

# Local Government in Turkey through the Lens of History

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## Abstract

Modern local government (LG) is seen to have accountability, transparency, participation and good governance as its greatest legacies and achievements and the manifestations of these principles in local governance differ from one country to the next. Local government in Turkey has mostly been perceived and discussed as an administrative issue. Yet since the eighties, the Turkish local government has undergone significant administrative, financial and functional changes. Recent reform processes have shifted the country's local government from the traditional model towards local governance. This paper looks at the evolution of the Turkish local government and reiterate the various wins and losses it has encountered over the years. Considering the weak foundation of the Turkish local government history, this article makes plain the updates in the foundational regulations of their local government system.

**Index terms**— local government, reform, tanzimat, turkey, autonomy

## 1 Introduction

Contrary to the western republicans, local government in Turkey was created by and for the central government. Therefore, the general characteristics of the framework within which the Turkish local government units were established and expected to function had been centralisation with the central government exercising its power and authority over their functions. This can be seen clearly in the operations of the local government in the tanzimat era and early stages of the republican periods.

The local governments in Turkey is based on a tripartite system: special provincial administration (SPA), municipalities and villages (Akilli & Akilli, 2014: 682). The decision making bodies of these units are elected by the public and like most local government units globally, their main task is to meet the local needs of the public.

This article focuses on the local government of Turkey from a historical perspective. It starts by giving an outline of the historical background of the local government in the Ottoman and Republican period in the light of major developments pertaining to those times of history. The third part of this article discusses the changes in the local government and the reforms that has taken place since the Tanzimat Era focusing on law changes in the four main local government bodies in the country. Finally the paper concludes by acknowledging the milestones the Turkish local government has clocked and recommends it keeps pressing on towards a more autonomous local government system. II.

## 2 Lg in the Ottoman Period

As has already been stated, Turkey does not have a long-standing tradition of autonomous local selfgovernment. As a matter of fact, the local government in Turkey was not established as a result of an indigenous development but in a top-down approach.

The Ottoman State exhibited a highly patrimonial characteristic as against the Feudalism of the European states. Thus the predominance of the central government was a natural consequence. According to Köker, the centralist establishment of the country rested on a two-tier structure -the rulers and the ruled (Köker, 1995: 3).

Until the Tanzimat period, only the Islamic law was dominated by the Ottoman Empire and it established a unique organizational structure that did not contradict Islamic Law (Karaarslan, 2007: 108). Thus up until the Tanzimat Reformation, the functions which are now performed by the local government were done by indigenous organisations. The most notable of these is the Kadî, who had judicial and administrative functions. The Kadi

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was centrally appointed ??Ortayli, 1985 ?? 112. Arslan, 2009: 7. Özer & Akçakaya, 2014: 64). The kadis functioned also as the supervisors of local markets and the organisation of local affairs ??Keleş & Yavuz, 1983: 39). The kadis were assisted by the Muhtesip and helped by subasi, imams, and regents. Based on what has already been said, we can deduce that in the Ottoman administration, the judicial and municipal functions were not separated.

Vakifs were another significant indigenous organisation in the Ottoman State. They were created by the sultan, his family and other rich people to donate property for charity. Services such as schools, libraries, hospitals, health centres, dormitories, and social assistance were carried out by vakifs ??Gül, 2015: 11,12). The vakifs successfully undertook a significant portion of public works and services (the construction of mosques, public baths bridges and the provision of water and sewage services).

Other indigenous organisations worth mentioning include the Mahalles which were headed by the imams, who were not only religious leaders but also administrative representatives in charge of collecting taxes and defending the neighbourhood in court ??Akyol, 2012: 27); and the lonca system, made up of tradesmen organised in a hierarchial structure ??Ünal, 2012: 243). Their main duties were to organize the professional activities of the people and to resolve disputes among members.

It is worth noting that all the aforementioned institutions had no separate budgets and decision making bodies, thus it cannot be said that there was a modern administrative organisation in this period. The Tanzimat period is credited for being the genesis of all the developments associated with the history of local government in Turkey.

November 3, 1839 marked the beginning of a new period in the Ottoman political and social life. The Imperial Rescript of Gulhane was publicly declared. The primary motive behind this declaration was to reinforce the central power through various reforms. Outside of this, it was to positively respond to the pressures of France, Russia, and England on the country ??Heper, 1985: 39).

