Chapter 5
Perceptions and Practices of Disaster Governance in Countries with Long History of Centralized Administration: A Case Study of Balikesir Municipalities, Turkey

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Abstract Causing major disruptions, disasters threaten more than ever the whole world, especially urban areas, where more than half of the world's populations live in today. Influenced by several recent international initiatives, such as United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, and The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (SFDRR), there has been a growing awareness and consensus on the need in risk reduction, prevention, and climate adaptation. Such initiatives highlight the importance of efforts of reducing disaster risks and building a "culture of prevention," as part of sustainable development. This reflects a paradigm shift in the mindset from disaster response to disaster reduction and preparedness. This shift also necessitates a fundamental change from centralized disaster management to decentralized disaster governance that is supposed to involve partnerships of all stakeholders including local communities, governments, private sector, civil society organizations, etc.

In order to fasten and facilitate the process of disaster reduction and preparedness, the literature usually focuses on the skills of "capacity building" of local governments. But is it really mainly a matter of capacity building? This paper finds this view simplistic and instead argues that disaster governance may hardly take place in some countries like Turkey even if they hold high skills of capacity building.

Putting financial barriers aside, countries that already have a decentralized form of administration, theoretically, may easily adapt to this shift. However many countries, including Turkey, hold a long history of centralized administration that makes it quite difficult for them to adapt to this new paradigm of disaster governance

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no matter how often and how severely they face disasters. Given that, it becomes important to examine how such countries deal with the principal of disaster governance in terms of disaster reduction and preparedness. To explore this question, this chapter discusses the results of a qualitative study looking at the relationships of Balikesir municipalities with other local stakeholders.

The data comes from in-depth interviews with ten mayors and high-rank officials. The main findings are the following: the perceptions and behaviors of municipalities towards natural disasters generally remain focused on post-disaster response. Disaster risk and vulnerability analyses are not performed. Target audiences of awareness trainings are limited to students. The concept of preparedness is not widely internalized because local knowledge actors are not allowed to be actively involved in planning processes. It is concluded that a history of centralized administration along with strong national security concerns are the main reasons behind relatively poor performance of disaster governance. However, municipality authorities have a high belief in the response capacity of the state institutions and social solidarity in the events of disasters.

Keywords Disaster risk reduction · Preparedness · Disaster governance · Balikesir municipalities

5.1   Introduction

Disasters can cause serious economic damage to local communities, regions, countries, and even the entire globe, causing the death and/or injury of tens of thousands of people (and plants and animals), and devastating buildings, infrastructure, and the environment in rural and urban residential areas. According to the EM-DAT of CRED, in 2019 a total of 389 disasters linked with natural phenomena took place around the world. In those events, nearly 24,000 people lost their lives, 94 million got affected, and an estimated amount of US$ 122 billion damage happened (CRED 2020). On the other hand, there is a growing belief that natural disasters are increasing in the world compared to the past (Titko and Ristvej 2020). However, the impacts of disasters do not occur in the same strength and intensity for every social group/community in social life. As UNDRR points out, impacts are often much greater among the most vulnerable groups—people living in poverty, the unemployed and underemployed, persons with disabilities, women and girls, displaced persons and migrants, young people, indigenous peoples, and older adults. In the aftermath of a disaster, these people "...may be caught in protracted cycles of unemployment and underemployment, low productivity and low wages and are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather [events]" (UNDRR 2019: 147). Considering these aspects, it is clear that disasters are social-cultural events as well as physical events. Along with social change, disaster perceptions and attitudes and behaviors towards disasters also change.

Although social scientists approach disasters from different perspectives, they mostly tend to see disasters as a result of certain factors that are generally linked to

hazards and risks. Most of events of natural disasters are believed to be due to global climate change. According to the World Economic Forum, "among the highest impact risks of the next decade, infectious diseases are in the top spot, followed by climate action failure and other environmental risks; as well as weapons of mass destruction, livelihood crises, debt crises and IT infrastructure breakdown" (2021: 7). The experiences of COVID-19 pandemic have drawn attention to pandemics (biological threats/biological natural disasters) and their impacts on various specific groups as well as on the general public (Cugat and Narita 2020; ILO 2020). For example, in a collection of essays, the World Economic Forum (2020) explores challenges and opportunities for strengthening preparedness and resilience in the post-COVID world.

Accordingly, a disaster may have natural causes or man-made causes. In a sense, the existence and emergence of these sources of danger cannot be prevented. However, the existence or emergence of these sources of danger is not the direct cause of disasters. Disasters are the devastating effects that occur as a result of inability to respond effectively and adequately to these hazards. If sufficient and appropriate response capacity is developed against the said destructive effects, harms (physical, social, or economic) can be prevented to occur; therefore, the destructive dimensions of disaster events can be completely or partially eliminated. This leads to looking at disasters as something manageable. The ultimate goal of disaster management is, on the one hand, to detect threats, dangers, and risks in advance and to eliminate them as much as possible with appropriate measures, and on the other hand, to increase the resilience of the analysis unit at all levels (individual, family, organization, community, and nation) by reducing their vulnerabilities.

The fact that natural disasters mostly occur in a local and regional area prompts the relevant literature to consider the active participation of local governments and communities in disaster mitigation, prevention, and preparedness processes. As a matter of fact, the top-down central management approach in the past has now been replaced by a decentralized disaster management approach in which local governments and communities play an active role. In this context, municipalities are one of the most important local actors in the process of creating a resilient society/community and in the preparedness process. Municipalities are expected to be the pioneers of community-based disaster governance by playing the most active roles before, during, and after the event in the context of probable and real disasters in their regions.

But to what extent do municipalities actually play this role? Do local governments have a strong agenda and appropriate mitigation, prevention, and preparedness strategies to "decontaminate" their cities? To what extent do municipal administrations use the principle of *governance* in risk management and disaster preparedness processes?

These questions are especially important for the Turkish society, which has suffered the painful losses caused by the 1999 Marmara Earthquake. This chapter aims to explore how the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of municipal administrations look like in contemporary Turkey, in the case of Balıkesir, within the conceptual framework of disaster-resilient society, preparedness, and community-

based disaster management, which stand out as parts of the main themes of contemporary disaster research.

5.2 Literature Overview

5.2.1 Disaster Management and Preparedness

Disasters arise as a result of the inadequacy of the appropriate and effective response capacity to dangers/hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities. In this case, if the said response capacity is sufficiently developed, the consequences of hazards and risks in disasters can be prevented, and therefore the destructive dimensions of disaster events may be completely or partially eliminated. In this logical framework, it is seen that the concept of disaster management has gained importance in order to increase the response capacity in question. Accordingly, disaster management includes a series of processes as activities to be carried out before, during, and after disasters occur.

