

**MUNICIPALITY
GOVERNANCE AND
LOCAL
ADMINISTRATIONS
UNDER THE LIGHT OF
MULTI-LANGUAGE
APPROACH**

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1. DEMOCRACY AND MULTI-CULTURISM

There is a widespread consensus that the social life and thought styles undergo a fundamental change in terms of the historical segment that we live in. The project of modernity which has been developing since the 18th century is being questioned within the frame of the whole scale of values, and its various elements are subjected to criticism from the philosophy of enlightenment to the classical positivist understanding. World of nation states which has become symbolic with the French revolution increasingly looses its limits against the reality of humanity, and it is strictly emphasized that there is a shift from the industrial society to the "information society". Such fundamental changes find their echoes in the institutional and political arena. Importance of democracy presents itself again under the frame of this chain of changes. Because democracy has proved itself to be the system which provides the scene for reflection of social reality on the field of politics in real terms.

The debate on the idea of democracy ongoing nowadays is not for suggesting different ideas and practices in place of it. These efforts are directed towards making democracy more functional, reaching to more satisfying dimensions. This critic should not of course be of a superficial and eclectic nature, it should be made towards the direction of a deeper questioning. Theory of democracy has proved to be true and practicable under various conditions throughout the history of mankind, taking forms of the ages that it is applied. Another point which should immediately be emphasized emerges at this moment, that is, rather than being a status which has completed its theory, democracy is an ongoing process. This point voids the claims on whether a certain country is suitable for democracy, and provides a root for the proposition that, on the contrary, countries become suitable on the path of democracy.

Relying on the idea that the public has the determinative effects on the political power, democracy acknowledges in a broader sense that the citizens participate in the process of taking all decisions that have an impact on them, and realizing this participation through a decentralization at a high level in all sectors. Dependence of the democracy on local administrations becomes important at this point. Because, citizens who do not have any action other than the election periods in terms of the central power, can only revive themselves through the local administrations. This fact further acknowledges that local administrations are a "school of democracy". The greatest feature of democracy is that on local terms, the public personally bears the function of being "object" during the process of meeting their needs. The most significant element which should not be ignored in the relations between local administrations and democracy is the local cultures.

When the culture is taken as a frame which provides to people living inside it a set of values and preferences which are meaningful to them, providing them a model of life, harmonization between the local democracy and culture emerges as a necessity. A suitable environment will emerge to the extent that culture, as a whole of normative principles, values and ideals are practiced within democracy.

Acknowledgement that all cultures have a similar nature in the process of creation of nation states lead to the mistake that homogenous societies exist, causing the rejection of other cultures that are present in the whole. Authoritative and totalitarian administrations have emerged from the very essence of this issue, aspired from such a misleading assumption. However, today the nature of local has started to be defended as opposed to the central authority, with preference put on heterogeneity as opposed to homogeneity. Municipality governance, which is fed from local cultures, has a more democratic content than the central administrations. Multi-culturalism, which has to be stressed in this scope, highlights three main principles, relying on the idea of "unity on the floor of differences":

1. Human beings can not think independent of their cultures. Because individuals do exist on the basis of certain meanings, values and symbols throughout the process of interaction with their environments.
2. Differences are not errors. Therefore, each culture is "unique" and "valuable".
3. Each culture actually corresponds to a part of a pluralist structure, and it may contribute in the understanding of democracy which does not exclude the other.

As opposed to the single type homogeneous cultures, multi-culturalism puts the emphasis on acknowledgement of and support for differences. This leads to a rich manifold, making the citizen-centered democracy more meaningful. Because, striving for creating democratic manifestation only in the central political system leads to

an understanding which is constructed as aliens to cultures. Yet, defending the local will fully meet the free, citizen-centered understanding, putting into life the principle of “unity on the floor of differences”.

II. CULTURES AND LANGUAGE

Living inside the cultures, the human being thinks through the language in terms of its meaning and expressive aspects, and expresses what he thinks using his language. Besides, it is only through the language that all other symbol systems can be interpreted. It is not possible for any object, which does not find its corresponding expression in the language, to have any meaning. Language is literally a human action and it is a historical phenomenon as it is humanistic. It relies on a fact, hosting all the meanings of human thought and actions. Limits of the meanings worlds of men are also the limits of their languages. Language, which should not be considered solely a simple means of communication, accommodates all meanings of the existence. It is not possible to talk about human without language.

