

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF BURSA NİLÜFER
MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF BURSA NİLÜFER MUNICIPALITY

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It is expected that decisions taken by administrative units meet needs and demands of citizens. Ensuring public participation in decision-making processes emerges as a method for reflecting perspectives of citizens especially in local governments. For this purpose, different participation tools are utilized, such as petitions, municipal call centers, participatory budgeting events, city councils, and neighborhood committees etc.; however, the effectiveness of these participation methods were not adequately addressed in the literature. The main aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation within borders of Nilüfer Municipality, which differs from other municipalities with its unique practices regarding public participation, including neighborhood committees, as a case study. The evaluation in this study is based on perceptions of the 23 sampled Nilüfer City Council members and administrative staff, and sampled representatives of neighborhood committee members in Nilüfer City Council, analyzed through the face-to-face interviews.

Interview questions were developed on the basis of the review of the literature about measuring effectiveness of public participation, and considered the following dimensions/criteria: methods/tools of local public participation, level of public participation, impacts/effects of public participation on the municipality, evaluation of neighborhood committee practice, enablers and barriers of local public participation in the municipality, attitudes of the municipal administration towards public participation. According to the findings, democracy could develop and local needs could be met with local participation of citizens. Neighborhood committees are local participation practices that have a great importance in line with this purpose.

Keywords: Public Participation, Local Government, City Council, Neighborhood Committees, Bursa Nilüfer Municipality

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’DE BİR YEREL YÖNETİMDE YEREL KATILIMIN ETKİNLİĞİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ: BURSA NİLÜFER BELEDİYESİ ÖRNEĞİ

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İdari birimler tarafından alınan kararların, vatandaşların ihtiyaç ve taleplerini karşılaması beklenmektedir. Halkın karar alma süreçlerine katılımının sağlanması, özellikle yerel yönetimlerde vatandaşların bakış açılarının yansıtılmasına yönelik bir yöntem olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu amaçla dilekçeler, belediye çağrı merkezleri, katılımcı bütçeleme etkinlikleri, kent konseyleri, mahalle komiteleri vb. farklı katılım araçları kullanılmaktadır; diğer yandan bu katılım yöntemlerinin etkinliği literatürde yeterince ele alınmamıştır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, mahalle komiteleri de dahil olmak üzere vatandaş katılımına ilişkin özgün uygulamalarıyla diğer belediyelerden farklılaşan Nilüfer Belediyesi sınırları içindeki vatandaş katılımının etkinliğini bir vaka çalışması olarak değerlendirmektir. Bu çalışmada yapılan değerlendirme, Nilüfer Kent Konseyi üyeleri ve idari personeli ile mahalle komitesi üyeleri arasından seçilen 23 kişi ile yüz yüze mülakatlar yoluyla, algılara ilişkin toplanan verilerin analizine dayanmaktadır. Mülakat soruları, vatandaş katılımının etkililiğinin ölçülmesine ilişkin literatürün gözden geçirilmesi temelinde

geliştirilmiş ve şu boyutları/kriterleri dikkate almıştır: yerel katılımın yöntemleri/araçları, vatandaş katılımı düzeyi, vatandaş katılımının toplum üzerindeki etkileri/etkileri, mahalle komitesi uygulamasının değerlendirilmesi, yerel halkın katılımını teşvik eden ve engelleyen unsurlar, belediye yönetiminin halkın katılımına yönelik tutumları. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, vatandaşların yerel katılımı ile demokrasinin gelişebileceği ve yerel ihtiyaçların karşılanabileceği düşünülmektedir. Mahalle komiteleri, bu amaç doğrultusunda büyük önem taşıyan yerel katılım uygulamaları arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vatandaş Katılımı, Yerel Yönetim, Kent Konseyi, Mahalle Komiteleri, Bursa Nilüfer Belediyesi

To my family...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LA21	Local Agenda 21
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNDP	The United Nations Development Program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the historical process, many states have applied different methods in order to increase the efficiency in the structures under their sovereignty. It is observed that governments have started to try administrative structures dominated by decentralization instead of central bureaucracy in order to increase the efficiency level of local services (Montgomery, 1983). The transfer of the powers and resources of the central government to the persons responsible for representing the local population is called decentralization and is considered as institutionalized participation (Vedeld, 2003). Participation and decentralization have a symbiotic relationship. On the one hand, successful decentralization requires some degree of local participation to ensure the responsiveness of local government to local needs. With a decentralized structure, citizens' opportunities to participate in local government will increase. A government structure that is positioned to be closer to the citizens and more easily affected by the demands of the citizens will be created. Participation in decentralized structures is seen as both a tool and a goal. (Litvack and Seddon, 1999). It is the delegation of local governance decision-making processes that occurs with people's participation. With this structure, a political environment emerges that allows people to show their political skills and positively affects their citizenship consciousness (Beetham, 1996).

Political participation could be defined as "taking part in the processes of formulation, passage and implementation of public policies" (Parry et al., 1992). Lowndes et al. (2006) refer to 'local political participation' as the action taken by citizens in seeking to influence decisions ultimately taken by public officials and elected representatives at the local level. Such a definition includes within its remit: 'not only voting and other forms of electoral activity (for example, working in campaigns, making financial contributions) but also contacting public officials,

attending protests and getting involved either formally or informally on local issues' (Brady et al. 1995).

“Public administration has witnessed significant changes in the globalization process and has worked to adapt to the changing conditions and new requirements” (Uygur, 2014). One of the most important changes for administrative system in this process is the change in the hierarchical administration approach. Central governments make local governments shareholders in some areas that fall under their mandate. Sharing the duties of central governments with local governments increases the efficiency of local governments (Başaran, 2008). In parallel with this situation, local governments stake in ensuring citizen satisfaction. The effect of local governments' decision-making processes on citizens begins to be observed. The fact that public revenues do not coincide with the increase in public service demands leads to the necessity of using public resources more effectively, in place and in line with need priorities. This is one of the factors that led to the development of a citizen-centered administration approach (Türkyılmaz, 2013). By moving away from the understanding that citizens are only consumers, and acknowledging that they are also owners and co-creators of public policies (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000), their perspectives has become more important.

Local participation can be realized through various tools, comprising petitions, municipal call centers, public meetings or hearings in municipal councils or city councils, participatory budgeting events, community policing activities, mail or web-based surveys, and other online tools (Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014; Sobacı and Karkın, 2013). City councils and neighborhood committees formed under the umbrella of the city council tend to be the main mechanisms of citizen-centered administration approach for local governments around the world (Cooper, 2011).

City councils demonstrate their ability to strengthen local democracy through participation, partnership participation model, democracy and governance. City councils bring together local governments, people and non-governmental organizations through governance and mechanisms, which have similar features in terms of governance, enabling them to communicate and a common management model. In this structure, services are provided in line with local requests and local participation, instead of top-down practices found in central governments (Kestellioğlu, 2011: 122).

