

Natural Disaster Governance: Barriers For Turkey¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the barriers of natural disaster governance for Turkey. First part of the study consists of definitions of disasters and disaster management cycle, theoretical discussions of natural disaster and local governance. The continuing and challenging part gives attention why Turkey has not adopted the natural disaster governance. This part consists of discussions of transcendental state, weak civil society and immaturity of local governance of Turkey. The mentioned discussions aim to correlate those barriers with immaturity of natural disaster governance. The study ends up with general evaluations and conclusions.

Keywords: Natural Disaster Governance, Governance, Local Governance, Turkey, Earthquakes, Disaster Management Cycle

Introduction

Disasters are important phenomena for people and governments. Especially the developing and under-developed countries with centralist public administration perspective realize more problems related with disaster when compared the other developed states. The biggest reason for this problem is highly the absence of participatory management for disasters. In other words, the classical Weberian disaster management could be thought like a classical public administration perspective and nation states position themselves like *the steers of the public services* but the damages of disasters are not obstructed with centralist perspective. In particular, if natural disaster management is perceived as a social phenomenon, then it is needed more

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participatory and multi-stakeholder governance practices. However, Turkey has substantial barriers for the natural disaster governance perspective. The literature that interests natural disasters does not also give enough attention to the governance and the concept has just started to be discussed.

There are many definitions of disasters and natural disasters. Definitions and statements such as calamity, catastrophe (Yılmaz, 2003: 1), the corruption of the fabric of society and the inversion of current course of events to the worse after this corruption (Alexander, 2005: 27), vulnerability and uncertainty as a catastrophic event (Jigyasu, 2005: 49) are helpful definitions to understand the nature of disasters. However, it is needed to move away from the ‘technical’ definitions of disaster in order to find out what method should be followed for the management of disasters and natural disasters, which is the subject of this study. The matter which has importance in the conceptualization of natural disaster management is the truth that disaster is not only a technical issue but also a social reality. Such kind of a conceptualization sees disaster as a social reality essentially, assumes that it results from lack of defense, describes the concept of vulnerability as one of the basic components of social catastrophe (Perry, 2006: 13).

Another important issue and concept of disaster management discussions is the disaster management cycle. Although they have small differences in their expressions, the disaster management cycle and phases consist of four (McLoughlin, 1985: 166; Petak, 1985: 3) as;

- Mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery.

The phases aforementioned involve the whole process starting from the happening of a catastrophic event until the sequence of measures to be taken before. However, it could be said that the most necessary phase for the natural disaster governance is mitigation phase with the presupposition of disaster is a social reality. Mitigation phase involves all planning and risk management phases which try to minimize the potential risks before disasters happen. This situation, which can be described as the harmony of the concepts of danger and awareness (Henstra and McBean, 2005: 304) and it reveals why mitigation phase is so important in that cycle.

The abovementioned arguments make the discussions of classical disaster management more meaningful, which will be criticized more comprehensively in the next part of the study. The main reason of this is that classical disaster management accepts the phases of disaster management cycle, which is an important step for disaster management, in a linear way. That is to say, classical disaster management describes disaster as a cycle and may rejects the existence of the science of management, puts emphasis on the claim/idea that the principal component of disaster management is the disaster itself rather than the management (Balamir, 2007: 27). Thus, in the aforementioned cycle lies the mistake of conducting all the phases in equal

importance and disaster management is perceived as a technical issue. This situation, which Balamir (2000: 44) described as classical earthquake engineering approach, isolates different actors and institutions from disaster management cycle in one sense and puts the state in a powerful place.