While acting as citizen-centered organizations, administrations should be conscious of the fact that the language used by people also creates their spiritual worlds. Language can not be transformed to a simple means of thinking between citizen and the administration. Language is the existing, can not be assumed as non-existent. Language, in its meaning as certain sounds, phrases or signs which human beings use for verbal or written expression of their thoughts, emotions, expectations and designs, is one of the most important values of cultural wholes as a developing living being. For this reason, most of the democratic societies of our time have reflected their sensitivity in language to their administration systems both in theoretical and practical terms.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The singular logic of the nation-state has neglected the cultural diversity at the stage of the establishment of nation- state. Nation-states, whose target it creating unity, require to construct a for of nation which creates homogeneity on fields which create diversity such as language, religion and cults. This requirement lead to the consequences that the sovereign element within the diverse cultural societies within the borders drawn being accepted as the principle element and other subject to it in the creation of the nation. It seems impossible that, with its current form, it is impossible for the nation-state to keep all forms of living which it accommodates within its body all together in an equal manner.

Turkey has for years adopted a policy which makes all people living within the borders of this country a single type (“everybody is Turkish”). This issue contradicts with the idea of multi-culturism, corresponding to a despot understanding which denies and assimilates. Yet, cultural diversity is a benefit for all parties, leading to a cultural dialogue, opening the way to social peace, rejecting all understandings based on force. Starting from the date on which “republic” was promulgated in Turkey, an understanding has been rooted which rejects diversities on the basis of “Turkish History Thesis” and “Sun Language Theory”, which sustained its existence in the form of cultural and identity policies in 1982 Constitution. This understanding which can be summarized as one characterizing all people, whether from Turkish ethnical identity or not, as "Turkish", which was associated with the ignorance of Turkish, Kurdish, Abkhazian, Arabic, Albanian, Circassian, Armenian, Georgian, Kyprian, Lazian, Pomakian, Greek, Assyrian, Tatarian, Hebrew and other languages in Turkey. In the “monist” structure of the cultural policy of the Republic of Turkey, those who claim for cultural diversity have been considered as dangerous, and they are exposed to various penalties with the accusations of “traitor” , “separatist”, and, on the other hand, assigned as targets of the policy of "devaluation" within the society.

Though the regulations which are enforced in the last period as a part of the process of harmonization with the European Union, lead to some changes in the traditional – status quo approach of the Republic of Turkey, they failed to be sufficient in terms of creating an understanding of a multi-cultural society. For example, some regulations such as "Ordinance on the Learning of Different Languages and Dialects which Turkish Citizens Traditionally Use in their Daily Lives" and "Ordinance on Radio and TV Broadcasts to be Made in Different Languages and Dialects which Turkish Citizens Traditionally Use in their Daily Lives” have been caused to be insufficient by immediately adding some restrictive provisions.

At this stage, reforms which are performed or accepted to be performed are far from reaching satisfying dimensions. The problem, before all, becomes a bottleneck at the point of a change of mind. It should not be forgotten that if the change of mind takes a further step towards a democratic structure, internal peace will be provided and a climate of morale and peace will be provided on social area. In this regard, it is required to produce and implement policies on the issue of creating relations between ethnical and lingual communities within the society.

Though the reforms which are performed within the frame of central administration are directed towards democratization, reflection of democracy theory to the social life is only possible through granting autonomy to local administrations. Municipalities, which are the institutions of service that are assigned through democratic means, bear an importance at this point. Municipalities become significant in terms of making democracy wide spread as the institutions that are the closest to public, and of elevating the democratic cultural level of citizens. Whilst municipalities operate for fulfilling the needs of local public, they directly establish relationship with the local public. For this reason, all cultural and lingual groups that exist in the local should be taken into consideration. Diversities, differences, which exist on fields where municipalities operate, are a natural situation and richness. Social and cultural diversities should be integrated in politics on a ground of tolerance and dialogue to be created by democratic pluralism. For this reason, every language, culture, religion, cult and belief should be provided with the opportunity to express themselves. Leaving behind the approach of single nation and single language, a process should be created which embraces pluralism and participation.