The expression of public participation in decision-making processes is not a one-sided phenomenon. It serves two different purposes. It is the participation of citizens both in the decision-making processes and in the implementation of the decisions. Thanks to these features, it contributes to the development of democracy. City councils are also organizations that serve this purpose. (Bozkurt, 2014).

City councils were also legally established in Turkey with Municipal Law No 5393, dated 2005 in order to bring together all stakeholders (Görmez and Altınışık, 2011). Together with the city councils, the protection of the rights of the city is ensured. In this way, it also contributes to the protection of the law. In addition, administrative principles such as the development of sensitivity towards the environment and accountability are provided with the city councils. Different actors of the society can come together and communicate and act in order to reach the most efficient decision to be taken in terms of municipalities. Along with the legal regulations, different actors such as non-governmental organizations and professional groups were allowed to participate in the decision-making process under the influence of the governance approach. In line with this purpose, it has been one of the reasons for the formation of city councils (Bozkurt, 2014).

There is one of the city council implementation examples in Nilüfer Municipality, which is one of the district municipalities in Bursa for Turkey. This practice comes to the fore with the neighborhood committees, one of the sub-units that contribute to the realization of participation at the neighborhood scale. With this feature that distinguishes Nilüfer Municipality from other municipalities, it can be said that it has a successful application example in terms of city council (Arikboğa, 2017). Thanks to neighborhood committees, decision-making process could reach to small parts of the district. People who are members of that area could explain their ideas with that institution to affect decision-making process. Although there are city councils in different regions of our country, the neighborhood committee is a participation practice developed and implemented by Nilüfer Municipality for the first time in Turkey. This situation enables the Municipality of Nilüfer to be characterized as a pioneer in increasing local participation in decision-making processes. With neighborhood committees, it is ensured that a citizen living in a region could directly participate in the decision-making process. As a result of these features, Nilüfer

Municipality is thought as a significant example in terms of studying local participation topic.

In the light of these, the main aim of this study is to evaluate public participation in Nilüfer Municipality as a case study, as it differs from other municipalities with its unique practices regarding public participation, including neighborhood committees. The evaluation in this study will be based on the perceptions of the sampled Nilüfer City Council members and administrative staff, and sampled representatives of the neighborhood committee members in Nilüfer City Council, analyzed through the face-to-face interviews. More specifically, this thesis attempts to address the following research questions using qualitative and quantitative methods:

- How effective is public participation in Nilüfer Municipality?
- Why is it effective or ineffective? In what ways?
- What is/are the most effective participation tool(s) in Nilüfer Municipality?
- What are the enablers and barriers to public participation at the municipal level?
- How can public participation be improved in municipalities?

The study involves semi-structured interviews with 23 randomly-sampled members and administrative staff of Nilüfer City Council and neighborhood committees in Nilüfer Municipality, including open-ended questions as well as Likert-scale rating questions that reveal their perceptions regarding the various aspects of local participation in Nilüfer municipality. Questions of our study were prepared as a result of the pre-tests. Interview questions were developed on the basis of the review of the literature about measuring effectiveness of public participation, and considered the following dimensions/criteria: methods/tools of local public participation, level of public participation, impacts/effects of public participation on the municipality, evaluation of neighborhood committee practice, enablers and barriers of local public participation in the municipality, attitudes of the municipal administration towards public participation.

The significance of this study is two fold. First, it examines the issue of effectiveness of public participation in a municipality, which is an underexplored area in the public participation literature. Thus, it is expected that the study will contribute to the literature by providing insights about the dynamics of public participation in a municipality in Turkey, particularly through the examination of a novel participation method at the neighborhood level. Second, it investigates Nilüfer Municipality as a case study, which is considered to be a pioneer in terms of its local public participation practices, thus the study might have implications for public participation practices in other municipalities and related policies as well.

This thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, conceptual framework and literature review on local public participation are presented, which include an overview of the main concepts of the study and a discussion on the issue of effectiveness of public participation. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the status of public participation in Turkey, along with a review of the developments on the related legal framework, as well as participation practices in Nilüfer Municipality. Next, Chapter 4 presents the qualitative and quantitative findings from the field study, including information on the methodology. Finally, conclusion chapter summarizes the findings and discusses the implications of the study for policy making, as well as for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the main concepts and discussions in the literature about public participation in order to form the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of public participation in local governments in Turkey. Although public participation has essentially one meaning, the situation is different in practice. Public participation could not be limited to a single genre and may appear in different forms or practices.

From this point of view, first of all, what public participation is, what its advantages, limitations and objectives are will be explained in this chapter. In the following parts of the chapter, actors and tools of public participation will be provided. Then, information about what should be understood by the concept of the effectiveness of public participation will be presented at the end of the chapter.

2.1. Public Participation and Local Public Participation

Within the 21st century plans, different countries wanted to come together and determine common goals for all humanity.

At the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, "sustainable development" was adopted as the common goal of all humanity in the 21st century. In this direction, the Action Plan titled "Agenda 21", which includes the principles and action areas for dealing with environmental and development problems and achieving sustainable development goals in the 21st century, has been accepted by the members of the United Nations (Karakuzulu, 2015: 397).

Local governments are of great importance for Agenda 21. Also, local governments are responsible for sustainable policies. "It has been stated that local governments should establish Local Agenda 21 (LA21) targets, which include mechanisms that will increase and diversify participation in the implementation of these policies" (Atvur, 2009: 231).

Thanks to LA21, both citizens and local governments are given the responsibility to act together in the projects to be organized and developed. It is thought that with increased participation, people could become more responsible for the places they live in.

With the effect of globalization, communication between people is increasing and cultural transfer is seen. As a result of this situation, people's expectations are also changing. One of those affected by this change is public services. In previous periods, although people were the ones who provided the necessary resources for the services offered to them, they did not have any say about what the service would be. However, this situation changes with the effect of the change process. The strict distinction between the administration and the managed, which was seen in the past, leaves its place to the new order. This new order is associated with the concept of local participation, which enables citizens to participate in decision-making processes. The transformation that will take place in terms of public administration is not expected to be from a single point. It was requested that the changes that will take place in different subjects be observed in the transformation. We can classify these issues as economic, social and political. "Concepts such as accountability, locality or subsidiarity, citizen participation, citizen orientation, which are the intersection point of these factors, have emerged as a part of the restructuring in public administration" (Kutlu, Usta and Kocaoğlu, 2009: 508).

In order to overcome this situation, which is also defined as the "representative democracy crisis", many discussions are taking place and new approaches are being put forward. In the face of the fact that the representative democracy is insufficient to produce solutions to the management problems of the societies and even it is claimed that they are in a "crisis", decentralization proposes to expand local participation (Önder, 2013: 312).

It would be a mistake to think that the concept of participation corresponds to a single meaning.

Participation in terms of its political dimension; it is expressed as the efforts of individuals or their units, organizations, to determine and influence the choices and actions of the cadres that manage them. The forms and levels of political participation differ according to the structure of the political system, legal environment, institutions, political culture and socio-economic structure. In terms of the administrative dimension, it is defined as the

participation of the public and Non-Governmental Organizations in the decisions they have taken, rather than the determination of the political and administrative staff (Görün, 2006: 164).