As part of the implementation of the Tanzimat Edict after 1840, the Muhasillik councils were created and given a legal status. Although the electoral system to select some of the council members had significant restrictions, there were elected representative members ??Ortayli, 1985: 24-25).

The establishment of the first municipal administration in the years 1854 -1856 was another significant step towards a local government tradition. The establishment of the ?ehremaneti during the years after the Crimean War began as a result of increasing relations with the Western world countries. After the war, there was an influx of foreigners in Istanbul and these foreigners wanted to live in a 'modern world'. The first municipality to be created took its example and model from the French commune administration ??Çiçek, 2014: 57.) The ?ehremaneti was run by a centrally appointed ?ehremini and had a council of 12 appointed persons (Keleş & Yavuz, 1983: 40). The municipality was responsible for providing basic goods and services, overseeing markets and constructing roads, building sidewalks, etc.

All these notwithstanding, the municipality was not financially independent and had to totally rely on the central government. It is therefore not surprising that these councils were under the strict control of the central government and were far from being autonomous ??Eke, 1982: 112).

The spread of the municipal organization to all Istanbul was ensured by the Dersaadet Municipality Administrative Regulation issued in 1869 and Istanbul ?ehremini became a two-level federative structure. At the lower level, similar to the Sixth Apartment Model, there were 14 Municipal Offices responsible for the local administrations of various districts. At the top level, there was the Cemiyet-i Umumiye, which was convened under the presidency of ?ehremini and ?ehremaneti, as well as ?ehremini, consisting of the Presidents of the 14 Municipal Offices and the representatives elected and sent among the Parliamentary Ministers. The beginning of the modern municipal organization in the provincial regions outside Istanbul was realized in 1864 with the Provincial Regulation ??Ünal, 2011: 244).

By the stipulation of the 1876 Constitution, all municipalities to be established both in Istanbul and in the provinces were to be governed by future parliamentary elections, and the procedures for the establishment of the municipalities and the election of the members of the council in question would be specified by law. The aim of this Provincial Municipal Law prepared in 1876 was to establish a municipal organization in each province and town. The Dersaadet Municipality Law of 1877 was enacted in order to find solutions to the major problems in Istanbul. Then, in 1912, the Law on the Municipality of Dersaadet Organization and the municipal offices were abolished and municipal branches were established. This structure continued until 1930 ??Çiçek, 2014:58).

In the nineteenth century, disorganised public services and insufficient infrastructure in the cities were a barrier to economic and social developments. In addition to the above, pressure from the Western countries forced the Ottoman state to have better port cities as centre of economic activities, necessitating better infrastructure. Consequently, (Beyoğlu), the first municipal administration in Pera was established ??Ortayli, 1985: 31,32). The port was run according to the recommendations of the Intizam Komisyonu, a sevenmember committee, comprising of six foreigners and one Turk. According to Mumtaz Sosyal, the great disparity in the number of foreigners as against that of the locals in the committee was an illustration of the disinterest of the local population in the project ??Soysal, 1967: 7).

The growing number of non-muslim merchant bourgeoisie of the Ottoman Empire who supported nationalist movements during the Tanzimat period served as a reinforcement for the central government's resistance and prejudice against the municipality (Sosyal, 1967: 7). The Ottoman Empire was very sensitive to the topic of nationalist movement at the time because it could dissolve the ottoman mosaic (Ortayli, 1985: 32). In fact,

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during this period, the masses kept themselves attached to the traditional institution, who actively resisted the reforms imposed from above between the years 1800-1850 (Inalcık, 1964: 63).

In the second half of the 19th century, the provincial special administrations started to develop. The Provincial General Assembly, which consisted of four members elected from each scepter as well as the provincial general administration headed by the governor general was established with a Provincial Special Administration (Çiçek, 2014: 58).

The village administrations are the first local government units that emerged before the Tanzimat in Volume XX Issue VIII Version I

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the Turkish local government history. Despite its long history of villages as a sociological unit in the ottoman context however, the creation of villages as a local government unit begun after the Tanzimat (Sosyal, 1967:1-2). Over the years there have been some changes to the village administration, but it continues to be in existence as the lowest level local government unit till date (Ünal, 2011: 245).

