project support. The region encompassing the Middle East and North Africa represents countries where projects have been implemented. Europe and Central Asia, which includes Türkiye, ranks as the third region with the highest number of supported projects. Shortly after becoming a member in 1947, Türkiye received its first project support in 1951, making it the state with the most credit opportunities in this region. Due to its strategic geographical location as a bridge between East and West, its long and unique relationship with the European Union, and its position of modernization since 1923, the WB attributes strategic importance to Türkiye, considering political developments in the region in its relations with the country (World Bank, 2014, p. 3).

Considering Türkiye's strategic importance and its long-standing relationship with the WB, the evolving themes and objectives of these projects provide valuable insights into this partnership. In this context, the study applies a deductive approach using content analysis to examine the development goals of Türkiye's WB projects. The study aims to make an original contribution to the literature by analyzing the content of the objectives of all projects between the WB and Turkey. The longitudinal change in the nature of the relationship between these two actors is analyzed. Utilizing MAXQDA software for qualitative analysis, the research categorizes these projects into thematic codes that reflect the various objectives pursued by WB and Türkiye over time. The study focuses on conducting a detailed thematic content analysis of the projects, aiming to analyze the trends, shifts, and continuities in the relationship between the two actors through the specific content and goals of the projects.

The first section of the study provides a general overview of the WB's project-based loans and their global role. In the second section, the data and methods used in this research are explained, focusing on the construction and content of the themes and codes. The third section presents the findings by examining the thematic distribution of the projects across different periods. Finally, significant trends in Türkiye's relationship with the WB, particularly in areas such as economic policy, social development, and environmental sustainability, have been identified. The conclusion discusses the implications of these findings for the project portfolio and future cooperation between Türkiye and the WB.

2. World Bank Loans

When the WB was established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, its initial goal was to address the post-war reconstruction needs, particularly in Europe. This early phase was characterized by a commitment to economic growth through capital investment in sectors essential for rebuilding war-damaged economies, such as transportation, energy, and agriculture (Cull & Efron, 2008, p. 315). The WB also undertook to promote the development of the new states that gained independence as a result of decolonization. In fact, the WB is associated with an important position as an actor in the political campaign in the development framework launched by the United

States at the end of World War II to establish its hegemonic position. In 1949, in response to the rising threat of communism in the East, President Truman announced a new programme to use the benefits of scientific progress and industrial development for the growth of underdeveloped regions (Esteve, 2010). Development and underdevelopment thus became an important agenda item for the international agenda and actors. In this context, the WB projects were a strategy aimed at building the economic infrastructure of the United States political programme.

In the 1960s, the WB expanded its focus beyond reconstruction efforts to include development assistance aimed at poverty reduction and social equality. This shift was driven by the growing recognition of the need for comprehensive development strategies that addressed not only economic growth but also social issues such as education, health, and gender equality. The concept of “*social loans*,” which emerged during this period, reflects the increasing awareness of the importance of social dimensions in development projects (Alacevich, 2009). Consequently, the WB’s approach evolved to incorporate a more holistic view of development, including investments in human capital and social infrastructure alongside traditional economic projects.

In the 1980s, the WB began to reassess its strategies in response to a number of factors. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), established in 1967 to provide an alternative to Western-based global organizations, aimed to increase the effectiveness of underdeveloped states in the international economic order and in solving economic problems. From these years onwards, the failure of the WB’s investments ensured economic growth but not development (Şenses, 2017). First the oil crisis and then the debt crises that started in Latin America and spread to other underdeveloped countries affected the whole world (Beaud, 2016, p. 368). Along with the crises, a new economic agenda emerged in the early capitalized states as productivity growth declined and stagflationary tendencies disrupted the capital accumulation process (Thorbecke, 2016, p. 142).

The WB, which focused on integrating the borrowed countries into the global economy through infrastructure and economic harmonization projects, directed its ‘development’ loans towards the purpose of integrating countries into the global market. The WB’s lending practices underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). These programs were designed to address macroeconomic imbalances in borrowing countries through policy reforms, typically involving austerity measures, deregulation, and privatization. While these adjustments aimed to stabilize economies and promote growth, they were also criticized for their adverse effects on vulnerable populations, particularly in terms of health and education outcomes (Thomson et al., 2017). The conditionality of the WB loans, tying them to the implementation of specific policy reforms, became a distinctive feature of its lending strategy during this period and sparked debates about the effectiveness and ethical implications of such practices (Thomas, 2004).

As the 1990s approached, the WB had to re-evaluate its policies again. Following a decade of structural adjustment, critiques intensified concerning the distribution or income inequality issues exacerbated by deepening neoliberal policies (Streeten, 1995, p. 93; Thorbecke, 2016, pp. 150-152). Correspondingly, as social opposition grew, the WB performance also declined (Kapur, Lewis & Webb, 1997, p. 42). In its 1989 Development Report and a report specifically for Sub-Saharan Africa, the WB acknowledged the limited success of development efforts, attributing these challenges to internal market dynamics affecting efficiency (World Bank, 1989a, pp. 2-3). As a solution to the issue of inadequate local capacity, the WB suggested expanding conditionalities to foster the implementation of sound policies in specific areas (World Bank, 1989b, pp. 10-11).

In the 1990s, as the Cold War came to an end, the WB adopted a new approach that symbolized a shift in international ideological perspectives by placing the concept of governance at the center of development policy implementation. Governance involves collaboration among various organizations and public authorities. Unlike the 1980s, when

state intervention was dismissed, the new approach accepted a regulatory role for the state, allowing for deliberate intervention to support market operations. This deliberate intervention included responsibilities related to public administration, accountability and transparency in public institutions, and anti-corruption measures (World Bank, 1994). As a result, the reform agenda expanded to encompass the political sphere alongside the economic sphere, supporting the establishment and orderly functioning of the market.

The WB shifted towards a more inclusive approach, emphasizing participatory development and stakeholder engagement in project planning and implementation. During this period, several initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Development Framework, were launched to enhance the effectiveness of development aid by integrating economic, social, and environmental considerations into project design (Fox, 2000; Hanna & Agarwala, 2000). The WB also increasingly recognized that sustainable development required strong institutions and effective governance structures, leading to a greater focus on governance and institutional capacity building (Ravallion, 2015, p. 89).