Theoretical Background: Governance, Local Governance and Possible Components of Natural Disaster Governance

Some new concepts started to be discussed in the perception of government with the economic and social transformation during the transition from Keynesian period to Post Fordist-Keynesian period and also as a result of the needs and necessities concerning the delivery of the state's own services in the context of government. Behind these discussions lies the claim that administrative modernization in the practices of delivery of service of modern nation-state, interdisciplinary equality and effective delivery of public services (Brenner, 2006: 114) have started to transform because of the factors of globalization and competitive market. On the other hand, flexible production standards –instead of Fordist production- have started to be demanded when the transition from industrial society to information has started. The period when the mentioned transition has occurred can be summarized as (Tekeli, 1999: 244): *a) the transition from industrial society to information society, b) the transition from Fordist production to flexible production c) the flow from nation-state structure to globalization d) the transition from modernism to post-modernism.*

The areas mentioned above have organic links among each other. The break from Fordist period in the production of goods and services has lessened the dependence on space while it has damaged the existence of the market which is easy to predict as in industrial society. The dimensions of competition and market have also started to transform with the appearance of less expensive and more profitable areas for meta production. There has been criticism about instrumental modernism and mind when some differences have occurred in terms of common good and right after the transition to information society (Tekeli, 1999: 245). The principles of classical administration have started to wear off with the period when network relations have gained importance and limits and the concrete have started to lose their importance (Tekeli, 1999: 246).

The concept of governance, which means the cooperation of the state, private sector and civil society and the ways of common service production (Şengül, 2001: 53), has started to be discussed and take place in both literature and practices of service execution especially after 2000s; but the term was first used in the World Bank's report called 'Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth' (Bayramoğlu, 2002: 86; Güler, 2002: 102). The governance definitions in this Report focus on to the new world

order, pluralist capitalist structure, and democratic process; the political system that has power to affect the executive process, accountable public administration and so on (Güler, 2002: 102). Although the concepts have different focuses, their intersection area meets in the terms of participation and plurality. In that regard, citizens/individuals becomes an important part of the new world order. The new actors, called local citizens, with the help of globalization, have to locate in a relational situations to solve their problems, because the citizens/individuals are the right actors who need to solve their own troubles in the best way (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998: 111).

The other important term or concept that will make easier to understand the possibility of natural disaster governance is the term of local governance. Similar to governance, this term specifies the formulating and conducting the collective action in the local level (Shah, 2006: 1). The reason of this situation is related with the fact that the new world order demands to reduce of the dominant position of the central state in public service provision, political decision making and policymaking; and this reality could only be actualized by the *subsidiarity* which means public service should be produced in a lower unit that nearest position to the individuals (Göymen, 2000: 9).

The administration or organization models desired for disaster natural disaster management are generally consistent with mitigation and preparation phases before a disaster happens. The reason for this is that a command and control based, quick decision maker and hierarchical administration model is need after a disaster rather than a problem solving process which is really flexible and with many actors (Meuleman, 2008). Thus, although disaster management cycle points out to a whole and directly interrelated process, the process meant by disaster governance in terms of running involves the mitigation phase. As to be mentioned in the next parts of the study, when the problems experienced in disaster management in Turkey are taken into consideration, it is more consistent to place the state in a more superior and in organizer position in the cooperation of state, market and civil society as anticipated in natural disaster governance. The reason behind this is the truth that there is a lack of financially powerful actors who can affect the disaster management and that weak civil societies, with their socio-spatial and socio-economic situations, will create a security flaw against disasters (Wisner and Walker, 2005: 92).

On the other hand, the anticipated governance model for the natural disaster governance differs from the anticipated governance models of other policy areas such as education, health and tourism. The difference comes from the fact that in natural disaster governance, various actors are asked to gather and run the process during the mitigation phase yet before facing any kind of disaster. In other words, in the process of making a policy, while you

come up with solutions after facing a problem in other policy areas, you need to take holistic measures before facing a catastrophic even in natural disaster governance. In this context, the governance models of Duit and Galaz (2008) which are adaptable to complex systems can be made use of. What is problematic with the complex adaptive system is that reality doesn't occur in a linear fashion and that the change at one point will affect other points and processes in very different and great ways (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 312). The reason behind this is the existence of policy networks which are fragile and closed to feedback especially concerning natural disaster governance. Although it is really difficult to manage and organize the phases after a disaster has occurred, it is also difficult to guess in what levels and circumstances the policy networks will be made, networks which are predicted to be necessary for the mitigation phase. Four governance types can be mentioned for the analysis of these systems/networks which are fragile and difficult to predict. First of them is rigid governance where exploitation through institutions, norms and hierarchies is high while exploration is low (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 321).