The last decades of the 19th century were important in the ottoman history. By the end of the century, the local government systems at the village, municipal and provincial levels had reached a pattern that was to remain 'frozen' for decades (Sosyal, 1967: 6-7). Before the Republican period, ie; the last period of the ottoman Empire, there were ideas favouring more decentralization policies.

It is worth noting that although the provincial local councils were established as part of the decentralisation process and policy of the Tanzimat, the fundamental motive of the Tanzimat was to protect the empire from disintegration by reordering the state, restore the declining power of the state and improve tax collection. More also, the Ottoman municipality acted as an institutionalized structure in the implementation of the city's services rather than implementing a local government system. Thus, the centralist rule was very much in force. Within this state of affairs, the local government bodies could not go beyond being merely the local agents of the central government and highly dependent on the central government financially.

### 4 III. lg in the Republican Period

Turkey became a republic in 1923 and republican establishment, unfortunately, maintained the statist-centralist frame it inherited from the Ottoman period. Another attribute from the past the republican establishment inherited was the centre's distrust for the periphery. The republican arrangement of local government was based on the principle of delegation, meaning to say, they had a completely subordinate status (Kalaycıoğlu, 1994: 90-96).

The Republic was established in a critical period of the state. It was a time when the founders of the new Republic were facing fears of a possible split of the Anatolia (Heper, 1985: 48). The resources of the country were quite limited and so the effective and efficient use of them was very necessary. These and many other internal and external pressures gave room for the reinforcement of the powers of the central government (Özgür & Kösecik, 2009:162). Another reason why the Republic maintained its centralist ideas of the Ottoman Empire was because the bureaucrats and officers of the previous regime were maintained in power during the Republican period; 93% of the high officers and 85% of bureaucrats of the Ottoman Empire continued to serve for the Republic (Özbudun, 1995: 7-8).

In the first year of the Republic, Ankara was given priority as the new capital and constituted specific example for municipal and development plans. A similar system to that of Istanbul was established for the Ankara Municipality by the law of 1924 and the mayor and members of the city council were appointed by the central government (Özgür & Kösecik, 2009:162,163).

The 1921 Constitution introduced by the government during the Independence War, conceived a wide autonomy of provinces concerning local affairs, however, this constitution became ineffective after the 1924 constitution was adopted after the War (Keleş, 2006: 137,138). (Özgür & Kösecik, 2009: 163). The drafters of the 1921 constitution aimed at rendering power into the hands of the people by localising administrative units and at the same time, by establishing mechanisms to enable the people to directly elect their governors at all levels from the district through the province to the Central government.

Shortly after the announcement of the new constitution, a new legislation concerning the local government was launched. Initially, the intent was to prepare separate laws for each local government administrative level. However, later on, this idea was renounced and a universal municipal law was prepared (Bayraktar, 2007: 4).

The Municipal Act of 1930 was designed to make local bodies agents of the central government in the periphery. This Act only gave legal status to the local government. Also, the municipalities were mandated with a wide range of services which covered almost all the local public services. In addition, the power of "general competence" was conferred upon the municipalities to cover those services and activities with local characteristics which were not explicitly prohibited for municipal undertakings.

It is noteworthy that, though the republican establishment passed legislations to enable local communities to create semi-autonomous local authorities, it did not attempt an actual autonomous decentralized system. It remained highly centralized.

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Rapid urbanization after the World War II posed many developmental problems such as; the creation of many weak municipalities, the accelerated establishment of the peripheral local governments and metropolitan ones, and the rapid demand for urban services as against its population, all of which the local governments could not handle (Tekeli and Guloksuz, 1976: 6). During this period, there was great inequality between the central and local government. More productive resources were allocated in favour of the central government. More also, the central government could easily influence the resources of the local governments (Kele?, 1981: 15). In addition, the local financial problems escalated because the central government failed to meet its legal obligations to the cities (Danielson and Kele?, 1980: 324). So although the law purported that the local authorities were provided with the revenue proportional to their functions, this was not the case in practice (Eke, 1982: 127).

A multi-party political system emerged in the 1950s. During this period, no major changes were however made to the workings of the municipalities except that the central government took up the provision of services such as roads, water, electricity, and mapping. The dependence of the municipalities on the centre however did not change (Alada, 1990:135).