The beginning of the millennium marked another pivotal moment for the WB as it aligned its objectives with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This alignment led to an increased focus on poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental sustainability in its projects. The WB's commitment to these goals was reflected in its growing financial support for health, education, and social protection programs, particularly in low-income countries (Holzmann et al., 2009, p. 9). The institution also began exploring innovative financing mechanisms, such as the Global Financing Facility, to address urgent global challenges, including maternal and child health (Fernandes & Sridhar, 2017).

In recent years, the WB has faced new challenges, such as the 2008 global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have prompted a reassessment of its role in global development, leading to a greater focus on resilience and recovery. The WB's response to the COVID-19 crisis highlighted its adaptability in the face of emerging global challenges by rapidly disbursing funds to support health systems and economic recovery efforts in affected countries (Kilby & McWhirter, 2021). Additionally, the institution has increasingly recognized the importance of addressing climate change and environmental sustainability, integrating these considerations into its lending practices and project design.

Throughout its history, the WB has undergone a continuous evolution, shaped by the dynamic interaction between economic imperatives and social concerns (Güdek-Gölçek & Gölçek, 2023, p. 254). The institution has adapted its strategies in response to changing global contexts, criticisms of its policies, and the evolving needs of its member countries. WB has faced the challenge of balancing its traditional focus on economic growth with the pressing demands for social equity, environmental sustainability, and resilience in an increasingly interconnected world.

In conclusion, the historical development of the WB's loans and projects reflects the dynamic interaction of economic, social, and political factors. From its origins in post-war reconstruction to its current focus on sustainable development, the WB has continuously adapted its strategies to meet the evolving needs of its member countries and the global community.

3. Data & Methodology

The WB classifies its projects based on their content through sectors and themes. The sector classification includes eleven key areas directly related to the field of project implementation: *Public Administration; Energy and Extractives; Industry, Trade and Services; Financial Sector; Water, Sanitation, and Waste Management; Social Protection; Agriculture, Fishing, and Forestry; Health; Education; Transportation; and Information and Communication Technologies*. In addition to this, the WB has established a three-tier thematic system to categorize projects according to their content and objectives. Many themes are applied across various projects, often encompassing multiple specific policy areas (World Bank,

2016). Given this broad thematic coverage, classifying projects solely by sector makes it difficult to derive specific insights and understand changing trends in the nature of the loans used. This study focuses on a thematic content analysis of the projects, providing a detailed examination of the projects undertaken between Türkiye and the WB. The aim is to analyze the trends, shifts, and continuities in their relationship based on the specific content and objectives of these projects.

3.1. Data

In the study, 308 projects between Türkiye and the WB from 1951 to 2025 were evaluated. Table 1 presents the distribution of the projects according to their status and years. As shown in Table 1, all the projects included in the dataset were analyzed. “Active” projects refer to those still ongoing, while “closed” projects represent those that have been completed and finalized. “dropped” projects are those that were discontinued, and “pipeline” projects indicate potential future projects. Both dropped and pipeline projects were included in the analysis, as they reflect the ongoing agenda between the two actors.

Table 1. Distribution of Projects by Years

Project Status	Active		Closed		Dropped		Pipeline		Total	
Projects	41		226		26		15		308	

Years	1951-1953	1963-1969	1970-1974	1975-1979	1980-1984	1985-1989	1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019	2020-2025
Projects	6	11	19	17	31	32	17	28	24	27	17	30	49

Source: World Bank, 2024b.

As seen in Table 1, the majority of the projects fall under the “closed” status. Of the active projects, 31 belong to the period of 2020-2024, and 10 are from 2014-2019. There are 9 projects for the year 2025, all of which are in the “pipeline” status. When examining the distribution of projects over the years, it is evident that there was an increase in the 1980s and again after 2015.

3.2. Methodology

In this study, a deductive approach to content analysis was applied through project development objectives. Therefore, themes and codes were not generated from the dataset but were derived from the WB’s classifications and relevant literature (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In creating the themes and codes, the WB’s themes and sectors provided in the dataset were utilized. Additionally, to reflect the changing nature of the projects, specific objectives of the projects and insights from the literature also played a role in shaping the codes.

Table 2 presents the theme and coding system used in this study.

Table 2. Theme and Code System Used in the Study

Themes	Codes	
Human Development	⇒ Health	
	⇒ Education	⇒ Basic Education
		⇒ Vocational Education
	⇒ Social Protection	⇒ Poverty
		⇒ Social Security
⇒ Employment		
Economy	⇒ Structural Adjustment	
	⇒ Privatization	
	⇒ Private Sector Initiatives and Export	
	⇒ Rationalisation in Public Sector	
	⇒ Emergency Recovery	
Agriculture	⇒ Agricultural Land Development	
	⇒ Financial Intermediary in Agriculture	
	⇒ Agro-Industry	⇒ Livestock Farming
		⇒ Agricultural Production
⇒ Marketing and Export		
Industry	⇒ Financial Intermediary in Industry	
	⇒ Production and Export	
Transportation	⇒ Highway	
	⇒ Railway	
	⇒ Port	
Energy And Extractives	⇒ Hydroelectricity	
	⇒ Renewable Energy	
	⇒ Oil and Gas	
	⇒ Thermal Power	
	⇒ Mining	
Living Areas	⇒ Risk Management	
	⇒ Urban	⇒ Sustainable Municipality
		⇒ Urban Development
	⇒ Rural Development	
Climate And Environment	⇒ Efficiency	
	⇒ Green Standards and Policy	
	⇒ Fighting Pollution	

It is observed that the projects benefiting from the WB loans in Türkiye are grouped under eight themes. The coding system specifically represents the content of these themes. All themes, except for *human development* and *living areas*, were derived from the WB's themes and sectors. The *human development* theme was based on the United Nations' development agenda. The sub-code employment under this theme is included in the social protection code due to the WB's sector distinction and the objectives of the projects. The employment goal of these projects aims to reduce the social costs of economic policies and crises.

All codes under the *living areas* theme aim to improve and strengthen living spaces. The *risk management* code focuses on making urban areas more resilient, especially against earthquakes, and planning evacuation and gathering zones. The urban and rural development codes include infrastructure services, primarily sanitation and drinking water. Transportation, electricity, and housing were also included as objectives, especially in projects from the 1990s. The sustainable municipality code represents a more recent goal, seen from 2005 onwards, emphasizing that municipal services should be provided with environmental sensitivity and sustainability in mind.