The ultimate goal of disaster management is, on the one hand, to eliminate threats, hazards, and risks as much as possible, and to reduce the vulnerabilities and increase resilience of analysis units at all levels (individual, family, organization, community, nation). Disaster preparedness is also "an important element of the disaster risk management (DRM) that can also contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals" (Titko and Ristvej 2020: 2). Disaster management processes are generally handled in four stages: (a) mitigation, (b) preparedness, (c) response, and (d) recovery (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 3). As Bello et al. (2021) state, these stages are closely interrelated and "must be set within a conducive institutional, political, normative and financial environment that permits the allocation of the necessary resources and the appropriate definition of roles and responsibilities" (p. 8).

Among these stages, the preparedness process "intersects with both of these two areas, serving as a temporal connector between the pre-impact and post-impact phases of a disaster event" (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 3). As a special type, pandemic preparedness include the need to increase overall public health funding, strengthen the public health workforce, eliminate barriers to access, improve data systems, address disparities, improve communication, and improve coordination across global, national, local, and regional authorities. For this reason, preparedness is seen as a very important process in the formation of disaster-resilient communities (Kirschenbaum 2004; Sutton and Tierney 2006; Espina 2015). In order to become resilient, a society or a community "must identify the disaster risks that it faces and then design and implement measures for reducing those risks (by means of, for example, infrastructure upgrades, land use planning and financial protection measures)" (Bello, Bustamante and Pizarro (2021:8).

Preparedness is the measures that enable different units of analysis such as households, organizations, communities, and societies to respond effectively and recover quickly when disasters occur (Kirschenbaum 2004; WHO/EHA 2002).

According to FEMA's definition, preparedness is "the leadership, training, readiness and exercise support, and technical and financial assistance to strengthen citizens, communities, state, local, and tribal governments, and professional emergency workers as they prepare for disasters, mitigate the effects of disasters, respond to community needs after a disaster, and launch effective recovery efforts" (www.fema. gov, Accessed 21 January 2018). It also requires measures against spread of misinformation (Cheng and Luo 2020; Hutchinson 2020).

In short, preparedness is a concept that expresses how well equipped and ready individuals and organizations are to respond to negative environmental threats (Perry and Lindell 2003). Preparedness studies also aim to ensure that the necessary resources are available to respond effectively in the event of a disaster and that those who have to respond to the disaster know how to use these resources (Sutton and Tierney 2006).

In many studies, it has been tried to determine the factors that facilitate disaster preparedness. Personal/individual, institutional, community (Sagala et al. 2009), social, and environmental factors (Tekeli-Yeşil et al. 2010) are the factors highlighted in this context. Individual factors include three basic belief systems (preparedness, danger, and personal beliefs) that have been found to affect preparedness behavior (Becker et al. 2013). In explaining each of these belief systems, Becker et al. (2013) emphasized that danger beliefs are equated with risk perception. The default risk level influences how people think about disaster preparedness. Preparedness beliefs focus on the meaning of preparedness, while personal beliefs explain people's understanding of the effects and ways of coping with disasters. The literature similarly shows that personal experience with a danger has a positive effect on behavior (Norris et al. 1999).

The level of effectiveness of the preparedness response to disasters may differ from society to society and according to the analysis unit. According to Barton, "the sources of effectiveness lie at the individual level (motivation, skill), at the group and organizational level (cooperation, leadership, resources), at the community level (inter-organizational coordination, technical and social skill of leadership, capacity to mobilize resources), and social leadership at higher levels (in state and national government, in large corporations, in large voluntary organizations, in professional and intellectual communities providing knowledge to guide policies.) At each level there can be activity or passivity, cooperation or non-cooperation, knowledge or ignorance, and ability or inability to bring resources to the problem (Barton 2005: 131).

As it can be understood from the information presented above, there are various analysis units in disaster preparedness research and guidance services. The smallest unit of analysis among these is households. Just like the understanding that "every disaster is local," preparedness begins at home with some simple steps that can be taken to improve life safety, property protection, and survival from dangerous events. While some households can prepare for disasters, it is clear that many other families lack the necessary funds and resources. This makes them more vulnerable to the destructiveness of disasters. For households, vulnerability is related to income, education, ethnicity, age, and linguistic isolation. Other axes of

stratification also play a role in making households more or less vulnerable and preparing them for disasters (Perry and Lindell 2006).

Apart from households, communities and organizations are other prominent analysis units in disaster preparedness research and guidance services. Accordingly, for an effective disaster management, communities and organizations, as well as households, should be committed to disaster preparedness activities (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 14).

A community is a social unit that may or may not be associated with a local political jurisdiction. The boundaries of a community may be represented by settlements or organizations with common ethnic origin, interest-based associations, or other social groups. However, community is often used to mean the local political jurisdiction (municipal government, district governorship, etc.) responsible for emergency preparedness, emergency warning and notification, emergency response, and recovery (Sorensen and Rogers 1988).

5.2.2 The Role of Local Governments/Municipalities in Disaster Preparedness

We have mentioned above the widespread belief that natural disasters are increasing in the world. This opinion is also strong in relation to cities and fragile communities in them. Indeed, many disaster researchers point out that the number of vulnerable people and communities to disaster risks continues to increase in most cities (Niekerk 2005; GTZ 2002; UNDP 2004). Of course, not every community is vulnerable to the same degree. The difference lies in the fact that some communities have to face more dangers that expose them to property damage, loss of life, or injury more than others. Therefore, the more exposed a community is to hazards, the higher its vulnerability (Cannon 1994).

There is no doubt that central governments have a major role in disaster management. However, many disaster researchers are skeptical of the capacity and effectiveness of the centralized approach in disaster management, and instead emphasize the need and benefits of local governments and local community-based disaster management with a decentralized approach. Local governments are defined as "systems of special geographical units that have definite borders, a legal identity, an institutional structure, generally defined powers and duties in their statutes, and have a degree of financial and other forms of autonomy" (Mphaisha 2006).

In general, decentralization involves "authority being spread out from a smaller to a larger number of actors" and the shift from a central authority to a less central one (Pollitt 2005: 373). Decentralization can be implemented in an administrative, political, and financial context. According to Ile (2009), the general idea behind decentralization is that the national government alone cannot fulfill all the functions and powers required by legislation. Proponents of decentralization hope that this understanding will give birth to the process of *governance*, not administration, and

they attribute various benefits to it. Decentralization is argued to be beneficial, for example, as it helps strengthen quiet communities by giving them the power to make their own decisions and provides opportunities for community members to manage disasters using their own strategies (Patterson et al. 2009).