From this point of view, the state of having power over the administrative authorities by influencing both the organizational structure and the decision-making processes could be described as public participation. In other words, we could consider it as the transformation of local governments into decentralized structures. This transformation both increases the expectations of citizens from local governments and makes citizens and local governments responsible for the decisions taken.

The potential of eliminating problems such as abuse of representation, authoritarian and bureaucratic management approach and citizen indifference, which is included in representative democracy, is present in the participatory management approach. Participation could be seen as a complementary solution for the administration to be under popular sovereignty and control. Participation is also seen as a phenomenon that enables citizens to become permanent “public subjects”, active citizens, rather than being decisive only in elections (İzci, 2014: 21).

It would be a mistake to think that local governments have a position where citizens do not have any influence. These structures ensure the fulfillment of the necessary services by considering the wishes and demands of the citizens. “Local governments are associated with democracy in terms of enabling the participation of local people in decision-making processes. In this respect, the existence of democratic local governments depends on the ways of local participation being open to all segments” (Yaman and Küçükşen, 2018: 247). The concept of democracy is so essential in terms of local administration. The power and effectiveness of local administration could be specified by that process. For example, local governments could be seen as less powerful in the first years of Turkish Republic and in the period of military coups which were against the idea of opposition. Therefore, we could say that there was a positive relationship between democracy and local administration. Both of them could enhance or reduce efficiency of another one. In addition, the most important key factor of local administration was participation. That’s why, we should be interested in the concept of democracy in order to find out the relationship between that concept public participation.

2.2. Public Participation and Democracy

If we want to evaluate government of a country, we should examine the condition of sovereignty in there. There are three main types of government systems, which were shaped in terms of sovereignty conditions. They are monarchy, oligarchy and democracy. In monarchy, there is not any institution to rule people. Only one person has power to govern others and (s)he does not share that power with others. Moreover, ideas of other people are not implemented or accepted. Whatever one person wants, others follow his/her claim. Different from monarchy, there is a small group which could be thought as decision-maker in oligarchy. “An Oligarchy is a government in which a small group exercises control especially for corrupt and selfish purposes” (Myers, 2015). This short explanation could be thought as a need for democracy which is about increasing public opinion to affect government.

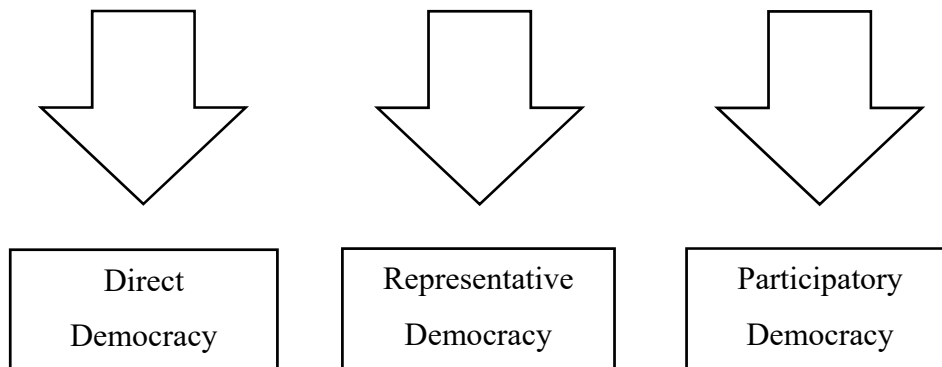
Democracy is an attractive but elusive concept. It is both an icon and a mirage. Democracy literally means people’s rule (demos kratos): a governance system where the political sovereignty of every citizen reigns without privilege or special entitlement. The people cast in the role of sovereign ruler (demos) distinguishes demo-cracy from types of political rule (kratos) where power is variously vested in the hands of kings (autocracy/monarchy), tyrants, aristocrats (aristocracy), patricians, religious authorities (theocracy), sects, cults, clans, communities, communes, cooperatives, professions, unions, gangs (mafocracy), or families (patriarchy or matriarchy) (Rosefilde and Mills, 2013: 5-6).

This explanation shows us the main aim of democracy, but we could not say that there is only one single democratic structure throughout history since there is a historical transformation in terms of public opinion which has an impact over purposes of government from time to time.

We could classify the concept of democracy by using three main titles which are called as direct, semi-direct and representative. The main characteristic of them is sourced from using of sovereignty.

Figure 1: Different forms of democracy throughout history

Forms of Democracy



The operation of direct democracy structure was very simple. People had an impact over decisions about their living places directly. In this system, even if not everyone, the citizens who had the right to participate in the administration gathered in a square, held discussions on the issues and needs of the region and voted for decision process. From this point of view, we could say that they directly influenced the decisions to be taken for these purposes. In contrast, in representative democracy, citizens elect their delegate in order to express their needs, ideas, etc. with their acquiescence. These delegates could be thought as a majority group which make necessary regulations for societies. At that point, election is really essential factor for representative democracy. Thanks to elections, people have right to transfer their power and authority to other people freely.

We could see participatory democracy is located between direct and representative types of democracy. Also, public participation finds a place in that type of democracy. We could not say that this structure has a purely unique structure since it has some specific features of both direct and representative democracy. People could participate in decision-making process with different tools like referendum, veto and public initiative etc. in participatory democracy. There is a parliament in a place that has participatory democracy in order to make and implement some decisions. However, this parliament sometimes could need public acclaim to legitimize for their services that have an impact over the area of their responsibility dramatically. From that point of view, we should not think that people have right to make decisions without parliament because parliament is also final authority in terms of legislation. Thanks to this limited authority, people could make service offers, in addition they

could decide to approve or reject the services that are planned to be performed by the administration.

“Participation in administration is the basic principle of democracy” (İzci and Sarıtürk, 2019: 499).

In these days, different control processes have been put into practice before elections and voting, which are the forms of implementation envisaged by classical democracy. Although the existence of representative institutions based on elections is necessary for a healthy democracy, it is not considered sufficient. It is thought that supporting the limited participation methods offered by the representative democracy with additional participation instruments that will ensure the participation of various public groups and thus expanding the participation of the local people will make significant contributions to the country's politics (Özgiraz and Zeren, 2009: 230).

Democracy has acquired its current meaning at the end of a historical process. The concept of democracy includes different features such as the participation of the people in decision-making processes, freedom of thought and majority rule. Democracy also ensures that different ideas could be freely expressed. Along with fundamental rights and freedoms and minorities' rights could also be protected through democracy (Çetin, 2003). Briefly, participation of people is necessary for the development of democracy in a society. In order for this participation to take place, some instruments are needed (in the section “Tools of Local Participation” in this study, the main ones of these instruments are explained.).