It is claimed that coordination among institutions is high while feedback and information flow is weak in rigid governance model of Duit and Galaz (2008). The second model is robust governance where both institutional level of exploitation and high level of exploration can happen (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 321). This model is also defined as the ideal governance. In fragile governance, which is the third type, it is mentioned that there are not enough numbers of institutions and there is a lack of information flow (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 322). The last model is flexible governance in which state does not have the capacity of high institutions for exploitation while exploration activities are a lot (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 322). These four types are important to make the analysis easier. However, the ideal governance model needs a policy network where there are institutional systems, information flow among many actors.

Barriers of Natural Disaster Governance for Turkey: An Exploratory Systematization

Certain and inclusive statements for natural disaster governance should be stayed away from as it hasn't been started to be discussed seriously in the literature and there are not enough academic studies on it. However, building the starting point on mitigation in a holistic disaster management system means the preservation of some presuppositions for natural disaster governance. At this point, deciding on the components of natural disaster governance will make the analysis of the research subject easier. Primarily, disaster management policy puts many great responsibilities on the state in terms of creating public opinion before a

disaster happens and of meeting the demands of people during intervention in a crisis. With the truth that the state is the most powerful actor in the discussions of natural disaster governance, the approach of the state to disaster management will be the first step for the discussions of the possibility of natural disaster governance. Legal and institutional regulations are needed assessing in these discussions. However, the analyses in question are not enough to assess the components of natural disaster governance, and it is useful to study the state-civil society relationship to make the discussions more quality. In this context, it has gained importance to discuss which economical processes the state has been with historical presuppositions, its relationship with civil initiatives and how willing it is or is not to create areas of civil society. Thus, civil society discussions are also an important step for the components of natural disaster governance. Local administrations are among the most important components of natural disaster governance because of the fact that they are the implementer of disaster policies and that they have to work with the central government for the coherence of the administration. When compared central government, local administrations can manage mitigation and risk management, city plans, town planning implementations, the communication with civil society institutions and households better.

It has been written in the literature of natural disaster management that the authority in the organization of disaster management in Turkey is the government or the state, and the coordination and lack of harmony between a centralist disaster management and other institutions have been criticized (Çorbacıoğlu, 2005; Ganapati, 2005; Öztürk, 2005; Yavaş, 2005; Yılmaz, 2005; Özerdem and Jacoby, 2006; Balamir, 2007; Keleş, 2007). The reasons behind the criticisms are that it has always been put emphasis on the processes after a disaster for years in Turkey, that post-disaster legal and institutional regulations have gained speed and that town planning implementations have not been done according to mitigation and risk management plans. On the other hand, it has been commented that 1999 İzmit/Marmara earthquake was a turning point for Turkish disaster management system and approach (Balamir, 2001; Ganapati, 2005).

The starting point for such kind of a discussion is evaluation of the legal and institutional regulations in terms of their periods. However, the analysis or discussion of centralist disaster management only with this data is not enough to find out why natural disaster governance has not developed in Turkey. At this point, it is also critical to study the state-civil society relationship because the citizens' and civil societies' perception of disaster, the state's attitude of approaching disaster; property, fundamental rights and freedoms and legal regulations reposition the relationship between individuals and state in many areas as civil society. It is needed that civil

society could be powerful and well equipped against the state and that civil society keeps the state alive in disaster management because the relationship between civil society and state is an important part of governance discussions³. Thus, it will be helpful to understand the hidden side of centralist disaster governance when it is analyzed in what extent powerful or transcendental state tradition will allow civil initiatives to occur.