It is assumed that most of the general arguments supporting decentralization also apply to disaster management. Thus, decentralization is believed to increase participation, capacity, communication, and coordination between sectors and levels of management. These features are believed to have an impact on vertical disaster management cooperation as well. Increasing local capacity is critical in providing many local services and reducing losses (Toya and Skidmore 2013). Local government can also increase local disaster management capacity (Rumbach 2016), facilitate preparedness, and increase public participation in disaster planning by incorporating local information and increasing local control over resource expenditure (Escaleras and Register 2012; Garschagen 2015).

Inspired by decentralization, community-based disaster management puts members of the local community at the center of managing the community's risks. This approach encourages the participation of non-governmental and community-based organizations operating within the community and sometimes other outside community organizations (Sahoo 2005; GTZ 2002; Scott and Tarazona 2011). Therefore, this approach requires the active participation of community members in decisions that affect community life (Sahoo 2005). Many international programs and agreements too, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), support this approach.

Some researchers (Cannon 1994; Sahoo 2005; Pillay 2001) point out that the lack of community involvement in disaster risk reduction efforts will result in ignoring local community knowledge and strategies for disaster emergency survival. Community involvement ensures transparency and creates a space for responsibility sharing (Meshack 2004; Sahoo 2005). Responsibility sharing facilitates a more sustainable use of scarce resources, thereby helping disaster mitigation and preparedness, as well as increasing community capacity.

Local government is believed to contribute to good disaster governance through building local capacity and bringing local perspectives and knowledge through the involvement of local actors. Similarly, the activities of local governments and civil society actors are believed to facilitate context-specific risk management solutions that are specifically tailored to the specific needs, aspirations, and capabilities of local communities (Garschagen 2015). Responding to disasters and reducing their risks requires local capacity within and outside local governments (UNDP 2015). Decentralized systems "prepare for and respond to disasters more effectively relative to more centralized systems" (Ainuddin et al. 2013: 51).

It is seen that the literature attaches great importance to the active participation and responsibility sharing of local governments and communities in disaster reduction, prevention, and preparedness processes. Undoubtedly, municipalities are

among the key actors in this context. The fact that municipal administrators come to power with the votes of the local people for certain periods and are mostly elected from among the candidates coming from the local people leads them to establish closer ties with the local people and to better know the local capacities as well as the local problems and needs. In addition, in terms of their personnel, technological equipment, infrastructure tools, and financial power, municipalities have the potential to be the most effective actors in risk analysis, prevention, preparation, and response activities related to disasters and emergencies in their regions. Municipalities, which have close relations with local people and resources, have a high capacity to use local information for effective disaster prevention and preparedness activities and adapt them to local threats and vulnerabilities. After all, disasters are mostly local. For all these reasons mentioned above, municipalities are expected to be the pioneers of community-based disaster governance by playing the most active roles before, during, and after probable and real disasters in their regions.

The insights above might be theoretically correct. But to what extent do municipalities actually play such a role? Are local governments developing appropriate mitigation, prevention, and preparedness strategies to make their cities "disaster-free"? To what extent do municipal administrations use the principle of governance in risk management and disaster preparedness processes? Most importantly how cultural/historical backgrounds of a given country affect the desirability and/or applicability of community-based disaster governance? The research outlined below presents and discusses findings regarding such questions.

5.3 Research Methods and Techniques

5.3.1 Purpose and Problem of the Research

Turkey has been a disaster-intense country. Between 1923 and 2018 Turkey has experienced 1903 earthquakes, 1281 landslides, 430 strong winds, 80 hail, 72 floods, 125 droughts, 721 extreme snowfalls, 445 avalanches, 696 floods, 352 rockfalls, 240 lightning strikes, 3 dust storms, 227 fogs, 754 heavy rains, and 127 collapses (Uzun 2020: 102). Apparently earthquakes seem to be the most striking threat for almost the whole country because Turkey is located in the Mediterranean, Alpine-Himalayan seismic belt, which is one of the most active earthquake zones on earth (Ergünay 2009). Undoubtedly, the most painful earthquake experience took place in 1999 in the Marmara Region with a result of 17,480 deaths and 43,953 injuries along with about 600,000 people becoming homeless (Altun 2018: 6). This experience should have been a milestone not only for the region but also for the whole country.

Has Turkish society experienced a significant transformation in disaster perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors after this big event? As stated above, municipalities are one of the most important actors in the process of building a resilient society/community and in the preparedness process. In Turkey metropolitan and district municipal governments are elected for a period of 5 years by the votes of the local

people and are expected to produce solutions to the problems and needs of the local community. The expectations of local communities from the municipalities are very high in the disaster preparedness and post-disaster response processes. Additionally, municipalities are the most trusted institution among Turkish local people (Çakı et al. 2019: 923).

Due to this trust and their supposedly key role, to what extent do municipal administrations more specifically use the principle of governance for processes of disaster resiliency and preparedness, which stand out as main themes of contemporary disaster research? Do municipalities have strong agendas and work programs to improve disaster awareness and preparedness in local communities in terms of disaster governance?

The main purpose of focusing on these questions is to improve our knowledge and understanding on how municipalities react against likely natural disasters and to discuss the desirability and/or applicability of community-based disaster governance within the context of countries holding a long history of centralized government tradition. However, different strategies (quantitative or qualitative research) on different social actors such as individuals, households, local and central governments, and non-governmental organizations can be designed and implemented for such a purpose.

This research, shaped by the questions above, adopted the strategy of choosing one of the provinces that stand out in terms of natural disaster risks and designing the research within the framework of the local administrators of that province. In this context, the research has chosen Balıkesir, one of the provinces where the risk of many natural disasters, especially earthquake and flood, is intensely felt, as a case study.

5.3.2   Research Method and Process

In order to reach its goals, this research adapts a qualitative method which refers to the attitudes and strategies followed in qualitative research aimed at understanding how people understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world (Sandelowski 2004: 893). Qualitative research is based on an interpretative approach. According to this approach, social phenomena are those that are constantly constructed and that are constantly being constructed by the mutual interaction of individuals and groups. The interpretative approach focuses on the meaningful social actions of people and assumes that social phenomena are constructed in people's world of meaning, in the process of interaction that takes place among people.