Subjecting democracy to a triple distinction, as in Figure 1, should not mean that there will be one of three different types of democracy. The tripartite democracy structure can be observed together in societies with the means of public participation. For example, neighborhood committee is a public engagement tool. As will be discussed later, three different types of democracy can be observed simultaneously within neighborhood committees. Elected officials such as Mayors and Headmen can be considered as examples for representative democracy, city councils for participatory democracy and neighborhood committees for direct democracy. The decision-making processes of these structures and the legal basis they have differ due to the different characteristics of democracy.

This differentiation also causes tensions from time to time. Participation for headmen and mayors who come to power through elections is already realized through the election process. Neighborhood residents elect these units to take the necessary decisions. For this reason, it may be criticized that there is no need for an additional structure such as the city council or neighborhood committees. The presence of participation tools with different understanding of democracy may also cause delays in decision-making processes and decrease the level of satisfaction in cases where there are differences of opinion. This situation may negatively affect the efficiency of public participation tools.

Nevertheless, with the development of these tools, it is expected that public participation achieves its goals and the development of democracy may be ensured. The objectives of public participation will be explained in the following section.

2.3. Aims, Advantages, and Limitations of Public Participation

“In local governments, direct public participation emerges as an effective tool that could serve many purposes like determining local people’s basic needs, using public resources efficiently, producing useful solutions to local problems and increasing citizen satisfaction with service quality” (Yavuz, 2021: 200). The power of political representation has come to a point where people can have a say in matters that concern them with the effect of periodic changes. With the effect of this situation, the usage area of democratic tools is expanding. “In this context, the questions of how citizens – especially the poor – express voice and how institutional responsiveness and accountability could be ensured have become paramount” (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001: 32). With the participation of the public, communication and the interaction between service providers and service recipients increases. This situation ensures that citizens have a share in the services that are planned to be realized and their passive structure comes to an end. In addition, the accountability of public institutions in terms of their services increases and the legitimacy phenomenon gains value. Thanks to the participation of the public, the ruling class is prevented from making decisions in line with their own wishes and putting these decisions into practice, and thus legitimacy is ensured. Also, the needs of citizens become a

primary condition because information about their needs could be learned directly and rapidly.

With local participation, people who share common space and have different views come together. While it is very difficult for these people to act together in normal periods, this situation changes with the participation of the public. It is ensured that people with different views think and discuss together and reach the best choice to be made about the area they live in. This is a chance for both the development of social relations and the increase in satisfaction with the service provided. Local participation creates this chance for us. “Participation diversifies and deepens interaction mechanisms within the society and enables the spirit of coexistence and solidarity to be strengthened. Participation allows local residents to be aware of each other’s problems and improves the empathy capacity of different groups” (Akay, 2016: 4). With the participation of the public, people are given the right to speak. They are given the opportunity to express their wishes, suggestions and needs. It is also possible for them to have an impact on public services with the participation of the public. Public services are done for the people. It aims at the economic and social development of the area where people live. Citizens, who are a factor in the creation of these services with the participation of the public, act more selflessly to increase the quality of services. Responsibilities increase when citizens share responsibilities in the area they live in. Since those who are described as having different thoughts have a common purpose, the problems between them decrease (Siu and Stanisevski, 2012).

With the public participation, the level of technical knowledge of actors who are attendants in decision-making processes is increased. This situation could be considered as another advantage of public participation (Goodin and Dryzek, 2006). It is not expected that the party with the right to take decisions will have comprehensive information about all the services to be provided. However, since the opinions of different people are taken for the services planned to be performed with the participation of the public, it is ensured that the people who have knowledge are included in the processes. In this way, the knowledge of the community becomes efficient. It affects the planned public services. At the end of this process, stakeholders also become knowledgeable about the subjects they do not know thanks

to the information exchange. The efficiency of the political decision-making process is increased by equipping it with technical knowledge. With the increased efficiency, more beneficial use of the capital allocated to public services is ensured. The delivery of a service to all segments of the society without any discrimination, and the fulfillment of it in the most economical way, is realized with the common opinion of the stakeholders.

Providing public services offered to citizens faster, with higher quality and at a lower cost are primary objectives of local governments (Yıldırım, 2021: 386). Thanks to the above-mentioned features, public participation is an indispensable element for the purposes of local governments. With the development and expansion of public participation, an increase in the quality of service will be observed. Stakeholders from different segments of the society will feel responsible. Social development will be achieved as different groups will communicate with each other through the public participation method. People's knowledge will increase. With all these, the effectiveness of local governments will increase and the quality of service provided will improve.

On the other hand, there are some limits in terms of local participation. We could not easily have a structure that enables public participation.

The assumption that the integration of associations into the decision-making process and into the implementation of urban policies would strengthen them, and consequently improve civic culture, has been widespread. Reality has, however, proved more ambivalent. First of all, most resources have been allocated to national or regional NGOs (such as the 'Restaurants du Coeur') or to NGOs made up of professionals rather than the residents of the neediest neighborhoods (Sintomer and Maillard, 2007: 515).

In addition to that point, it is difficult for communities far from the city center to act as pressure groups and have an influence on political decisions. (Sintomer and Maillard, 2007).

These situations could be thought as negative characteristics of local participation, but there are also some important and beneficial features of that structure. First of all, it is a key for legitimacy. According to Ökmen, with local participation, people become one of the main actors involved in decision-making processes. This situation hinders their alienation from democracy (2005). Also, the interaction between people

and administration units is increasing under the influence of the development of technology. This situation provides an increase in opportunities in terms of participation. At this point, local governments also have responsibilities. These structures should develop contemporary management techniques and improve themselves in terms of institutionalization. In order to have a democratic understanding, it is necessary for citizens to take a continuous and active role in the decision-making processes (Keleş, 2000).

Until this section, the basic information about what public participation has been given. The following section will provide information on the actors that involved in the public participation process.

2.4. Characteristics of the Actors Involved in Municipal Public Participation Processes

Central governments' desire to move away from strict hierarchy and share their power with local governments has a purpose like accomplishing the needs of public. With decentralization, the idea of centrally administering a society from a single center has been moved away from, and local governments with the authority to make and implement decisions have been created. However, it has become impossible for people to meet their changing needs over time with the practices that local government units will develop by making decisions on their own. This has enabled local governments to adopt partnership in their decision-making processes. It is aimed to take the desired efficient decisions with the participation of the public. For this purpose, one side of public participation is local government administrative organs (mayor, municipal council members, municipal board) where central governments share their authority with, while the other actors that the municipality interacts with in taking decisions are as follows:

- Citizens (living in a particular municipal area)
- Members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Members of professional organization associations
- Employees of public organizations

- Members of political parties
- Members of universities
- Headmen

In the following section, the role of citizens, non-governmental organizations and headmen in local public participation will be explained as having higher relevance for the context of this study.

2.4.1. Citizens

With the concept of public participation, the idea that people should choose only the people to represent them has been moved away. With the participation of the public, people have been given more responsibility. With this concept, it has become possible for citizens to have a say in the decisions to be taken about the region they live in or the services to be provided. They were given the opportunity to express their opinion on a problem related to their environment. Within this scope, the right to communicate and interact with the administrators has been obtained (Erdoğan, 2019a). Citizens could express their opinions directly with local participation.