As of today, contemporary democracies have put into life the principle of “unity on the floor of differences” through a pluralist and multi-lingual method. Multi-language practices which exist in various countries have been secured under the constitution, and are being applied by municipalities. Countries which adopt the understanding of multi-language municipality governance can be listed as follows: Belgium, Sweden, Canada, Israel, Switzerland, Spain, Basque Country, Catalan, Galicia, India, China, Indonesia, UK, Wales, Scotland, North Ireland, France, Bulgaria etc.

While meeting the needs of people, municipalities determine these needs by establishing communication with the public. Dialogue between the municipalities and the public which take place one-to-one on local terms lead these service organizations with the problem of understanding their local languages.

Adoption by the municipalities of a multi-language method is a requirement which arises from both the reasons of existence and democratic plurality. Recommendations can be provided as follows as an example of multi-language practices, which are very essential for municipalities:

1. Before all local practices, constitutional and legal regulations at macro level should be encouraged on the basis of state governance. For this purpose, all citizens shall be ensured to participate in processes which directly or indirectly affect themselves and the languages they use as well as their identities, the identity of being “Turkeyian” should be accepted as a frame in the Constitution, and constitutional norms should be taken into account in this axis.
2. The facts that municipalities receive the requests and complaints of the local public and create solutions under the light of these depend on the ability of parties to understand one another and express themselves. For this purpose, municipalities should perform preparatory works before all practices directed towards multi-language purposes. Within this frame, chambers and desks as well as titles and offices in municipalities should be identified in a multi-lingual manner (i.e Turkish, Kurdish, Zazaish, English etc.)
3. Since it is a hard possibility that all units existing within the body of the municipality understand and explain issues in all languages and dialects, municipalities should make available certain translators towards language and local dialects in institutional terms.
4. Under the frame of the “Right of Information” which is guaranteed under the laws in Turkey, municipalities should be able to provide any information requests of the local public in the language and dialects in which they are requested.
5. Under the frame of multi-language based municipality governance, another element is that each language group should establish its own “Public council”. These public assemblies should talk in their own languages and dialects in their own meetings, and the issues they agree should be of suggestive character of the municipality.

6. Public announcements, campaigns and invitations of municipalities should be promulgated to the public in a multi-lingual manner.
7. Annual activity reports of municipalities should be prepared in a multi-lingual manner, and should be published within this frame.
8. The age we live in is called as the “Age of Information” and many communication channels survive on these technologies. The widespread nature of this age, particularly internet as a sub-issue, should be the main emphasis of municipalities. That means, the municipalities should take into account the multi-lingual aspect while preparing their web sites, and prepare the sites taking into account all languages and dialects which are used or which have the possibility to be used.
9. Local languages should be used at a satisfactory level in local bulletins and publications which are prepared for informative purposes.
10. Names of streets, neighborhoods and park areas located within the populations units where municipalities operate should be provided with signboards prepared in multi-lingual aspects taking into account the local languages.
11. Phone communication, which is one of the most significant communication channels of municipalities, is directly related to the efficiency of the switch operator. With the shift of municipalities to multi-lingual applications, multi-lingual services should be provided to citizens who wish to establish communication via phone. For this reason, switch operators should be able to use such languages and dialects as Kurdish, Arabic, Assyrian etc. in addition to Turkish and English.
12. In addition to this, efforts for writing Punctuation Books and Dictionaries should be supported with the aim of contributing to the survival of languages used within the municipalities. Besides, actions shall be taken for translating World Classics to local languages, and publications towards children such as child literature series, educative brochures, stories and tales should be taken into account.
13. Knowledge of the local language should be a condition of employment for any staff to be recruited by the municipality.
14. Urban settlement plans or projects prepared by engineers from among the works performed by local administrations should be prepared in other languages in addition to the official language.
15. Official documentation may be in different languages.
16. Libraries should be present within the body of municipalities where products in various languages are presented.

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