All codes under the themes were primarily created based on the specific objectives of the projects. The codes Private sector initiatives and export, rationalization in public sector, and agricultural land development were developed using insights from the literature. The *private sector initiatives and export* code mainly includes projects aimed at supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and private entrepreneurs in

exporting. The rationalization in public sector code represents the modernization, integration, and rationalization of public sector systems. Agricultural land development includes activities such as opening, rehabilitating, and modernizing agricultural lands, as well as improving irrigation systems.

The validity of the analysis is based on the fact that the code system is based on the concepts and phenomena agreed in the literature and in the WB resources. In qualitative research, the validity of the analysis can be assessed from the perspective of the researcher, participants, readers and reviewers (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In the study, the triangulation validity strategy was used to check the accuracy of the analysis. The triangulation strategy requires the use of different sources of information to identify themes (Creswell & Creswell Báez, 2021, p. 200). For the study, the sources of information are the classification system of WB projects and the literature. Furthermore, as can be seen from Table 2, the themes and codes generated consist of simple, objective and content-neutral concepts.

In this study, MAXQDA software was utilized during the analysis process and for the visualization of the results. MAXQDA serves as a useful tool for organizing, analyzing, and visualizing qualitative data.

4. Findings

When the projects were analyzed in general, the strongest theme identified was economy. The *economy* theme first emerged in 1980 and rapidly increased, surpassing other themes. Since 1980, nearly every year has seen the implementation of a project focused on policies related to the *economy* theme. The *economy* theme is followed by *energy and extractives* and *living areas* themes.

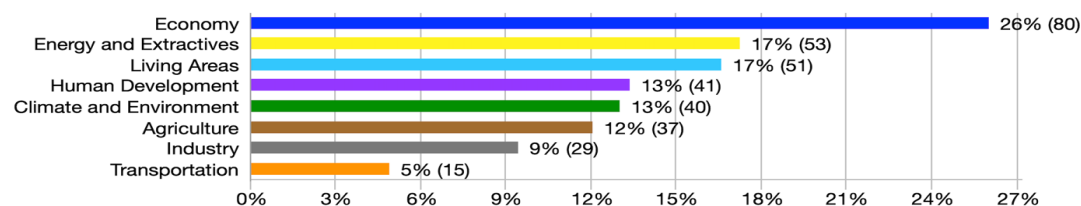


Figure 1. Distribution of Projects by Themes

From Figure 2, which shows the distribution of themes over the years, it is clear that the relationship between Türkiye and the WB, based on credit, has been influenced by global and national macroeconomic developments. While there is a decline in the *agriculture* and *industry* themes after the 1980s, an increase is observed in the *economy* theme, which aligns with international macroeconomic policies, as well as in the *environment* themes, which are at the core of sustainability agendas. Other themes exhibit periodic fluctuations.

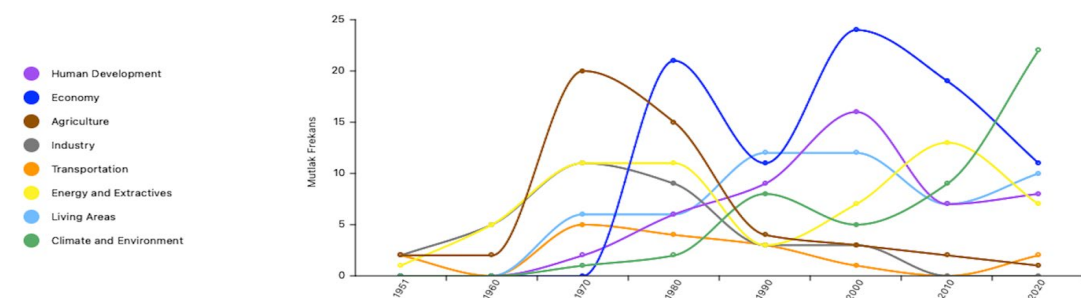


Figure 2. Trend of Themes Over the Years, 1951-2025

The changes in themes indicate that certain significant shifts occurred across different periods. When considering the changes in themes, codes, and their content, the projects between the WB and Türkiye can be divided into four distinct periods. The heat map presented in Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of codes across these four periods. The heat map shows the distribution of the frequency of the codes according to red (most) and blue (least). The color transition from red to blue is generated by MAXQDA according to the frequency of occurrence of the codes. The number of cods with colors is also shown in Figure 3.

Themes	Codes	1951-1979	1980-1999	2000-2015	2016-2025	
Human Development	Health	0	3	3	4	
	Education	Basic Education	0	2	2	2
		Vocational Education	2	7	2	1
	Social Protection	Poverty	0	0	2	1
		Social Security	0	1	5	1
		Employment	0	2	3	5
Economy	Structural Adjustment	0	14	5	0	
	Privatization	0	8	6	1	
	Private Sector Initiatives and Export	0	5	12	5	
	Rationalisation in Public Sector	0	5	6	3	
	Emergency Recovery	0	0	4	12	
Agriculture	Agricultural Land Development	5	2	1	3	
	Financial Intermediary in Agriculture	4	2	0	0	
	Agro-Industry	Livestock Farming	5	3	0	0
		Agricultural Production	6	9	2	0
		Marketing and Export	4	3	0	0
Industry	Financial Intermediary in Industry	13	4	2	0	
	Production and Export	5	8	1	0	
Transportation	Highway	2	4	0	0	
	Railway	1	2	1	2	
	Port	4	1	0	0	
Energy and Extractives	Hydroelectricity	12	8	5	0	
	Renewable Energy	0	0	8	6	
	Oil and Gas	1	4	3	3	
	Thermal Power	1	1	0	2	
	Mining	3	1	0	0	
Living Areas	Risk Management	0	2	7	7	
	Urban	Sustainable Municipality	0	0	2	4
		Urban Development	4	15	2	0
	Rural Development	2	1	3	4	
Climate and Environment	Efficiency	0	0	6	6	
	Green Standards and Policy	1	4	3	10	
	Fighting Pollution	0	6	4	7	

Figure 3. Heat Map of Themes and Codes by Period

The period from 1951 to 1979 is distinguished from other periods by the prominence of the *agriculture*, *industry* themes, and the *hydroelectricity* code. The significant shift in the 1980-1999 period is marked by the emergence of projects under the *economy* theme for the first time. The *structural adjustment* code quickly became a key part of the economic policy agenda. Additionally, the *urban development* code stands out during this period. The 2000-2015 period continues to prioritize the *economy* theme, although the *structural adjustment* code declines, and the *private sector initiatives and export* code rises sharply. The 2016-2025 period differs due to a negative shift in the *economy* theme. The efforts to develop the private sector in the previous two periods are replaced by a focus on emergency recovery in this period. Moreover, the *climate and environment* theme takes a prominent position on the policy agenda. Analyzing each period in terms of the nature and prominent codes offers a more detailed analysis. Examining each period also helps explain the relationship between Türkiye’s credit projects and national and international developments. For this reason, the findings have been analyzed in detail for each period.