The passive role that people had before the local participation process has been replaced by an active, participatory and responsible position.

The aim of active citizenship is to ensure active participation, because this is a partnership relationship. In this relationship, the citizen actively participates in the policy-making process. Although the responsibility belongs to the government in the final decision stage, the citizen takes an active role in shaping the policies (Akçay, 2013: 8).

Citizens have the right and power to express an opinion about the place where they live. They do not need any intermediary while exercising this right. They could come together and ensure that their rights are used more effectively, but this is not an obligation. They could also participate in the decision-making process alone thanks to public participation.

The concept of citizenship could be explained as a community of people living in a certain region, sharing common areas, and having a common purpose and goal. There is no discrimination in terms of citizens who are party to local participation.

Everyone is considered to have this right and everyone's opinion is valued. It was an obstacle in front of citizens who wanted to express their desire to participate in the administration only through elections. For example, since children and youth did not have the right to vote, they did not have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. However, with the participation of the public, it is possible for all segments of the society to express their opinions. In public participation, there is no discrimination. Everyone, whether a child or elderly could express their own needs freely.

2.4.2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In places where there is a democratic administration approach, the participation of the people in the administrative processes is dependent on some conditions. Local governments should have democratic and participatory mechanisms. In addition, the people must be in an organized structure to act together (Okutan, 2008).

Considering that individual initiatives are ineffective in the realization of participation today, but more positive results could be obtained when collective action is taken, it is clear that local governments will deal with organized communities rather than atomized individuals in their interactions with the public (Mutlu, 2006: 3).

In response to this need, Non-Governmental Organizations have emerged. NGOs were formed when people came together despite the risks of not being able to make their voice heard when they act alone. These structures carry out their activities in accordance with the purpose of establishment without any profit motive.

NGOs are directly influential on the decisions to be taken by local governments, as they are an organized structure. It is not requested by local governments to take a decision contrary to the wishes of the people acting together. In addition, it considers the demands of the organized structure. Based on these explanations, the place of an NGO in the participation processes is similar to that of individuals. However, the effect is higher in the participation process. Despite the inadequacy of individuals, NGOs are considered as a solution. Associations, unions and foundations are also parties of public participation like NGOs. They are also thought as gathering of different people for their needs. They share common goals, and they could express their ideas more strongly thanks to their organizations.

2.4.3. Headmen

There are legal regulations regarding the duties of headmen. According to Municipality Law No. 5393,

Headmen are responsible for determining the common needs with the voluntary participation of the residents of the neighborhood, improving the quality of life of the neighborhood, conducting relations with the municipality and other public institutions and organizations, expressing opinions on issues related to the neighborhood, cooperating with other institutions and performing other duties assigned by law (Article 9).

Based on this explanation, we could say that headmen act as a bridge between citizens and local government units. Headmen determine what services are required to be provided in line with the needs of the people in the region where they are responsible, and then cooperates with the local government levels to fulfill these services.

So far, we have focused on the aspects of public participation. We saw that there are different actors in terms of public participation and these actors have the right to participate in decision-making processes. However, some tools are needed to exercise these participation rights. These tools, which differ in terms of application, will be discussed in the following section.

2.5. Tools of Public Participation

Today, there are many different tools of public participation. “Participation methods show themselves in a wide range from voting behavior used since ancient times to participation methods realized with today’s technological participation opportunities” (Kocaoğlu, 2015: 75). Participation methods differ from each other in terms of the opportunities and effects they offer to citizens. In this section, the following main tools of participation will be discussed:

- Advisory Board
- Individual Application
- Public Opinion Poll
- Referendum

- E-Municipality
- Recall
- Veto
- Project Democracy
- City Councils
- Neighborhood Committees

2.5.1. District Advisory Board

With this participatory mechanism, it is desired to have a conscious society. “Neighborhood Consultative Councils are participatory mechanisms established to increase democracy responsibility and urban awareness. It was first implemented by Bursa Metropolitan Municipality in 1994” (Emini and Sancak, 2018: 83). “One of the best practices for the realization of democratic participation in local governments is district advisory councils. They ensure that the demands and requests of the people in the city are conveyed to the municipality” (Yıldırım, 2014: 83).

District Advisory Councils are official organizations in which demands of representatives of the political party that has power in the municipal administration or demands of representatives are expressed. The decisions made here are conveyed to the municipal administration by the district mayor or the members of the municipal council (Kocaoğlu and Fural, 2018: 157).

It is an important advantage of this participation tool that it enables the requests to be forwarded to the responsible units in the decision-making process.

2.5.2. Individual Application

Individual application is a participation mechanism that enables the requests to be forwarded directly to the administration without the need for any intermediary institution (Karkin and Zor, 2017). Thanks to this method, citizens could apply for the subject they need without the need of any intermediary. People could use their personal application right through methods such as petitions and have chance to convey their requests directly to the administrators.

2.5.3. Opinion Research

Opinion polls can be considered as a method of participation used in the process before a decision is taken. Also, this method is used in order to find out what the citizens living in a region think about the decision to be made (Öner, 2001).

These researches, which constitute a special type of consultant, could be done through the public relations unit of the public institution or researches made by other institutions could be used. However, the result is always the same. Before planning in an area where the knowledge of the public administration is insufficient, information that will shed light on the evaluation of the administration could be obtained through public opinion research. The important thing here is that the applied research, survey and interview methods are consistent, impartial and reflect the facts (Yalçındağ, 1986: 154).

Despite the lack of knowledge on any subject, it becomes possible to take effective decisions about that subject with opinion researches to be done. This is an advantage of public opinion research, which is one of the participation tools.

2.5.4. Referendum

Thanks to the referendum, which is one of the means of participation, citizens have the right to take an active role by expressing their opinions regarding the decisions and investments to be made (Erdoğan, 2019b). “Referendum is an example of local democracy frequently used by local governments. Especially, various referendums are held for citizens to play an active role in infrastructure and superstructure investments made by local governments and in important decisions concerning public” (Erdoğan, 2020a: 53). With the referendum, which is one of the participation methods, citizens have right to make a choice in terms of what to do about the region they live in. It could be said that this participation tool brings people together for decisions to be taken.

2.5.5. E-Municipality

“Modern world is rapidly moving towards a system where citizens do not have to go to municipal building to benefit from local government services and get their work done” (Henden and Henden, 2005: 56-57). “It is called e-Municipal service that municipalities bring their services to the public with the help of internet technologies

while fulfilling their duties” (Çoruh, 2009: 215). E-municipality is very important structure in terms of efficiency, as people could submit their requests to the authorized units from where they live, thanks to provision of the necessary infrastructure. This concept could be considered as making municipal services available to citizens on the internet.

It includes much more than the fact that municipalities carry service delivery on the internet, it has a special importance in terms of increasing relationship between municipalities and citizens, providing opportunities for citizens to take part in the decision-making mechanism, including transparent and more democratic management processes, and thus carrying the requirements of the governance phenomenon (Sayimer et al., 2019: 424).