Among the research techniques of the qualitative research method, in-depth interview was chosen for data collection. In-depth interview is an interview technique used when it is desired to gather information about the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of the people rather than the superficial information about the research problem. In in-depth interviews, it is tried to obtain very detailed information about

the experiences, views, thoughts, and beliefs of the participants by interviewing a small number of people. Whether or not information about all the details and dimensions of the research subject is obtained during the interview reflects the depth of the interview (Kümbetoğlu 2005: 81).

In the research process a semi-structured interview form was used. It included four main topics: (a) awareness of local natural disasters (4 questions), (b) awareness-raising activities (2 questions), (c) other prevention and intervention activities (5 questions), and (d) perceptions of trust (4 questions). So a total of 15 open-ended questions were included in the form. Of course, many drilling questions were also asked when appropriate. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and then transcribed. Interviews were carried out in durations varying between 30 and 60 min.

The sample group of the research consists of a total of ten administrators, including the mayors of Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality and five district municipalities, and the relevant unit managers. While using the interview data, information on the gender, age, and job position of the participants were not included in case it might lead to the guessing of the identities of the municipal administrators.

5.4 Findings

As a result of the classification and analysis of the interview data, we have organized the findings under eight subheadings as described below.

5.4.1 Risk Analysis: "It Has a Cost"

We first wanted to specifically ask the municipal administrators whether any risk analysis, which is an important part of the disaster reduction management (Titko and Ristvej 2020; UNDRR 2019), is carried out in their provinces/districts. Many chose to dismiss this question. A few of them directly admitted that they have not done any risk analysis. The following quote is an example:

> If we say that we have done a risk analysis yet, we would not be speaking correctly. I'm not so sure about a risk analysis study (in the previous period too), but there are studies that have been done. Of course, as you know, first of all, Balıkesir is an important area under the first degree earthquake belt, which is affected by a fault line in an existing business, especially in the Karesi region. Apart from this, we cannot say that it is a natural disaster, but we have a geography that can have problems with rain water. Apart from this, there is no situation that we foresee as a natural disaster (in our district). (Interview #3)

Earthquake risk is a widely known disaster risk in Balıkesir. However, it is seen that municipal administrators generally tend not to accept the existence of disaster risks other than earthquakes, since they do not carry out serious risk analysis actions. It can be thought that the narrowed understanding of "disaster" in the minds of

municipal administrators has an effect on this. As political actors, municipal administrators may also show this tendency "politically." Another reason why such studies have not been done so far is the "cost," as can be seen from the excerpt below. Municipal administrators argue that it is almost impossible with their current budgets to carry out routine responsibilities, let alone risk analysis actions.

> In the coming period, we will make an effort to make our district as prepared as we can, by having a risk analysis done in our district... As you know, last year, serious water cuts caused serious grievances of people due to the explosion of the main pipes, which caused at least as serious a problem as a natural disaster. We looked at the way to fix them. Another important issue for us is that a rainwater transmission line should be built in order to prevent rain floods. But here, too, the rainwater pipeline is the responsibility of the district municipality for our district, and it has a cost of about three to four times the budget of our municipality. We are working on it now. How can we get around this? At least in the main arteries, we can do it in the next 5 years (we wish). (Interview #2)

Undoubtedly, cost and budget possibilities are undeniable realities. In addition, determining the priorities well and using the budget in a rational and responsible manner should be among the sensitivities of the municipal administrations.

5.4.2 Database on Disadvantaged Groups: "I Don't Think We Have a Healthy Data"

An important aspect of disaster preparedness is of course having a database on and intervention action plan for vulnerable/disadvantaged people including the handicapped, the poor, the sick, the elderly, the immigrants, etc. Through such a database and action plan, intervention may take place faster and more effectively in case of a disaster (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 6).

We asked the municipal administrators if they had any database and any intervention action plans for such social groups in order to reach the disadvantaged groups in their provinces/districts quickly in case of a disaster and meet their needs. Almost all of the administrators said that such a database is not available to them:

> Not as far as I know, but it is an important issue, for the first time, thank you for drawing attention to it, but we do not have such data, I do not think that we have a healthy data. (Interview #6)

Another municipality administrator states that he does not have numerical data on disadvantaged social groups, but points out that what the institution will do in case of a possible disaster has already been planned:

> We do not have numerical data like this. In a project called TAMP,[1] such plans are already being prepared in the Marmara region through AFAD.[2] They form some working groups with the data they need. In these working groups, they have different duties such as funeral services, burial services, and rescue services. In other words, AFAD units are already doing the general analysis in the Marmara region. There is such a list of stakeholders. This is called TAMP. In this TAMP, everyone's duties are clear, they are related to logistics, funeral, rescue, so we do not have our own plan, we only share the data we have with the AFAD region. (Interview #1)

Exceptionally, a municipal administrator states that they have numerical data on disadvantaged social groups, but they do not make an intervention action plan for them:

> We have numerical data, these numbers are available in Cultural and Social Affairs. We have a center there called ALGEM, we already have a sociologist there. From personal care services to the elderly, trainings, social market, etc., I am trying to explain that numerical data are much healthier there. Addresses and information about the elderly, disabled young people, the disabled and poor families are all available. But I don't think there is an action plan for such a disaster situation. (Interview #4)

Although all of the municipal administrators we interviewed specifically stated that they adopted the concept of "social municipality," it is of course a contradiction that almost no municipality has up-to-date databases and an intervention action plan for the vulnerable/disadvantaged social groups within the borders of their province/district. This contradiction becomes even more striking when considering the fact that municipalities can/do employ sociologists, psychologists, and social workers. Thus, it is possible for each municipality to obtain up-to-date data on vulnerable/disadvantaged individuals within its borders. However, they generally tend to see this outside of their responsibilities.

5.4.3 Information on Disaster Material Requirements: "We Provide Whatever Assistance Is Requested from Us"

In a disaster, it is necessary to save a large number of human lives and to provide treatment for injured people as soon as possible, and to meet the vital and basic needs of citizens such as shelter, nutrition, heating, protection, security, and psychological support. In this context, all of the municipal administrators to the questions we asked about the types and numbers of materials that would be needed in case of a disaster stated that these data were provided by AFAD (Directorate for Disaster and Emergency Cases) and that the municipalities provided assistance from their own bodies upon the request of AFAD. A typical response in this context is:

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[1] TAMP is acronym for Turkish Disaster Intervention Plan.

[2] AFAD is acronym for Directorate for Disaster and Emergency Cases. It was established by the central government after the 1999 Marmara Earthquake. It is affiliated to the Governorships of every single city.