4.1. 1951-1979: Developmentalism and Industrial Focus

The period between 1951 and 1979 aligns with the macroeconomic policy agenda focused on import substitution industrialization. During this period, Türkiye implemented an industrialization policy led by the private sector, based on import substitution (Pamuk, 2014, pp. 250-252). As seen in Figure 3, the *industry* theme becomes

prominent with the financial intermediary code. The projects indicate a focus on supporting industrialization, particularly through the Turkish Industrial Development Bank, which was established with the support of U.S. aid agencies and the WB during these years, financing industrial investments (Keyder, 2013, p. 173). The State Investment Bank was also minimally included in projects for this purpose.

As shown in Figure 4, the themes of this period are consistent with economic policies. The *energy and extractives* and *transportation* themes stand out as a result of industrialization policies. The *hydroelectricity* code in the *energy* theme and the *port* code in the *transportation* theme support the *production and export* code within the *industry* theme. Projects under the *human development* theme, particularly the *vocational education* code, were implemented to support industrial employment.

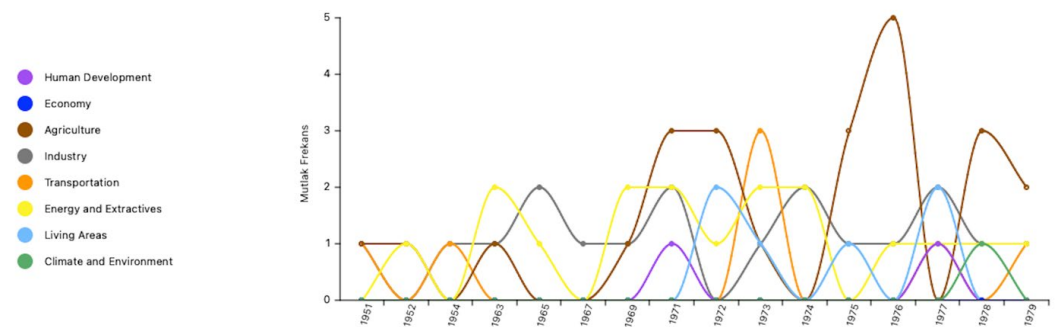


Figure 4. Distribution of Themes by Year, 1951-1979

Figure 4 also highlights that this period is characterized by significant investments in agriculture. Agro-industry, as another aspect of industrialization, was supported. The codes for livestock farming, agricultural production, and marketing and export reinforce this conclusion. The dominance of the *agriculture* theme during this period is consistent with Türkiye's agricultural policies following World War II. After the 1945 Law on Land Distribution to Farmers, the expansion of land ownership and the use of U.S. aid to support farmers continued with WB loans. The amount of cultivated land increased in Türkiye during the 1950-60 period, leading to rapid growth in agricultural production (Keyder, 2013, pp. 163-165).

The *living areas* theme entered project priorities starting in 1970, likely reflecting the infrastructure and housing needs driven by the urban migration that industrialization encouraged. The faster pace of urbanization compared to industrialization and the resulting informal housing growth (Boratav, 2011, pp. 131-132) brought attention to the *urban development* code.

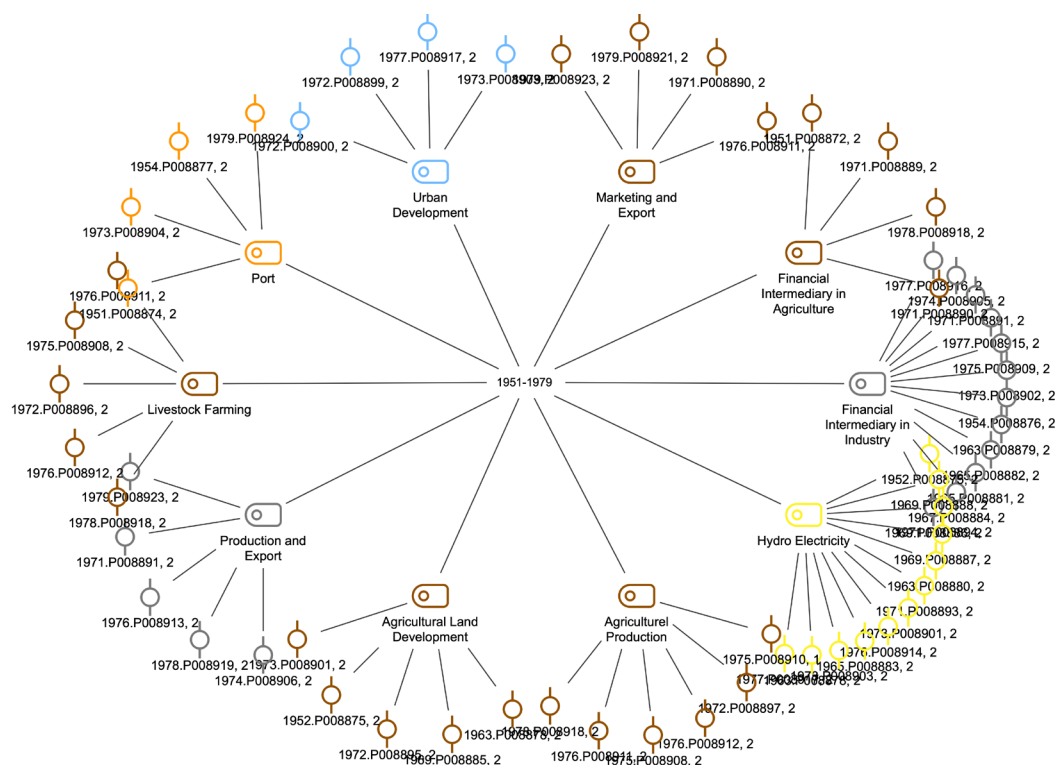


Figure 5. Single-Case Model, 1951-1979

Figure 5 summarizes the 1951-1979 period by presenting a model of the 10 most frequently used codes in projects. The extensions around the codes show the projects associated with each code. The model, which highlights the most commonly used codes and thus the most heavily invested policy areas, demonstrates the development of agricultural lands for agricultural production. Additionally, financial intermediary efforts to support private initiative aimed to enhance production and export in industry. The primary energy source for production and development during this period was hydroelectricity.