The discussions of transcendental state tradition in Turkey (Mardin, 1973; İnalçık, 2005; Heper, 2010) are an important step to explain the relationship between the state and civil society. What Heper (2010: 30-31) conceptualized as transcendentalist state is a type of government where the state is institutionalized around certain norms, where these norms direct the political life, where bureaucrats are in the position of decision makers, and where political parties can work as state apparatus. Mardin has also made a serious contribution to this topic and stated that modernization actions in Europe are shaped by contractarian dynamics. In this context, the contract tradition in Eastern Europe, which was based on agreements and privileges between the state and bourgeoisie, was adapted in Ottoman State with the processes based on the autocracy of the center on the periphery (Mardin, 1973: 33). Mardin has expanded this argument of his and claimed that the economic and cultural disconnection between the center and periphery has been passed down to now in Turkey and that the official ideology exposed the villagers to many impositions in terms of both cultural and economic way (Mardin, 1973: 52). Thus, state - civil society relationship of European states, which was shaped by the peculiar economic and social dynamics and capitalism processes, was passed down to Turkey from Ottoman Empire as a heritage, in one direction and with the state holding the economic dynamics in its hand. The monolithic construction of the individual - state relationship in historical context has also hindered the organization of artisan associations, trade associations, and sectorial associations or in general meaning civil societies which could create benefits against the state, negotiate with it or could impose sanctions to it.

The tension with state – civil society relations is so similar to central – local government relations discussions of Turkey. Since the time of modernization of Ottoman Empire, the ontological situation of local units have always been problematic through the discussion whether they are the autonomous democratic places or not. However, counter arguments also defend the fact that local units are the sub-units of the central government. In that regard, the distinction between the local administration and local government gets important (Köseçik and Özgür, 2009). If the discussion offers the fact that local agent could only be an administrative unit that

³ A similar approach could be seen in Ganapati's (2005) study.

represents the central state, then we refer to the term ‘local administration’ (Keleş, 2009). This perspective perceives the state’s administrative system as an entire entity; local and central agents work for the same aim. On the other hand, if the argument implies that local agents are independent and autonomous units, then it is referred to the term local government in a liberal way. Those distinctions have occurred in the separation of state tradition of France and America. Turkey is so closer to the Napoleonic French system. In that regard, especially after the 1961 Constitution, centralization and decentralization debate, which was one of the most important discussions for Turkish modernization, was ended. By this way, administration system was transformed in a new position that central and local agents should work through the aims of integrity of administration (*idarenin bütünlüğü*). The new term, similar to the transcendental state perspective, comprehends the localities or decentralization movements only the sub-units of the central state. In other words, the mentioned perspective sees the existence of localities in possible only with the existence of central agent (Güler, 2000). For that reason, a constitutional or legal amendment that relates with local administration affects all the local levels in the whole country. By this way, local administrations are not independent actors from the central government and it blocks the maturation of the local governance implementations.

Under the light of the above discussions, not surprisingly, local administrations have failed to be active actors in natural disaster management because of the effect of centralist disaster management and classical earthquake engineering in Turkey. Although there are many reasons for that, the foremost reason is that disaster management is not focused on explicitly and strongly in the laws of establishment of local administrations. Even though municipalities have responsibilities like preparing disaster and emergency plans, the content, effectiveness, importance and practicality of these plans are highly questionable. Moreover, degradation of disasters as “crisis” in emergency plans is also another important problem. Even if the matter is analyzed from the perspective of emergency management, it is an important problem of municipalities not to take the opinions of ministries, public institutions, trade associations, universities and other local administrations in the preparation of these plans (Özgür et.al, 2014: 77). On the other hand, the lack of officials and competent staff about disasters in local administration is at maximum. There are not any disaster experts, except civil defense experts, in local administrations in staffing norms (Özgür et.al, 2014: 77). Moreover, as it was mentioned in the previous parts of this study, Construction Law with no. 3194 and Disaster Law with no. 7269 hold civilian administration liable for disaster issues but unauthorized for construction work, and hold municipalities authorized but independent from responsibility (Balamir, 2000: 109). Moreover, the role and authority of

Housing Development Administration of Turkey about urban transformation may put municipalities in a difficult position in construction and disaster issues. In addition, the Law # 6360 came into force in 2012 that constitute 30 metropolitan municipalities made a great transformation about the scales of municipalities in local level. Because of the expansion of local public provision of municipalities, the participatory disaster management process gets difficult. The reason of the situation is that with grew up of spatial width of the metropolitan municipalities; capacity of the municipalities gets also extended. By this way, metropolitan municipalities have to face various disaster troubles of sub-level units.