> There is AFAD, it is affiliated to the Governor's Office, because they have more data. In the event of a disaster, under their coordination, the Municipality, Provincial Health Directorate, National Education and other institutions take action depending on the direction of AFAD. So I don't know what their data, resources and priorities are. We only have commitments with AFAD; we provide personnel or support for equipment, vehicles, dozers, carriers, fire extinguishers, whatever. In the event of a disaster, the personnel or equipment supports of the metropolitan and district municipalities are coordinated from the same place, in such a case you cannot separate them. (Interview #7)

Here, it is understood that the municipalities are assigned under the coordination of AFAD and that other state institutions provide support and service in line with this system. In our meetings with AFAD, it was confirmed that disaster response work is organized within the framework of TAMP (Turkish Disaster Intervention Plan), which involves a total of 26 service groups—including municipalities and provincial directorates of Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Family and Social Policies, Provincial Directorate of Security, etc.—working all together with a division of task under the coordination of AFAD. This division of task among the stakeholders is determined directly by the state. Although it theoretically involves the participation of NGOs too, in practice they are allowed to play a very limited role. What is important here is that the centralized character of disaster management through AFAD makes all institutions including municipalities reduce their share of responsibility for disaster mitigation and preparedness process. We will come back to this point in the conclusion section.

5.4.4 Awareness-Raising Activities: "A New Generation Is Coming with Its Consciousness Right Now"

In Turkey, interventions to be implemented after emergencies and taking measures to reduce disaster damages are more prevalent than taking measures to reduce the damages of major disasters, whether natural, technological, or human-induced, with advance planning (Erkal and Değerliyurt 2009: 162). However, in order to prevent life-threatening risks in disasters, pre-disaster preparation, information, and awareness-raising activities are of great importance (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 6). Disaster awareness actions can increase the preparedness level and level of resilience against disasters (Titko and Ristvej 2020: 4). Thus we asked the municipal administrators whether they had done any awareness-raising activities to prepare local people in their provinces/districts for disasters. Almost all of the municipal administrators stated that they have done some disaster-oriented activities, but they also felt the need to emphasize the limitations of these activities.

> Conferences and talks are held from time to time. Of course, it is not correct to say that this is enough. It is always necessary to educate people and raise awareness, and it is necessary to carry out trainings one-to-one until it touches the individual. In a sense, such trainings are ritual things that institutions do to fulfill their duties. (Interview #6)

Another municipality administrator stated that training and awareness-raising activities for disasters are only carried out in schools, and that there is no comprehensive work for the community. In his words: "There is no campaign, but we are doing this in schools, in cooperation with AFAD" (Interview #9).

Almost all of the municipality administrators mentioned the inclinations carried out by the Fire Department in the context of awareness raising activities. For example, two different municipal administrators made the following statements similar to each other:

> There is no special study we have done so far. We know the work of our fire department in this regard. Our fire department goes to first aid training and conducts emergency and fire drills in different areas, in buildings. If you ask what you are doing as a municipality, there is no special activity that we do exactly. But when different units of our state ask for help, we mobilize about them. So let me say in a nutshell. Everything in the regulations regarding this is done completely, and as a fire department, our fire department operates in all schools, especially in the 4th and 8th grades of primary school, in order to provide all information about natural disasters. In other words, we gather those students in all schools in the last year of primary school and in the last year of secondary school and carry out awareness raising activities. We continue in this way with the logic that students can also inform their family members. We provide continuous education to the new generation. (Interview #4)
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> Our Municipality's Fire Brigade Department and AFAD Provincial Directorate carry out continuous activities on both earthquake disaster awareness and fire awareness and fire prevention services for primary and secondary schools throughout the academic season. Last year, we reached a total of 130 thousand students at schools. . . . So, this new generation is coming with its consciousness right now. We are much more active in terms of preventive services. In other words, that new generation is now at the middle, high school, and university levels, so they are much more conscious of basic information, both fire and disaster, since they come with this information. (Interview #1)

As it can be seen, the main target group of disaster awareness-raising activities in the local community is limited to youth (students). This can be read as an indication that the municipalities do not have such an agenda directly, and that there is no hope for the adult and elderly population in a sense. As a matter of fact, some municipal administrators admit that there is no awareness-raising effort for the local community, but they also feel the need to complain about the indifference of the community. As in this quote:

> Preparation is entirely AFAD's duty, of course. Naturally, since they have the responsibility, they only give us directions, so we apply them anyway. Apart from that, we provide training on fire and first aid. But since we have an institutional structure, we do not have any problems, but when the business returns to the public, there is a lot of deficiency. Now, for example, if we make and distribute brochures, how many people do you think would read them? . . . Everyone is on social media, telephone or television, serials. . . Unfortunately, we have a great lack there. If we make a brochure and distribute it, what percentage will read it? I don't think most of them will read it. But it could be through social media. For example, now young people make short videos, interesting videos, that may be a bit absurd that you can remember, but it may be interesting, without exaggerating it, that type of awareness can be made. This is how I think. (Interview #3)

From all the data on the subject, it is concluded that municipalities carry out "some training activities" within the scope of raising disaster awareness, but these activities are carried out with a narrow audience (usually students), with a narrow content

(usually on fire), and are not systematic and sufficient. This can be read as another indicator of the fact that municipalities' disaster management understanding still focuses on post-disaster response activities rather than pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness activities, and they see the preparedness process as the responsibility of AFAD, not theirs.

5.4.5   *Disaster Response Plan:* "That Plan Will Come from AFAD and We Will Be Involved in It"

In the event of a disaster, the first responders are the ones closest to us. The help from the central government may take quite a time due to the lack of sufficiently reliable information, breakdown in the infrastructure, heavy traffic problems, etc. Besides family members and neighbors, municipalities are among the local actors who can make the first response in case of a disaster. In order to play this role of first responders, municipalities are supposed to have done some special preparations suitable to the conditions and needs of their local communities. Thus it was necessary for us to ask if they had any special preparation other than what provincial directorate of AFAD had to offer. As one might guess, all of the municipal administrators stated that they did not have any special preparations and that they would fulfill the duties and services to be given to them in line with the "Turkish Intervention Disaster Plan" coordinated by AFAD:

> We are included in AFAD's system, because in line with the demands given to us by AFAD under the coordination of AFAD. . . . Meetings are held once a month and we participate in them. We do whatever we are asked to do. They ask us to buy body bags, we buy them. They ask us to buy hard hats, we do so. We are asked to send food here and there, so we do. In other words, these are all things under the coordination of the Governor's Office. We provide the necessary supplies. (Interview #1)