4.2. 1980-1999: Neoliberal Reforms and Economic Liberalization

The most significant structural feature of the 1980-1999 period arises from the *structural adjustment* code embedded in the *economy* theme. Projects under this code generally aimed at economic structural adjustment programs and, more specifically, sector-specific structural adjustments. As seen in Figure 6, the frequency of the *structural adjustment* code caused the *economy* theme to dominate throughout this period. During the process of neoliberal economic policies implemented after the January 24th Decisions, the reduction of state intervention in the economy also led to the inclusion of the *privatization* code in projects (Keyder, 2011, pp. 38-39). The first projects targeting privatization focused on reforms in State Economic Enterprises (SEEs). These were followed by projects aimed at privatizing the electricity sector within the energy industry. The wave of privatization, which began with SEEs in the 1980s and continued into the 2000s, was a challenging process in Türkiye (Ağartan, 2018).

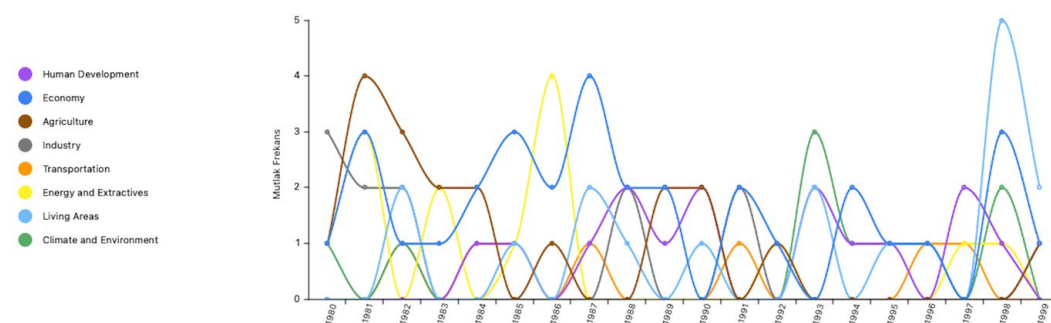


Figure 6. Distribution of Themes by Year, 1980-1999

As seen in Figure 6, the *agriculture* theme continued until the early 1990s. However, the changes within the content of the *agriculture* theme during this period indicate a departure from previous agricultural policies. Except for two projects in 1983 and 1989, the *financial intermediary* code, which had previously been common in agricultural policies, is largely absent in this period. The main reason for this is the abandonment of direct farmer support policies through Ziraat Bank for production. Starting with the Agricultural Sector Adjustment Loan Project implemented in 1985, agricultural investments shifted towards irrigation systems, technical training, and research support.

The *energy and extractives* theme gained visibility until the late 1980s due to the prominence of the *hydroelectricity* code. During this period, projects frequently included *hydroelectricity* alongside the *urban development* code, which is part of the *living areas* theme. The prominence of these codes can be linked to the rural-to-urban migration triggered by the rapid growth waves of the 1960s and early 1970s. The rapidly increasing urban population required infrastructure development, including sanitation, drinking water, and the provision of electricity to urban areas (Pamuk, 2014, p. 230). Additionally, the impact of the 1973 Oil Crisis, coupled with the high inflation and unemployment wave that intensified toward the late 1970s (Boratav, 2011, pp. 141-143), likely contributed to the rise of the *vocational education* code within the *human development* theme, as seen in Figure 3. Projects under the *vocational education* code during this period primarily aimed to provide technical training for employment, particularly in industry. Projects featuring the *employment* code also adopted a similar function. Furthermore, employment-supporting projects sought to mitigate the social costs of privatization.

On the other hand, the *climate and environment* theme emerged during this period and saw an increase in the early 1990s. Apart from two projects focusing on the protection of forests, heritage sites, and biodiversity, most projects aimed to establish environmental standards. Specifically, these projects addressed policies, monitoring, and technological measures targeting industries in Türkiye that used ozone-depleting substances (ODS). Thus, environmental standards began to emerge as a constraint on industrialization during a period when industrial policies were weakening. For instance, the United Nations' 1990 Human Development Report emphasized the importance of environmental conditions, particularly for developing countries. The report highlighted that poverty contributes to adverse environmental conditions such as deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, and water pollution, and that developing countries should prioritize environmental concerns, especially regarding land and water (United Nations, 1990). Consequently, the *fighting pollution* code, which would later become a staple of policy agendas, saw a sharp rise. Additionally, solid waste management, a component of the *fighting pollution* code, appeared for the first time as a project target during this period.