The aforementioned discussions have an organic link with the practices of central and unsuccessful disaster management. The reason of this organic link is the powerful, transcendental state tradition, and the weak civil society. Security flaws against disasters in weak civil societies strengthen this claimed organic link. The term “vulnerability” by Wisner and Walker also supports this theory. Vulnerability focuses on the reality that socio-spatial and socio-economic circumstances shape disasters (Wisner and Walker, 2005: 92). Wisner’s definition of vulnerability will help the theoretical discussion of transcendentalist state tradition be evaluated in the context of disaster awareness and vulnerability (Wisner, 2005: 11 from Bolin, 2005: 116):

“The characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recovery from the impact of a natural hazard.”

It is not possible to say that civil societies and people were not active participants when looked at the experiences of Turkey in natural disaster governance in the past. As can be seen, especially in the parts where legal and institutional regulations were discussed, it is clear that the state is the dominant actor of disaster management, and that necessary circumstances have not been provided for any disaster management system where civil society organizations can take part in. In this context, as can be seen from the studies which explain the relationship between civil society and disaster management in Turkey (Özerdem and Jacoby, 2006; Ganapati, 2005; Kubicek, 2002; Tarih Vakfi, 2000), civil societies have started to take part in disaster management of Turkey after the 1999 İzmit earthquake. However, the role of civil society, which was claimed to have a turning point after the 1999 İzmit earthquake, does not really mean a civil society structure which can have powerful role in a holistic disaster governance. In this context, although civil society organizations have put some initiatives into work after the earthquake, the real agent of the process has been the households and individuals (Tarih Vakfi, 2000: 289). Thus, individuals, who are independent from the practices of hierarchical and traditional administration, who can

decide on their own, and who can communicate quickly, took active roles in first aid and dressing for wounds. However, it is not possible to talk about a holistic and planned initiative of civil society here. It is not possible to say that this civil movement where, institutionalism, planning and programming are not felt enough (Tarih Vakfi, 2000: 290) has established the ground to contribute for cooperation and long-term disaster governance.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to present the barriers of natural disaster governance of Turkey. Thus, it is hard to develop natural disaster governance components in Turkey because of the above explained/illustrated reasons. The existence of weak civil society in a powerful and transcendentalist state tradition in Turkey, the lack of civil initiatives in disaster management policies which can inspect/trigger/impose sanctions on the state, the evaluation of natural disaster only in terms of earthquake engineering, the existence of civil society initiatives after the 1999 İzmit earthquake and only after a disaster happens, lack of market actors in mitigation phase of disaster management cycle (Aydiner, 2014). When examined in terms of the actors, disaster management profile of Turkey looks problematic because of the powerful status of the state, the pressure of central administration on local administrations in terms of management coherence, local administrations' lack of capacity in disaster management, the inactivity of private sector in mitigation policies, non-participation of civil societies in a sustainable disaster management system which covers mitigation phase. Thus, there is a need to talk about the existence of *a weak and fragile administration network* in Turkey when the opinions of Duit and Golaz (2008: 312) are taken into consideration. The reason behind this is that the state is weakly connected in terms of institutional construction and that civil societies and private sector actors are not powerful enough to guide and direct the state, force it to be transparent and participant, and negotiate with it in reasonable ways and for the sake of society (Aydiner, 2014).

Another important topic is that natural disaster governance is a newly used term in the academic literature. For that reason, it is impossible to define the whole components of natural disaster governance; rather the first step could prove the barriers on it. However, if the future studies begin to use the sub-topics of governance in the disaster literature, like *accountability, check and balance, transparency*, and may be the most important one could *participation*; then in a few years rather than demonstrating barriers, it could be written the structural components of disasters governance.

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