The purpose of the Turkish Disaster Intervention Plan (TAMP) is to define the roles and responsibilities of the service groups and coordination units that will take part in disaster and emergency intervention activities, and to determine the basic principles of intervention planning before, during, and after disasters. Here, other institutions, including municipalities, become a part of this intervention within their own share of tasks (AFAD 2013). A municipal administrator describes their role in this process as follows:

> In this regard, there are authorities and responsibilities that our ministries assign us all within the framework of AFAD. Of course, this is renewed every year on paper. We meet once a year. After the meeting, how to do a special study on this, workshops are held for them, everyone shares their duties in the assembly areas, and the duties of the municipalities were communicated to those friends two years ago. It hasn't been done for the last three years, but we all know what we're going to do. (Interview #8)

Another municipality administrator, when asked about the disaster intervention plan, summarized his roles as "that plan will come from AFAD and we will be included in

it." Therefore, municipalities seem to agree that disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response activities are carried out with coordinated cooperation between state institutions.

5.4.6 Disasters and Inter-Institutional Cooperation: "We Mobilize Very Well When Necessary"

It is of vital importance that all stakeholders work and cooperate in harmony in all stages of disaster management (Sutton and Tierney 2006: 9). For a good quality of preparedness, institutional channels of communication and cooperation must be established between public bodies and the community (Bello et al. 2021; ECLAC 2019). Although some cooperation and mutual work is emphasized, many municipal administrators do not think that these works are of sufficient quantity and quality. A district mayor explains his opinion on this issue as follows:

> Of course, district municipalities work actively with the district governorship; we do many works through the district governorship, including natural disasters. There is no inter-institutional disconnect in Balıkesir. There is a harmonious work between institutions. But, of course, it is not possible to say that all works are being done, sir. Now, as you know, as the Turkish nation, as you just mentioned, we take our precautions when we experience a natural disaster. We experience disasters, after a while we forget. After forgetting, we continue on our way as if it will never happen. Of course, institutions do not forget about them, institutions take their precautions and do their work. But it is not possible to say that we, as institutions, are doing enough work. And we need to make our work more visible so that the nation can see it more. (Interview #9)

By using a funeral metaphor, another municipality administrator emphasizes that the planning and coordination between institutions is not very functional. According to him, even though there is chaos on the surface, things are being settled somehow, including disaster response:

> I just came from a funeral. While we are still burying the body, we do not know who will do what. Put it here, put it there, it's happening somehow, as long as there's no clutter, we'll sort it out somehow. So no matter how much you plan ahead, like the mess at the funeral, it happens eventually. (Interview #1)

One of the issues identified as a common point of view among municipal administrators is that municipal administrators highly trust on the selfless attitudes and behaviors of the Turkish/Balıkesir people for extraordinary situations including natural disasters. Accordingly, even though municipalities do not have any preparations at the moment, they are confident that everyone will do their part during a disaster.

> We, as Balıkesir, are very good in that regard. So it's like this: we have a highly educated proportion of population, it's really high. Our people are conscious and respectful to each other. For that reason, I think Balıkesir is more advantageous than any other province in Turkey. In other words, God forbid, if it were a total problem like a disaster, we would give

each other the same help as the city that started the Kuvva-i Milliye movement.[3] So we mobilize very well when necessary. (Interview #3)

It is understood that municipalities assign a passive role to themselves in all pre-disaster and post-disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response processes. In other words, municipalities have a tendency to reduce their role in these processes to providing materials, tools, personnel, and services that will be requested from them under the coordination and instructions of AFAD, instead of carrying out mitigation and preparedness activities by researching/taking into account the special situations and needs of their local communities. It is also clear that municipal administrators find the quality and quantity of cooperation among stakeholder institutions not sufficient and satisfying. Despite this fact, what makes them feel confident is their trust on the strength of social solidarity among the Turkish/Balıkesir people for extraordinary situations including natural disasters. A high sense of social solidarity is obviously a big advantage. But is it appropriate for institutions to lean on such an advantage? No doubt, the lifetime of such an advantage may not be permanent. On the other hand, the central role of AFAD may be subject to different views as seen in the opinions of the municipal administrators differ. While some have internalized this situation, others may look at it more critically as shown below.

5.4.7 *The Central Role of AFAD:* "We Learned This on August 17th"

Those who internalize the passive role of municipalities in disaster management processes in line with AFAD's coordination and instructions, see the August 17, 1999, Earthquake experience as the legitimating basis of their thoughts. According to them, the difficulties experienced as a society in this experience necessitated the implementation of disaster management under the coordination of an organization such as AFAD. The following quote explains this way of thinking:

> As the Fire Brigade Department, we have duties related to extinguishing services, rescue services and logistics services. Apart from this, machinery stocks, personnel groups and working groups of units such as Water Affairs, Highways and Forestry Affairs are formed in each institution. Everyone in their working groups is integrated into the AFAD system, and when there is an incident or a disaster, they already establish a communication center in terms of logistics. AFAD calls the relevant units here itself. In other words, it does not call and use such an unnecessary crowd or intervention and situation when there is no need. The general system in Turkey is this; we learned it on August 17th. At that time, fire brigades, civil defense directorates, private organizations, private companies, associations became such a mess that they could not use us properly. After that, there was a planning in this structuring, because it is also necessary to manage it besides explaining the disaster risk.

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[3] Kuvva-i Milliye movement is the starter of the country's independence from occupying powers. It is accepted that the movement first started in Balikesir by the mobilization of the Balıkesir inhabitants.