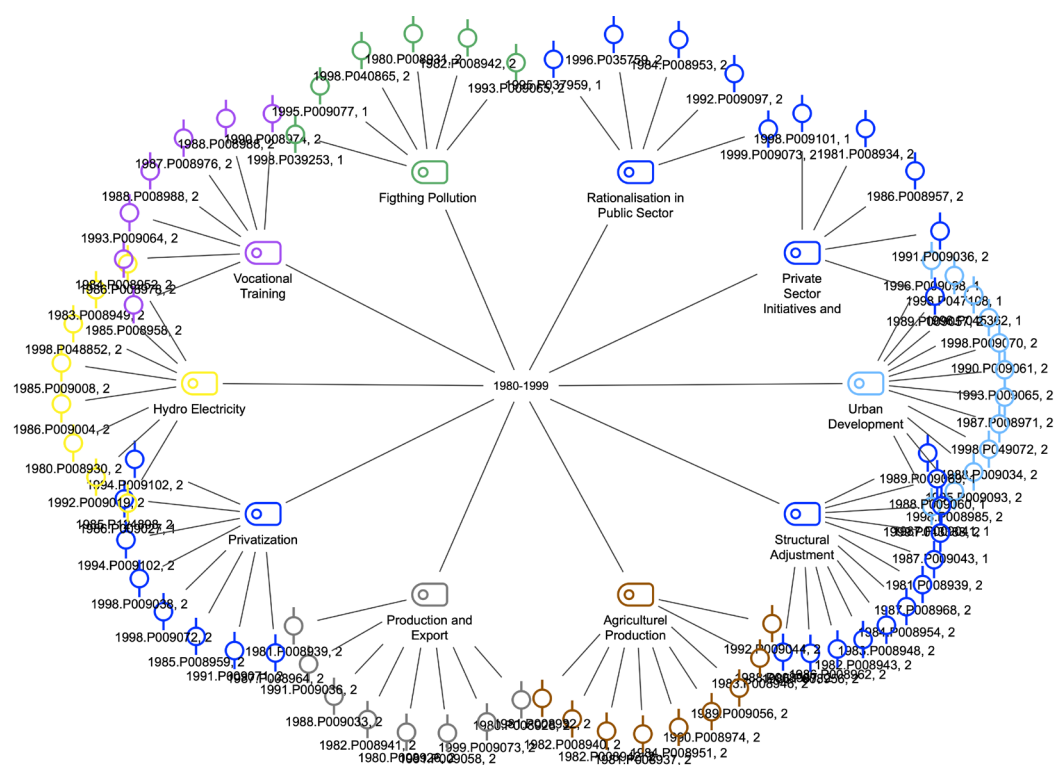


Figure 7. Single-Case Model, 1980-1999

Figure 7, which illustrates the prominent codes of this period, reveals that the *production and export* codes within the *agriculture* and *industry* themes continued to decline. Türkiye's shift toward neoliberal economic policies led to a marked reduction in the *agriculture* and *industry* themes. In response to the socioeconomic challenges of the period, the urban development and *hydroelectricity* codes gained prominence. The *structural adjustment* code, a defining characteristic of this period, also features in the case model. Between 1980 and 1984, five structural adjustment loan projects were implemented. Additionally, from 1980 to 1996, structural adjustment projects were executed in the agriculture, energy, finance, and public sectors. In line with the global integration of the financial sector during this period (Cömert & Türel, 2017, p. 282), more *structural adjustment* codes were observed in the finance sector.

4.3. 2000-2015: Structural Shifts, Crisis Response, & the Rise of Sustainable Development

The 2000-2015 period represents a phase where the *agriculture* and *industry* themes nearly disappeared, and other themes showed fluctuations. The *economy* theme was present throughout this period, encompassing all its codes. The *structural adjustment* code, which characterized the previous period, was replaced by the *private sector initiatives and export* code. Nearly all the projects under this code were implemented to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). After the experience of the Grameen Bank, policies targeting SMEs, positioned at the center of the international development agenda as a primary tool for combating poverty, also impacted Türkiye (Buğra, 2010, p. 94). The *privatization* code continued to be seen in the energy and telecommunications sectors during this period. Additionally, projects aimed at supporting privatizations and increasing employment to gain public support for these privatizations were implemented. Despite the relatively slow and challenging privatization process in Türkiye compared to countries with similar economic structures, this changed in the early 2000s, paving the way for larger-scale privatizations during this period (Ağartan, 2017).

On the other hand, this period also witnessed the introduction of the *emergency recovery* code due to various crises. The program created by Kemal Derviş, supported by the IMF following the 2001 crisis, helped keep the *economy* theme active. The WB also provided credit to projects addressing the impacts of both the 2001 and 2008 global financial crises. Furthermore, these crises contributed to the presence of the *social security* and *employment* codes in projects. Although the 2008 crisis was a financial one, it affected Türkiye's real markets, leading to a sharp increase in unemployment (Güdek-Gölçek & Gölçek, 2020, p. 2000). Additionally, the social security code appeared in projects following the reforms implemented in the Social Security Institution in 2008 (Eğilmez, 2020, p. 42), with the *health* code in the *human development* theme supporting these reforms, particularly in health insurance.

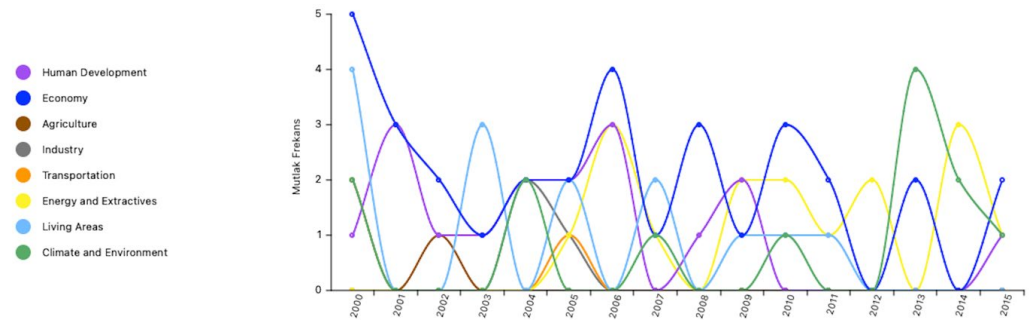


Figure 8. Distribution of Themes by Year, 2000-2015

While the continuity of the *living areas* theme was evident in this period, significant changes within the theme were also noticeable. In 2000, two projects focused on rehabilitation and reconstruction after the March 13, 1992 Erzincan earthquake and the August 17, 1999 Gölçük earthquake in the Marmara region. The *urban development* code declined compared to the previous period, while the *rural development* code increased. Moreover, the heightened environmental awareness spurred by the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was reflected in the *sustainable municipality* code, which gained visibility within the *living areas* theme. This international development led to the prominence of the *climate and environment* themes. Projects aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and reducing air pollution, as indicated by the rise of the *fighting pollution* codes, also contributed to the increase in green-themed projects.