The 1960s brought a revival in the central government's interest in the local government. Of course, this was not for the sake of increasing their (the local government's) autonomy but to direct their potentials to the national development. This started with the Five-Year Development Plans. The first one (1963 -1968) gave priority to underdeveloped regions with the distribution of public investments. The second one (1968 -1972) emphasized regional development and urbanization (Danielson and Kele?, 1980: 337).

After the military coup of 1960, in 1961 a new constitution was prepared. This constitution introduced clear constitutional provisions for local autonomy. That is, democratic rights and freedoms were extended to Local government and newly established autonomous institutions (Özgür & Kösecik, 2009:162-163. Kele?, 1991: 294). These new institutions were introduced in order to prevent the arbitrary, undemocratic and unconstitutional acts of government (Bayraktar, 2007: 8). The new constitution affirmed that the general decision making bodies of the municipal and provincial general councils were to be elected by the public instead of being appointed. The aim of the constitution was to strengthen the administrative and financial resources of the local government, however, it could not effectively achieve this because they were accompanied by a widespread of administrative and financial control of the central government, thus subordinating the local government (Özgür & Kösecik, 2009:162-163. Kele?, 1991: 294). According to Bayraktar (2007), the local government system was not amended despite these changes because, the old system was maintained in reality due to the lack of laws that will translate the constitutional principles to actual practices (Bayraktar, 2007: 9).

Another significant change that happened during this period is the change made to the Municipal Act in 1963. Mayors were to be elected by citizens rather than the municipal council. In addition, the government's appointment and president's approval were no longer required.

In the 1970s, the governments tightened their tutelage over the municipalities, particularly those of rival parties (Heper, 1986: 26). The climax of the local government stress happened after the 1973 elections. For the first time, social democrats in opposition won the elections and controlled the largest Turkish cities. This in itself was not the problem. The problem arose when the government consequently took partisan considerations and restricted the financial autonomy of the municipalities especially over the opposing party mayors (Danielson and Kele?, 1980: 332). The social democrat mayors initiated a national municipal movement later named "New Municipalism" but this movement could not establish organic bonds with the public.

There was a shift in 1978 to transform municipalities and make them more democratic based on the principles of participation, coordination, and resource creation. This attempt, unfortunately, was unsuccessful due to financial issues (Toksoz, 1981: 75-76).

During the military intervention in 1980, a two-tier metropolitan municipality system, made up of the metropolitan and district municipalities, was established. In 1984, the metropolitan municipalities were introduced under the Law No. 3030 making government of large cities to be handled at two different municipal levels. The district-based municipalities were maintained. This introduction though good brought some problems as well. The municipalities lost considerable resources and their democratic functioning was weakened. The mayors wielded too much power hence creating a "centralist pressure" at the local level (Kele?, 1986: 41-45).

The nineties was accompanied with movements that advocated for the principles of good governance, a less pronounced but effective state, and a division of responsibilities between the state, the private sector and the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) with an emphasis on the rule of law and wider human rights (Göymen, 2006: 247. Özcan & Turunç, 2008: 180). Several influential studies and reports were conducted and published throughout that period by some effective NGOs and think-tanks.

The European Charter of Local Selfgovernment, adopted by the Council of Europe 1985, signed in Turkey in 1998 was approved by the parliament in 1991 and put in effect in 1992 (Kele?, 1995: 17-18). Consequently, the Ministry of Interior Affairs prepared a series of bills to improve the workings, structures, and resources of the local government (Kele?, 2006: 476). In 1996, the government launched a series of reform processes that lasted until 2001. Bills regarding each local government unit, excluding villages, were made public. Unfortunately, these bills failed to be passed.

Projects like the Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) birthed in the 1990s are worth mentioning. And despite their shortcomings, the structures it put in place helped to reinforce civic pride, a sense of collective responsibility and partnership in solving the problems as well as create a culture of participation (Göymen, 2006: 249-250).

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It must be noted that since 1950 Turkey has been making progress towards a more democratic way of life. It is certain that the Republic period has improved greatly on the traditions of local government even though local was based on the principle of delegation with a completely subordinate status. According to some scholars, the Republican approach of municipalism entered a process of true democratisation with the 1980 military coup.