“With the understanding of e-municipality, municipalities reach a larger mass of people and speed and convenience are provided in municipal services” (Gürler Hazman, 2005: 66). For this reason, e-municipality could be considered as an effective participation tool.

2.5.6. Recall

With this participation tool, it is ensured that the people who are authorized in the decision-making processes act responsibly during their term of office. “Recall, which is implemented in nearly fifty countries today, is the dismissal of elected officials or organs by voters before the end of their term of office, provided that they adhere to certain procedures and rules” (Erdoğan, 2020b: 354). Based on this explanation, we could understand that recall, which is one of the participation methods, fulfills its role as an audit mechanism over administration unit.

2.5.7. Veto

Veto could be thought of as a tool of participation that enables people to express their opinion on actions of those who have power of representation. “Public veto is the opposition of the public in a certain period of time to the laws duly enacted and brought into force by the legislative branch” (Şehitoğlu and Çarkçı, 2022: 255). Along with the right of veto, the public is allowed to express their opinions on matters deemed appropriate by the authorized people in the decision-making processes. Thanks to this participation tool, citizens have the right to express positive

or negative opinions on the decisions taken. There is a stipulated time for the veto to be used. The right of veto could be exercised before the implementation phase of the decisions taken. The veto is determined by a vote process. With the voting that took place, it is understood whether a veto has been formed based on the opinion of the majority of the participants (Çevikbaş, 2008).

2.5.8. Project Democracy

A committee is formed so that people who share the common living area could express their wishes regarding the projects planned for the relevant location. The involvement of this delegation in the project with the aim of expressing the needs of people in demand is named as project democracy.

An example of project democracy practices is the Dikmen Valley Project, which was put into practice in Ankara in 1990. According to the size of the project, citizens who will be affected by this project organized and elected representatives. A joint decision committee was formed to facilitate the participation of the public while this project was being carried out (Yıldırım, 2014: 83).

Project democracy is important in terms of bringing people together and enabling them to organize.

2.5.9. City Councils

It would be wrong to make a strict distinction between the parties to local participation as administrative authorities and others. Some of the organizations that are actors of local participation, such as city councils, are created by the administration itself. The administration produces a kind of advisory and supervisory authority for both central and local governments. In this way, it contributes to public participation.

City councils have their own organizational structure. Within this structure, the selection process is carried out for each unit (such as women's council, people with disabilities council, neighborhood committees etc.) and the staff is determined. Organizations in which elected people take part are actors of local participation in places that fall under their mandate. Within this organization, some decisions are

taken regarding the fields of work. Afterwards, these organizations, in which the elected people take part, convey the decisions taken to the administrative authorities.

The city council is a tool to strengthen local democracy with its participation, democracy and governance features, where the “partnership” model is tried to be implemented (Şahyar Akdemir, 2020). City councils have a dynamic structure. It works to support the work of decision-makers in the local government elected by the citizens. This enables people to work in an efficient environment (Bozkurt, 2014). For this reason, we could say that city councils are versatile resources. They not only bring citizens together, but also act as an important guide to the administrative class. Also, city councils have a legal basis in terms of their establishment.

We could say that the city councils are the structures that act as a bridge between the municipalities and the citizens. Citizens notify the city council about the services they need. Afterwards, the city council carries out studies specific to these demands and determines the options that could be made. Among these options, the most beneficial one is selected with the participation of the citizens. During this process, the city council conveys the positive and negative issues regarding the options to the citizens. The most beneficial option is determined and forwarded to the municipalities. Municipalities also discuss technical and financial conditions with the city council and exchange ideas on how the said service could be provided. It is ensured that the service is fulfilled in the most efficient way.

Thanks to this understanding, the people see themselves in the administration and in an active structure. This ensures that the services performed at the local level are transparent and accountable in line with the wishes of the people.

2.5.10. Neighborhood Committees

Neighborhood committees, a local participation method implemented for the first time in Turkey by the Municipality of Nilüfer, serve the purpose of establishing a local participation unit at the neighborhood scale. Headmen, who are one of the actors of local participation and represent government, are also members of neighborhood committees. This situation causes some problems. Headmen state that they have authority as a result of the elections held within the scope of representative

democracy, and that they are the people to be addressed before a decision is taken in a region. For this reason, they argue that there is no need for an additional participation tool like neighborhood committees. In case of disagreement between the neighborhood committees and the headmen, the lack of determination of the course to be followed also causes the problem. These problems related to neighborhood committees, which first encountered the resistance of the headmen, were overcome over time (Polat, 2014: 122). Headmen and neighborhood committees adapt to working together. Other detailed information about the neighborhood committees, which is one of the tools of public participation, is given in the third chapter of the study.

People become an actor of public participation through the public participation tools described in this section. Moreover, it is also necessary to understand how effective public participation is. For this purpose, measuring effectiveness of public participation will be explained in the following section.

2.6. Measuring Effectiveness of Public Participation

Thanks to participation tools, citizens have taken part in the decision-making processes of local governments. With the participation, it has been facilitated in terms of conveying the needs of citizens to the competent authorities. It has become possible to get quick solutions to problems in living spaces. These issues prove the positive effects of public participation (Yavuz, 2021). However, it is necessary to pay attention to the effectiveness of public participation. There is no single method that public participation should follow in order to achieve the above-mentioned advantages. “How participatory the participatory processes are and who participates in these processes is an important issue” (Şen, 2014: 71). Another issue can be what the outcome of public participation is. This multi-dimensionality leads us to the question of how to measure the effectiveness of public participation.

Local participation methods applied within the municipalities have various objectives in different fields. (Font and Galais, 2011). Also, the examination of various actors involved in participation is a method for us in order to understand the basic structure of local participation, along with the levels of participation including one-way information provision, consultation and active participation (Macintosh,

2004). Research also shows that there are various individual-level and environmental-level factors affecting where, when, why, how, and by whom local public engagement takes place, including legal framework, political system, political culture, and the size of the municipality (Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014), presence of civic assets, that is “a building, an organization, a program that connects citizens to one another, and to their public institutions, in ways that inspire and support collaboration, deliberation, and shared responsibility” (Leighninger and Mann, 2011: 3), and personal characteristics of individuals (Ryfe and Stalsburg, 2012). Moreover, the output or outcome of public participation can also be criteria to evaluate its effectiveness. Therefore, many different methods, perspectives, and criteria could be utilized in order to examine and evaluate the success of local public participation in a local government.

In the study conducted by Greg Brown and Sean Yeong Wei Chin in 2013, different approaches to the evaluation of effectiveness of public participation were reviewed and it was stated that the following criteria and questions could help in measuring the effectiveness of public participation.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria for public participation identified from the literature

Process Criteria	Description
Representativeness	The public participants should comprise a broadly representative sample of the population of the affected public.
Independence	The participation process should be conducted in an independent, unbiased way.
Early involvement	The public should be involved as early as possible in the process as soon as value judgments become salient.
Transparency	The process should be transparent so that the public can see what is going on and how decisions are being made.
Resource accessibility	Public participants should have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to successfully fulfil their brief.
Seeking out and involving those affected by decisions	Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by interested in a decision.