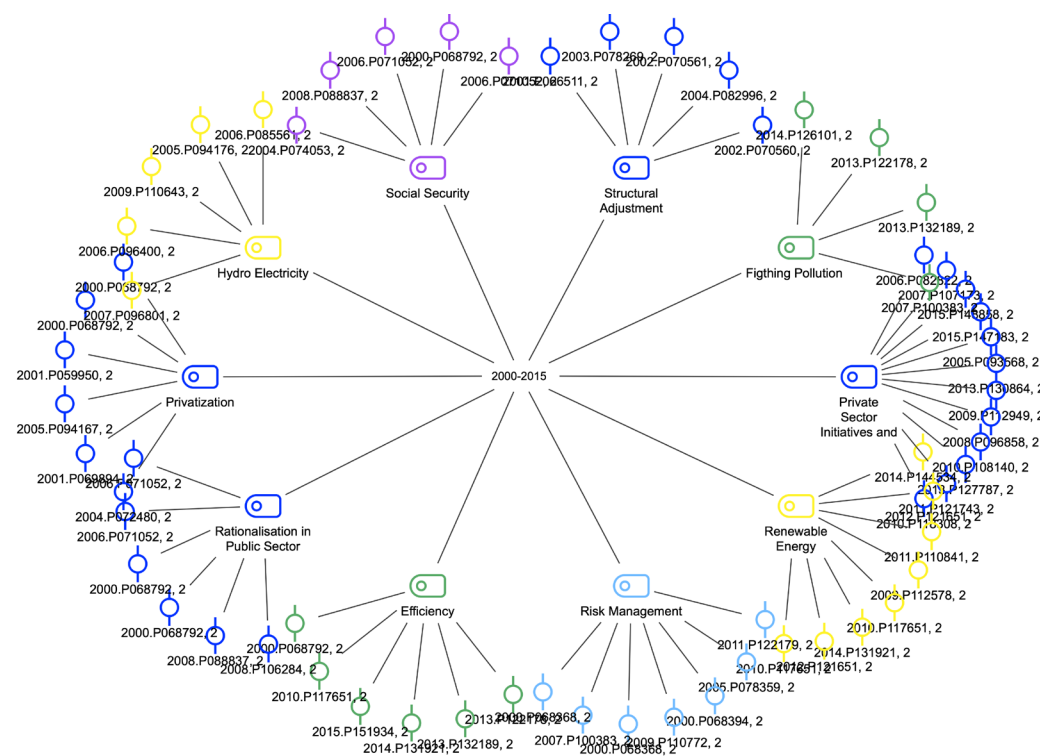


Figure 9. Single-Case Model, 2000-2015

Another change during the 2000-2015 period, as seen in the model in Figure 9, occurred in the *energy and extractives* theme. The *renewable energy* code entered the project agenda for the first time and became one of the most prominent codes. Consistent with the international sustainable development agenda, this code emerged as a key focus within the *energy and extractives* theme. Another change in the energy sector during this period was seen in the content of the *hydroelectricity* code. While previous projects supported electricity production, storage, and distribution before the privatization policies for electricity, the *hydroelectricity* code in this period aimed to improve the efficiency of the electricity distribution process and address the issues encountered in this process.

The single case model presented in Figure 9 demonstrates that the prominent areas of this period differed significantly from those of previous periods. The *efficiency* and *renewable energy* codes were prioritized within the WB-Türkiye credit agenda, in line with the international agenda. The *rationalization in the public sector* code, which had been part of project objectives since the 1980s in line with neoliberal economic policies, gained prominence during this period, likely due to the financial discipline introduced by the IMF-backed program in 2001 (Eğilmez, 2020, p. 107). Investments targeting SMEs made the *private sector initiatives and export* code a defining characteristic of this period. Lastly, the *risk management* code, related to earthquakes, entered the case model. The rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in earthquake-prone regions during the previous period brought earthquake risk management to the agenda. Projects aimed at planning evacuation and gathering areas and increasing earthquake resilience were included among the objectives. These projects primarily focused on strengthening Istanbul against earthquake risks.

4.4. 2016-2025: Sustainability and Socioeconomic Challenges

Two key policy areas have characterized the 2016-2025 period: 1) Addressing socioeconomic challenges, and 2) Environmental concerns. The *emergency recovery* code appeared in 2018 in projects aimed at Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTP). There

are a total of nine projects in this category: six under the *emergency recovery* code, one under the *basic education* code, and two under the *private sector initiatives and export* code. The project focusing on education for SuTP was developed under the EU Facility for SuTP.

During this period, Türkiye experienced significant socioeconomic challenges due to the refugee crisis and the global COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate the impact of the pandemic, two projects were launched to prevent the closure of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and maintain employment levels during the crisis. Additionally, two projects were implemented to support the healthcare sector, and one project aimed to enhance the capacity for remote education access for school-aged children. Another major challenge in this period began with the February 6, 2023 earthquakes. Four projects were implemented to address housing and healthcare needs in the earthquake-affected region and support businesses impacted by the disaster.

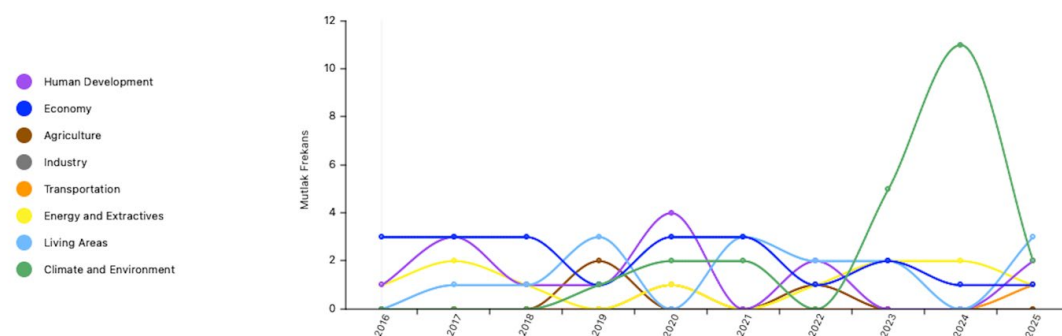


Figure 10. Distribution of Themes by Year, 2016-2025

While the previous period saw earthquake risk management as a central project objective, this remained a priority in the current period. However, some changes occurred in the content of the risk management projects. Objectives now include strengthening critical infrastructure resilience and raising public awareness of disaster risks. Since 2021, wildfire risk management has become the sole focus of this code. The increase in wildfires from 2020 onwards, coupled with the government's delayed and insufficient response, can be linked to changes in the *risk management* code.