> Now, let me give you an example: the last time there was an earthquake in Ayvacık, our closest one, we did not go anywhere, we did not move. Why? Because AFAD Regional Directorate asked us only to set up tents and stoves in terms of logistics. We were included in that system and went that day and did what was necessary. Being there all the time is also a problem, because you have to provide logistics for the staff you send. The system working through this AFAD is much healthier. (Interview #4)

A municipality administrator, who is critical of the AFAD-based conduct of disaster management, especially in terms of preparedness activities, evaluates the issue in the context of "appointed officials and elected ones":

> This work is being done not with the elected, but with the appointed officials. In other words, the governor is in charge of this business. But the governors are appointed and work only for a few years in a particular district; then they go somewhere else. Thus, sustainability is lacking. It is the same for deputy governors. It is necessary to carry out this work with resident actors. (Interview #2)

As it can be seen, some municipal administrators are satisfied with the fact that disaster management is based on AFAD (governorship), while others think that it would be more appropriate to be municipality-centered instead. A third, more synthetic approach is that it would be appropriate for AFAD to remain at the center, but municipalities should also take a more active role in the current situation. A municipal administrator describes this position as follows:

> Municipalities are really important places where the citizens can reach very easily and who can deal with the problems of the citizens. But the places where citizens can reach very easily are deformed in some matters very easily. I am of the opinion that AFAD, now working under the Governor's Office, fully complies with the rules. There may be some problems caused by the constant replacement of AFAD employees, but when it comes to municipalities, AFAD may become obsolete in some respects. In my opinion, the center should be under the Governor's Office, but municipalities should take a more active role in this regard. Unfortunately, municipalities in Turkey are being stretched a little as well as being overburdened in many issues. (Interview #8)

These interview data clearly indicate that municipal administrators do not agree on who should be the key actor in matters of disaster management. While some find the centralized organization quite appropriate, others think that municipalities have to be at the heart of disaster management. This disagreement can be interpreted as a sign for why municipalities hold themselves back from taking more active roles in disaster mitigation and preparedness processes. In a sense they follow the following logic: If I am not in a position of decision-making, then I would do only what I am asked to do, nothing more.

5.4.8 Cooperation with Civil Society: "Let Me Be Clear, NGOs Are Not Very Active"

Article 41 of the Municipal Law No. 5393 says that the Municipal Strategic Plan "is prepared by taking the opinions of universities and professional chambers, if any,

and relevant non-governmental organizations, and enters into force after it is approved by the municipal council." This shows that local governments should act in cooperation with NGOs/voluntary organizations as well as with other public institutions and organizations.

As one of the actors that municipalities are expected to cooperate with, NGOs have entered a development process in Turkey since the 1980s, in parallel with the development in the world, and have emerged as an important actor of social change. NGOs represent the "organizational field" that operates in a wide range from voluntary organizations working in different fields from think tanks, social movements, citizenship initiatives, non-governmental organizations to trade unions, and professional chambers.

It is accepted that NGOs can have an important function in preventing the loss of life and property damages that may be caused by disasters (Messer 2003: 43). In this direction, we asked the municipal administrators what was their status of working and contacting with NGOs regarding disasters. Thus, we aimed to understand the way municipalities view cooperation with NGOs. All municipalities stated that they have some contacts and work with NGOs:

> Of course, we cooperate with NGOs on various issues, and protocols are signed. (Interview #5)
>
> There are NGOs that we cooperate with, but there is no NGO that we cooperate with on natural disasters. Of course, the Red Crescent is a very important unit of Turkey, an important organization. It is indeed a huge gain for Turkey. ... Now, these NGOs can make a difference according to the type of natural disaster. The Red Crescent is a unit that works actively on this issue after natural disasters. But from the point of view of earthquakes, the chamber of geological engineers, the chamber of civil engineers and the professional chambers should also work actively on this issue. (Interview #7)

However, some municipal administrators emphasize that NGOs in Balıkesir are not very active:

> There are not many NGOs in Balıkesir. There are about 4-5 associations on this subject; search and rescue association or other issues. We generally work with them in terms of trainings. After all, they generally have to be integrated into AFAD's system, because when such a situation occurs, everyone cannot actually be found in the incident area as they know it. Now, you are guided through the AFAD system according to the control of the region where it is needed, but let me be clear here, non-governmental organizations are not very active. (Interview #1)

It is also possible to observe that municipalities differ from each other in terms of the level of cooperation with NGOs in disaster preparedness processes. Some seem to be friendlier, while others are more distant. For example, one of the municipal administrators stated that disaster awareness-raising activities should generally be carried out by NGOs as follows:

> Disaster awareness raising is a work that non-governmental organizations have to carry out. This issue is on the agenda of our city council. It is currently being worked on to conduct studies on this type of training. Let's see how it will take shape in the coming days. ... It is an issue that should be included in all non-political, non-governmental organizations. Along with the duties assigned by them, our municipality will also take its responsibilities in this regard. (Interview #4)

On the other hand, a municipality administrator who is distant to cooperating with NGOs in the disaster preparedness process argues that these processes should not be multi-headed:

> Question: Are there any NGOs you cooperate with in disaster preparedness processes?
> - Just have one, that's enough. These things should not be multi-headed anyway. We have AFAD, we have The Red Crescent, that's enough. (Interview #1)

Our quantitative research findings too revealed that households also do not trust NGOs much in terms of getting accurate information and help. The above quotes show that at least some municipal administrators have a distrust and skepticism towards NGOs. This fact too requires some explanation. Why distrust and skepticism are common among both households and municipality administrators? We will come back to this question in the conclusions section.

5.5   Discussion and Conclusions

Before discussing the findings, it is useful to summarize them first.

- Many of the municipal administrators preferred to ignore the question of whether risk analysis is carried out in their provinces/districts. A few of them directly admitted that they did not have such a work. Municipal administrators argue that it is almost impossible with their current budgets to carry out routine responsibilities, let alone risk analysis studies. Therefore, municipal administrators explain their inability to take any preventive measures, such as the improvement of streams against the risk of flooding, with the claim that the municipal budget does not allow for such initiatives.
- Almost no municipality has up-to-date databases and an intervention action plans for the vulnerable/disadvantaged social groups within their provincial/district borders. Instead, municipal administrators draw attention to the fact that what institutions will do in the event of a possible disaster has already been planned.
- All municipal administrators state that data is provided by AFAD on the types and numbers of materials that will be needed in case of a possible disaster, and municipalities provide assistance from within their own structure upon the request of AFAD.
- Municipalities do not seem to have any serious and tangible activities to create disaster awareness raising in their local communities. Almost all of the municipal administrators mentioned the trainings conducted by the Fire Brigade in the context of awareness-raising activities. It has been stated that information and awareness-raising activities for disasters are carried out only in schools, and there is no comprehensive activity for the society. Therefore, the main target group of disaster awareness-raising activities in the local community is limited to youth (students). While some municipal administrators admit that there is no awareness-raising effort for the local community, they also feel the need to complain about the indifference of the community.