Table 1 (cont'd)	
Comfort and convenience	The timing and place of meeting should be convenient to the participants' schedule. They should also feel comfortable during consultation sessions.
Deliberative quality	All participants should be given the chance to speak and provide their opinions.
Level of conflict	Public participation process should avoid or mitigate conflict.
Seek input from participants in how they participate	Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
Task definition	The nature and scope of the participation task should be clearly defined.
Non-technical information	The information provided to participants must be easy to understand and contain minimal technical language to prevent confusion.
Communicates influence on decision	Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.
Outcome Criteria	Description
Influence	The output of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy.
Increased understanding	Public participation should build mutual understanding between stakeholders and commit to the public good identified.
Consensus reached	Decisions made as a result of public participation were based on consensus and mutual understanding.
Increased trust	Public participation should build trust and lasting relationships.
Workable solutions	Public participation should create a compromise and acceptable solution.
Satisfaction	Good public participation should result in high satisfaction amongst participants.

Source: Brown & Chin, 2013: 565-566

In the public participation process, there are different actors that are included, as explained in the previous sections. In order to measure the effectiveness of public participation, one method is to study one or more groups of these actors (municipal administrators, city council members, NGOs or citizens) to evaluate their perceptions and behaviors regarding the participation process and its outcomes.

Another dimension of evaluation may be concerned with the mechanisms for public participation. Participants need to be able to use these participation tools effectively. Everyone should be given the opportunity to freely express their feelings and thoughts. In addition, participants should be encouraged to exchange ideas with each other. They should also have clear information about what is intended by participation. This information should be comprehensible at a level that all participants could understand and should be far from technical information. If the aims of participation are not known, the effectiveness of participation will decrease. At the end of the process, the participants should be informed about the effects of the decision to be taken with the participation of the public or the service to be given. In this way, the public trust on public participation will increase.

In addition to features that public participation processes should have, the outputs obtained at the end of these processes are also important in terms of the effectiveness of public participation. The outcome of the participation of the public should be shaped according to what is expressed in the participation process. Participants who voice their opinions in the participation process must have an impact on the outcome. Public participation becomes meaningless if these mechanisms do not have any effect. The decision taken with the participation of the public must be in the interest of the whole society, beyond the wishes of a particular group. Different actors participating in the process need to take a joint decision. The result that occurs according to the will of a one group negatively affects the effectiveness of public participation. Decisions should be made in the public interest. As a result of this situation, the trust in the participation process will increase. With the participation of the public, acceptable results for the whole society are achieved and the satisfaction level of the citizens regarding the services they receive increases.

Providing tools for public participation alone is not enough. These should be used effectively and have an impact on the decisions that local governments will take or the services they will offer. The above-mentioned features are the points to be considered in order to measure the effectiveness of public participation. Using these features, public participation could be evaluated. Therefore, these issues were considered in the determination of the interview questions asked and the evaluations in terms of public participation in the field research in this study.

CHAPTER 3

MUNICIPAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN TURKEY

In order to eliminate failure to the fulfillment of democratization process, we could see the development of local public participation idea.

Especially after the 2000s, the increasing rate of globalization has led to political, economic and socio-cultural changes. In parallel with these changes, developments in technology make the world smaller and facilitate the exchange of views, increasing the expectations of individuals and institutions for public services at the national and local level. In this process, the effectiveness levels of local governments, which serve as the closest administrative units to the local people, are evaluated with their degree of democracy and participation (Kaypak and Bimay, 2017: 165).

Local administrations in Turkey include municipalities, special provincial administrations, and villages. Local public participation has also been given importance in Turkey and is guaranteed by different legal regulations. The main legal document regulating direct public participation in municipalities in Turkey is the Municipal Law No 5393, dated 2005. Article 13 of the law states that “Fellow citizens have the right to participate in municipal decisions and services”. In addition, municipal council meetings are open to the public as indicated by the same law (Article 20). More importantly, with Article 76 of Municipality Law No. 5393, city councils gained a legal status in Turkey, and further developed with the City Council Regulations issued in 2006 and 2009. To examine the development of local public participation in Turkey, the next section first reviews the legal basis of public participation in Turkey.

3.1. Legal Basis of Municipal Public Participation Tools in Turkey

There is no single method for participation. Participation takes place through different methods and tools.

Participation in local public services in Turkey takes place using different tools. These tools are seeking the opinion of citizens through a referendum on some services and decisions that concern citizens, participating in public assembly meetings of local government units, participating in the election of elected bodies, online participation in services through technology and internet, voluntary participation in local services, and participation in local services with city councils (Uysal and Atmaca, 2018: 420).

In fact, one of the main mechanisms that comes to mind when it comes to participation in municipal administration in Turkey is city councils. The existence of city councils is based on Article 76 of the 5393 Municipality Law. The 5393 Municipality Law came into operation on 03.07.2005. With this law, public participation tools like city councils in Turkey gain a legal basis (Dilaveroğlu, 2020).

3.1.1. Legal Basis of City Councils

City councils act as an intermediary for local governments. They are resources that provide communication between the ruling class and the ruled class. They increase communication between different segments living in a region. They assist the administrators in making decisions and enable them to realize the wishes of citizens.

Citizens are offered the opportunity to participate in the administration together with the city councils. In addition, it could be said that the city was protected by the public thanks to these structures. The decisions to be taken together with the city councils appear as the joint product of different actors. For this reason, it is stated that it is a participatory and democratic structure. Together with the city councils, people living in a region are given the opportunity to freely express their opinions. (Yaman and Küçükşen, 2018). In addition, city councils have responsibilities and duties. The development of the vision of the city and the formation of citizenship awareness are examples of these. At the same time, together with the city councils, the rights of the city are protected. They also contribute to the provision of social aid and environmental awareness. Together with city councils, administration principles such as transparency and accountability are possessed (Kestellioğlu, 2011). Municipalities are the biggest supporters of city councils while achieving these goals. The establishment of the structure of city councils gained a legal basis with the 5393 Municipality Law.

Municipality Law No. 5393 states as:

In the day-to-day life of the town or city, the city council shall endeavor to implement the following principles: development of a vision of the town or city's future and of an awareness of citizenship of the town or city; protection of the town's or city's rights, laws and regulations; sustainable development; environmental awareness; social solidarity and mutual assistance; transparency; accountability; participation and local self-government.

The city council shall comprise representatives of public professional organizations, trade unions, notaries public, universities if any, the civil society organizations concerned, political parties, public entities and neighborhood masters, and other parties concerned. The municipality shall aid and support in order to ensure that the city council's activities are conducted effectively and efficiently.

Opinions formed within the city council shall be placed on the agenda of the municipal council and deliberated at its first meeting. The working procedures of the city council shall be laid down in a regulation to be issued by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change (Article 76).