### 7 IV.

## 8 Reforms Over the Years

Turkey has carried out large scale reform efforts since the Tanzimat period and still continues to do so at regular intervals now. Local government reform in Turkey has been on the national agenda for many years. However, the lack of strong political leadership and governance prevented these plans and attempts from being translated into concrete reforms and actions (Göymen, 2006: 253). Particularly, the first decade of the 21st century has been the year of reforms in local government. Although these efforts were triggered by external dynamics and a desire to adapt to the European Union's criteria, there has been a level of successful reconstruction in local government and public administration (Özer, 2013:104). This section will, therefore, discuss the changes in the local government and the reforms that have taken place since the Tanzimat Era. The discussion will focus on law changes in the four main local government bodies in the Country (Metropolitan Municipalities, Municipalities, Villages, and Special Provincial Administration).

The V.

## 9 Metropolitan Municipalities

From its advent in 1984, metropolitan municipalities have evolved and gained increased autonomy and urban planning powers (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 18). With an increase in number from three to eight in 1988, metropolitan municipalities were the birthing ground for the Emergency Action Plan and Public Administration Basic Law drafts of the Justice and Development Party which made decentralisation for the sake of democratisation a priority (Adıgüzel, 2012: 158). Two waves of expansion in the metropolitan municipalities were an accompaniment to this mentioned decentralisation. The first wave happened in 2004, when the responsibility area of the metropolitans was increased according to population by the Metropolitan Municipalities Law Article No. 5216. In 2012, with the legislation Act No. 6360, fourteen more metropolitan municipalities were established and the metropolitan municipality borders were expanded to provincial borders (Akilli & Akilli, 2014: 683). According to this new legislation, metropolitan municipalities can only be established by law (Ahin, 2015: 161). Party powers The purpose of these reforms are detailed to help achieve ideal and optimal scale.i.e. to help avoid problems about planning and coordination and benefit from economies of scale. Moreover, clear lines of responsibility has been drawn for the metropolitan municipalities.

### 10 VI.

## 11 Municipalities

The first municipal organisation was created in 1855 in Istanbul, under the influence of the international developments related to the Crimean War (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012 ?? 11-12. Ünal, 2011: 243). Another catalyst to the formation of the municipal administration was the external pressure and influence of the Western powers (Neumann, 2014: 6-7). Modern municipalism came on the scene three years later with the founding of the sixth District of Istanbul located in the Pera/Galata area. Following the success of this, the Dersaadet idarei Belediye Nizamnamesi, a two-tier system to govern the capital was introduced in 1868 (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 12). Shortly after the approval of the 1921 constitution, in the year 1930 specifically, the law on municipalities (law no. 1580) was formulated and remained for 75 years. The law of 1930 transferred some services back to the central government (Görmez, 1997: 124-125). In 1961, the constitution, through Article 116 recognized the need to allocate proportional resources to municipalities. Despite this recognition, the old system persisted. One noteworthy thing however was that municipalities as from that time were no longer overseen by the central government but by the judges. More also mayors were no longer appointed but elected (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 18). In the growing population and rapid advancement of Turkey however, this law proved a bit inadequate and thus called for a reform. Subsequently, the law No. 5393 was birthed. This law was adopted in July 2005. The main goal of this law was to ensure more democratic and autonomous municipalities hence it bestowed on the municipalities administrative and financial autonomy. The new law increased the minimum population requirements of a municipality from the original 2000 (as seen in the law no. 1580) to 5000 (Tileuberdi, 2014: 99-101). This led to a significant reduction in the number of municipalities. In March 2008, Law 5757 withdrew the municipal status of 1,145 towns (Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 45).

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Through this reforms, the shares of national tax revenues grated to municipalities increased, new responsibilities were assigned to them, as well as changing the composition of the municipal standing committee to an equal number of elected and appointed members as against the previous appointed majority.

## 14 VII.

### 15 Villages

The village administration is the oldest management unit among the local administration. It is also the most neglected according to Ad?güzel ??Ad?güzel, 2012: 155). Although villages in Turkey had been in existence and operation for very long, they gained their legal status during the Republican period.

The village administration was organised as a local administrative unit in the late nineteenth century. A decree proclaimed in 1864 dealing mainly with the administration of the provinces also served the village administration, by providing for a popularly elected muhtar and council of elders ??Soysal, 1967: 2). This regulation made detailed arrangements on matters concerning the duties, responsibilities, and authorities of the administration. These duties and authorities continued until 1913 ??Ünal, 2011: 245).