- All of the municipal administrators stated that they did not have any special preparations and that they would fulfill the duties and services to be given to them in line with the "Turkish Disaster Intervention Plan" under the coordination of AFAD.
- In case of natural disasters, municipal administrators highly rely on the selfless attitudes and behaviors of the Turkish/Balıkesir people for extraordinary situations. Thus trust in the strength of social solidarity seems to lead to a weaker level of disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.
- In general, municipalities assume a passive role in all mitigation, preparedness, and response processes before and after disasters. In other words, municipalities tend to limit their role in these processes to providing materials, tools, personnel, and services that will be requested from them under the coordination and instructions of AFAD, instead of carrying out mitigation and preparedness activities themselves by investigating/taking into account the special situations and needs of their local communities.
- All municipalities state that they have some contacts and works with NGOs, but they think that NGOs in Balıkesir are not very active. While some are more willing to cooperate with NGOs, some are more distant.

It can be concluded that Balıkesir municipalities have a shallow and ambiguous understanding of disaster and have focused their disaster management completely on post-disaster response. There are no serious and concrete activities and efforts of Balıkesir municipalities in terms of disaster mitigation and preparedness. They see disaster management as the duty and responsibility of AFAD within the body of the Governorate, and they consider their own role in this process to be only about meeting the instructions and demands from AFAD. In this respect, Balıkesir municipalities do not seem to be focused on any mitigation and preparedness effort that can meet the expectations and needs of the local communities although they are the institution that local communities trust the most.

Those findings are clear indications of a centralized disaster management, not disaster governance. Then it is necessary to ask why municipalities hold themselves back from taking more active roles in terms of disaster mitigation and preparedness in spite of the facts that they have more human and material resources compared to other institutions, that local communities have high expectations from them, and that scientists warn about a much stronger earthquake disaster than the 1999 Marmara Earthquake experience. Of course there is no simple answer to this complicated question.

We can first look at the political position of municipalities. Municipalities are political actors seeking public attention and approval. The fact that elected municipal governments feel obliged to turn to high-visibility services in order to rewin the vote of people limits their roles and services in the context of disaster management. Investment in disaster mitigation and preparedness (such as risk analysis actions, generating up-to-date databases and intervention action plans for the vulnerable social groups, carrying out serious and tangible disaster awareness raising activities) usually is not as visible as constructing buildings, renovating sidewalks, holding

public concerts, opening big parks, etc. Municipalities want to use their budget for visible actions so that voters can see and appreciate them. Thus, it is usually a matter of priorities rather than budget problems. In order for the process to be reversed, the consciousness and preferences of the urban voters must change; and the municipal administrators must be forced to take real and serious actions instead of ostensible ones in urban areas.

Apart from political position of municipal governments, the centralized character of disaster management through AFAD in Turkey might be considered to be the most important factor leading to this result. There is a large literature emphasizing the long history of central government in Turkey. For example, by considering Turkey as representing a centralist/statist model, Özerdem and Jacoby argue that in natural disaster management, the political elites "imposed fully institutionalized and extremely strict restrictions on the third sector," that "there is a general fear in the state about the politicization of humanitarian aid," and that "the weakness of civil society is caused by the pressure of the state" (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006: 99–107; see also Jalali 2002). Therefore, the state is seen as the main responsible actor for the failure of disaster governance to develop in Turkey. This trend is quite common. According to this trend, "centralized and unsuccessful disaster management practices" arising from the relationship between "strong and ruthless state tradition" and "weak civil society" create security gaps against disasters (Aydıner and Özgür 2014: 400).

Such analyses point out that one of the most important problems in disaster governance processes in Turkey is distrust between relevant actors. Accordingly, on the one hand, the society has lost trust in the state, and on the other hand, the state has an insecure attitude towards some segments of the society, as well as non-governmental organizations. This mutual distrust limits the development possibilities of disaster governance. As a matter of fact, trust-based relationships are seen as critical for effective emergency response, including disasters (Janssen et al. 2010; Kapucu and Garayev 2011; Longstaff and Yang 2008).

The lack of trust or skepticism on civil society may or may not have legitimate roots depending on the history and social structures of a given society. Sandoval and Voss (2016) draw attention to the fact that each society should be based on its own socio-cultural and historical conditions in disaster governance. Because, according to them, "there is no 'one size fits all' approach to disaster governance. Instead, there is a need to historicize and contextualize governance practices to reduce the occurrence of disasters or, if they are unavoidable, at least reduce their effects" (Sandoval and Voss 2016: 114). In parallel with these views, it is often argued that good governance regarding disasters depends on the local context, cultural, and historical conditions (Kieger 2013; Dahiya 2012).

In our view, the centralized character of disaster management and the narrow roles of municipalities in this regard are closely related to perceptions of civil society. Whether the state is willing to build a "strong civil society" can be determined by many factors. The state's historically peaceful relationship with its own social structure may make it willing to pave the way for civil society. An opposite type of relationship may lead the state to an oppressive and restrictive

attitude on civil society. On the other hand, especially in developing countries such as Turkey, the facts that some NGOs are supported by Western states and organizations and that such NGOs work in harmony with their interests (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006: 19) may lead some states to skeptical, selective, distrustful, and/or inhibiting attitudes towards NGOs in their countries. NGOs, about which such perceptions are formed, may be exposed to an insecure and distant relationship not only by the state, but also by the potential buyers of their services—local communities. This is exactly what happens in Turkey. As of today, both the state and the society prefer to display a selective and cautious attitude towards NGOs. Instead of evaluating this situation as "fear of civil society," it would be more accurate to think that security concerns reorganize the state-civil society relations in Turkey, as it has been effective all over the world, especially since 11/2001.

It is a fact that some terrorist organizations such as PKK and FETO establish many NGOs to work for their goals in disguised forms. This fact generates a general skepticism on NGOs. On the other hand NGOs in Turkey easily become politicized and turn into tools of intervention in the political system rather than serving the society. In addition, NGOs in Turkey like many other developing countries have structural problems such as transparency, abuse, and corruption. Considering all those features of and perceptions on NGOs, Turkey has chosen a centralized way of disaster management instead of governance. As a central institution, AFAD takes the leading role in this process. Under structural authority of AFAD, municipalities, as well as other institutions are enforced to play a secondary role while NGOs are usually given a decorative role.

In sum, this research has tried to show that local governments are insufficient to draw the necessary lessons from their past experiences of serious disasters (e.g., the 1999 Marmara Earthquake), and that the ongoing structural conditions and security concerns in developing countries such as Turkey limit the desirability and applicability of decentralized approaches in terms of disaster risk management in general and preparedness in particular. Of course this research is a case study; its findings and conclusions are limited to Balıkesir provinces/districts. Therefore, it is not fair to claim that they can be generalized for the whole country. Undoubtedly, there is a need for more research with new designs both in Balıkesir and in Turkey as well as other developing countries.

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