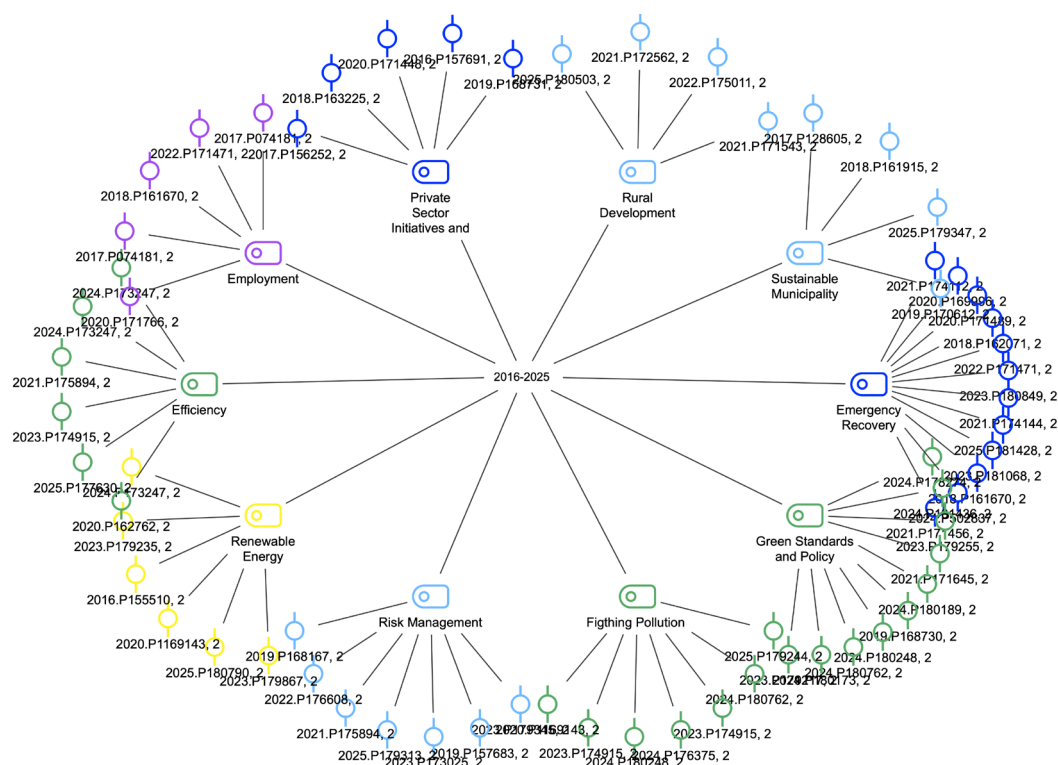


Figure 11. Single-Case Model, 2016-2025

As shown in Figure 11, green policies have become a defining feature of this period. The WB expanded its investment project financing to include collaborations with national actors in many countries, extending its activities into green economy and environmental protection (Ganbat et al., 2016). Within the *energy and extractives* theme, *renewable energy*, and under the *living areas* theme, *sustainable municipality* codes reflect aspects of sustainable development policies. The *green standards and policy* code became a dominant theme, aligning with the international agenda set by the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Türkiye joined the Agreement in line with its request for access to financial and technological support under the new climate regime. On April 22, 2016, Türkiye signed the Agreement, affirming its status as a developing country (Directorate of Climate Change, 2024). Consequently, projects have focused on combating pollution, including air pollution, waste management, recycling, and efforts to prevent water pollution in the Marmara Sea region.

Projects under the *green standards and policy* code include sustainable management of natural resources, green planning, policies to prevent pollution, and the development of legal mechanisms, monitoring, and information systems. The *efficiency* code primarily focuses on improving energy efficiency in public institutions, generating savings, and promoting public awareness of energy conservation. Finally, the *employment* code involves investments in human capital to create better job opportunities, particularly in technological fields, while two projects aim to support employment for SuTP and Turkish citizens.

5. Conclusion and Evaluation

The credit relationship between Türkiye and the WB has been shaped by both international policy agendas and developments within Türkiye. The relationship represents a dynamic and evolving partnership, influenced—albeit to varying degrees—by global development trends and Türkiye’s local needs. However, the international agenda has proven to be a more decisive factor. In the 1951-1979 period, projects funded by the WB were aligned with its founding motivation of supporting policies that

operationalized the liberal market economy, increased global welfare through foreign aid policies, and thus counteracted the spread of communism. Inspired by the successes of welfare states, efforts to include low-income countries within this framework gained momentum, making development economics a popular field after 1950 (Şenses, 2001, p. 104-105). During the 1951-1979 period, particularly until the 1970s, the supported projects were grounded in development economics.

Since the 1980s, projects have continued to sustain liberal economic policies. The introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1980s, aligned with neoliberal reforms and economic liberalization strategies, marked a turning point in Türkiye's economic policies. After the rapid economic restructuring of the 1980s, liberal economic policies remained the central focus of projects until the 2000s. In the 2000s, the influence of the Sustainable Development Agenda, constructed under the United Nations framework, began to emerge. From 2015 onwards, the global threats of increasing environmental degradation and climate change have directly impacted the WB's project agenda and its relationship with national economies.

The WB and Türkiye's projects, especially in times of emergencies and crises, have shown that Türkiye's priorities and needs are also taken into account. During the challenging years of economic crises and earthquakes, the WB responded quickly by implementing Emergency Recovery projects. However, outside of crises and disasters, it is evident that Türkiye's unique national conditions and socioeconomic issues have largely been overlooked. Despite the growing socioeconomic challenges after 2015, WB has primarily directed its support towards green projects.

Overall, the shifting priorities in the WB's project portfolio are evident, transitioning from initial infrastructure and industrial-focused initiatives to more prominent themes like economic liberalization, social development, and environmental sustainability. It becomes clear that WB's priorities and objectives play a determining role in shaping the economic policies of borrowing countries. The variety of projects, ranging from infrastructure development to social policy reforms, illustrates the WB's broad involvement in Türkiye's development agenda. The trend in the Türkiye- the WB project portfolio suggests that future projects will likely focus on areas emphasized by the global policy agenda, such as climate resilience, energy transitions, and digital innovation, with continued emphasis on sustainability and inclusiveness in development.

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