The Village Law No. 442, 1924 abolished the previous law and it is still in force today ??Ünal, 2011: 245). It introduced a more liberal approach by abolishing most of the restrictions imposed during the 19th century and endowing the villages with corporate status. This is why, according to Sosyal, the Village Law of 1924, of all legislation on local government in Turkey is the most realistic and most paradoxical ??Soysal, 1967 : 3). As of 2009, there was a record of 31,146 villages. However, there has been an increasing trend of migration and relocation to the provincial and district centres ??Altan et al., 2010: 57).

Polatoglu says the village law gives the impression of a very autonomous and democratic unit in the local government, however, in reality, due to financial constraints it is not as autonomous ??Polatoglu, 2004: 169). Most of the services taken to the villages are undertaken by the central administration unit ??Ad?güzel, 2012: 155).

With the enactment of Law No. 6360, many village administrations were terminated and turned into mahalles (neighborhoods) of the nearest district (Ad?güzel, 2012: 156).

## 16 VIII. Special Provincial Administration

Special Provincial Administration is one of the very interesting local government units in Turkey. It holds a dual role; firstly as a local government unit and also as a local unit for the central administration. The former role was majorly governed by an ordinance issued in 1913 whereas the latter role falls under the provision of a law enacted in 1949.

The roots of special provincial administration go back into the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1864, the Provincial Regulation was established. During that time, the unit had no special legal personality, however, its formation was somehow linked to achievement of the purpose of local participation, especially of the non-Muslim subjects ??Ad?güzel, 2012: 156).

In 1913, a law governing the special provincial administration was instituted. This 149 articulated law contained provisions related to the general administration of the province. The first part of the law concerning the general management of the province was abolished with the provincial administration law no. 5442 in 1949.

In 1987, the law no. 3360, which is seen as the hugest and most comprehensive amendment to the system of special provincial administrations was passed. Despite the provisions and amendments this law made, many provisions of the old law were not tempered with ??Ad?güzel, 2012: 156).

Until very recently in 2005, the law of 1913 has been the reference law for the management of the Special provincial administration. Since its establishment, the special provincial administration has been plagued with so many problems necessitating the 2005 law review. In fact, the provisional local administration is the least developed and most disputed of all the local government units in Turkey (Soysal, 1967: 32). There was no clear distinction between the work of the central government and the special provincial administration unit. The initial duties of the provincial government were later taken over by the central administration. In 2005, Law No. 5302 which abolished the law of 1913 and all annexes and amendments, and restructured the special provincial administration was enforced. The Law No. 5302 clearly defined special provincial administration as a public legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy, established to meet the common local needs of provincial people. Thus, it brought an end to the confusion between the local authority and devolved state administration at the provincial level ??Bayraktar & Massicard, 2012: 45). This law also charged the SPA with duties of dual nature; those that are seen within the provincial borders and those seen outside the boundaries of the municipality.

The law no. 5302 also made changes regarding the approval of budgets, audits and control issues. It also made provisions and various arrangements in revenue and expenses of the provincial administration. Changes in the borrowing conditions of the provincial administration were not left out. All in all, the new law is more autonomous and it seems to have foreseen a structure with less administrative guardianship and control.

## 17 Conclusion

Although the local government of Turkey still has quite a way to go, I believe it has been progressive. One can trace the footprints in the sands of time, from a place where it was virtually impossible to find any room for either the concept of a local government with legally defined status and some degree of independence or the concept of citizen participation; to a time of deconcentration and finally to this period of quasiautonomous local governments.

Although the developments in the 1980s brought limited decentralization, they strengthened municipalities and revived interest in local government and politics (Eder and Nihal, 2008: 6-7). It can be said without hesitation that until the recent reforms, local government authorities in Turkey had been considered as administrative agencies of the central government. Thus their administrative and financial autonomy was limited and under the iron clads of the central government.

There is no denying the strides that have been taken towards increasing capacity, efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency over the years. We can also not deny the improvements, and enhancement in local autonomy, participation and accountability in recent years. And while we must recognize these achievements, the nation is still far away from having a 'truly' autonomous and democratic local government. One bothersome note I have made is that, local government reforms are still initiated and enforced in a top-down approach. Additionally, citizens seem to be quite satisfied ending their 'duty of participation' at merely voting. I believe a close look and examination at these two areas will help improve and inform future local government reforms in the country. For it is clear, by looking at history that the problems of the local government in Turkey cannot be resolved merely by policies that are imposed from the center.

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