When we look at the functional features of the city council, we see that the most important issue is to increase the interaction between the municipal administration and the citizens. Citizens inform the city council about their wishes, needs, demands and the services they want to have. At this point, the financial opportunities that the municipalities will need while fulfilling their duties are also planned by the city council. In addition, checks on the service performed are also carried out by the city council. For this reason, the city council is constantly involved in the services provided. Citizens' influence is constantly felt on services, as they take an active role. This situation also brings local governments to accountable structure. While general information about the duties of city councils is like this, detailed information about this subject is explained by the City Council Regulation. The duties of city councils are explained in the City Council Regulation as follows:

- To ensure the dissemination of democratic participation at the local level, the development of citizenship law and awareness of common life, and the adoption of a multi-partner and multi-actor governance approach,
- To ensure sustainable development and to prepare and implement plans for the solution of the problems that arise in this regard,
- To contribute to the creation of a common mind covering the whole city in the determination of basic strategies and activity plans regarding the city, and in the implementation and monitoring processes,

- To develop participation, democracy and a culture of reconciliation within the framework of the principle of locality,
- To protect and develop the historical, cultural, natural and similar values related to the identity of the city,
- Contributing to the effective, efficient and fair use of urban resources,
- To support environmentally sensitive and poverty-reducing programs that improve the quality of life of the city based on the understanding of sustainable development,
- To contribute to the development and institutionalization of civil society,
- To increase the activities of children, young people, women and disabled people in social life and to enable them to take an active role in local decision-making mechanisms,
- Contributing to the implementation of the principles of transparency, participation, accountability and predictability in city administration,
- To ensure that the opinions formed in the city council are sent to the relevant municipality for evaluation (Article 6).

Legal regulations in force for city councils could be summarized as in this section. The reason why a structure such as city councils is needed is related to the developments in the historical process.

3.1.2. History of City Councils

Local governments gain a new dimension with city councils. Thanks to these structures, different actors in certain fields have the opportunity to work collectively. This situation enables the existing structure to be strengthened in terms of democracy. Under the roof of the city council, structures such as public and private sector organizations, non-governmental organizations that act as the spokesperson of a particular community and citizens act together. The presence of actors from different segments shows us the existence of a joint administration model.

City councils have gained a place in local governments at the end of a process. This process did not happen all at once. In this process, two different programs about local governments have a significant impact. These are Agenda 21 and Local Agenda 21 programs. “Agenda 21 is a product of the 1992 Rio “Earth Summit” and is an action plan for the realization of the concept of “sustainable development”, which aims to

establish a balance between development and the environment” (Yıldırım, 2014: 86). The aim of this program is to make the development movements that will take place in the new world order as harmless as possible.

The third part of Agenda 21, entitled Strengthening the Roles of Major Groups, deals in general with the following topics:

- Global action for women's participation in development,
- The role of children and youth in promoting sustainable development,
- Strengthening the role of indigenous peoples and their communities, strengthening the roles of non-governmental organizations,
- Local government formations to support Agenda 21,
- Strengthening the roles of workers and trade unions,
- Strengthening the role of industry and trade circles,
- Strengthening the role of the scientific and technological communities and farmers (Atvur, 2008: 46).

This part of Agenda 21 shows us the belief that local governments should also be strengthened in the new order.

It has been emphasized that the problems and solution proposals in Agenda 21 find their source in local activities, therefore, the participation and cooperation of local governments will be decisive in achieving the goals of the program. Local authorities establishing economic, social and environmental infrastructures will also be responsible for their administration process and operation (Atvur, 2009: 232).

For this purpose, the Local Agenda 21 program, which is related to the Agenda 21 Program, has been accepted in order to implement the Agenda 21 Program in a better way. Following the change that took place in 1992, the importance given to participatory approaches has increased in terms of local governments. It was believed that other segments of the society should have a say in the decisions taken by the official institutions consisting of people who were elected in the administration of certain regions. To make a brief summary, with the Agenda 21 Program designed in 1992 and the LA21 Program after it, it was aimed to achieve the targeted development in the new world order by increasing participation at the local level. With the LA21 Program, it has been understood that the hierarchical decision-

making mechanisms observed in previous periods are not effective. For this reason, considering that the old structure should be changed, a structure that accepts cooperation between different segments of society has been started to be built. In the decisions to be taken in the new structure, the partnership of different segments is targeted.

In 1996, a meeting of the United Nations was held in Istanbul. Turkey's LA21 adventure started with this meeting, which is called ‘‘Human Settlements: Habitat II’’. At this conference, it was decided that each local administration should prepare its own LA21 program. In this context, also encouraging decisions for local administrations were taken. In the following periods, processes related to the implementation of the LA21 program were carried out jointly by the International Union of Local Authorities and Section for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East Region, with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The project, which was initiated in Turkey in 1997, ended successfully after a two-year period (Kara and Şimşek, 2016).

During the transformation movement in Turkey, positive results were observed in terms of women's and youth's participation in the administration. Women and youth have started to take an active role in decision-making processes, and their impact on participation has increased.

Upon the success of this project, UNDP agreed to support the second phase, and after the Council of Ministers adopted it, the second phase project titled ‘‘Implementation of Local Agenda 21 in Turkey’’ started in January 2000. Turkey Local Agenda 21 application was selected by UNDP in 2001 as one of the most successful applications in the world (Kara and Şimşek, 2016: 253).

One of the most important changes observed in the second implementation period is the remarkable increase in the number of local governments participating in the program. One of the most important changes observed in the second implementation period is the remarkable increase in the number of local governments participating in the program. This situation had an impact on the long duration of the new term program. However, it should be noted that there is no uniformity in local government units participating in the LA21 program. The program is shaped around the characteristics of each local government.

With the transformation that took place under the influence of the LA21 Program observed in the 1990s, it was aimed to increase the participation of citizens in decision-making processes in local government. For this purpose, different structures have been created. The city council or the city senate could be considered as examples of new structures. City councils were also formed with the effect of this program. The existence of the city councils has been with the LA21 Program that came into existence with the Agenda 21 Program. During the transformation process, the units that were established under the name of LA21 in some local governments were later named the city council and continued their existence with this name until today. In the historical process, city councils gained their legal status with the 5393 Municipality Law in the previous section.

3.1.3. Power of City Councils

City councils have a purpose. In order to achieve this aim, application examples are created.

Although it is difficult to clearly state how effective the city councils are in practice, it should be noted that the establishment of these mechanisms was based on the strengthening of the local area and the contribution they would make to the creation of a participatory local government model (Bozkurt, 2014: 237).

Contrary to its examples in the West, it is a system that has no executive power and is only intended as an advisory mechanism (Aygen, 2014: 224). As could be understood from the law, decisions to be taken by city councils are advisory. Decisions of city councils do not go beyond suggestions and do not have any sanctions cast a shadow over works of city councils (Erkul, Baykal and Kara, 2013: 91). The reason for this situation is 5393 Municipality Law itself, as we have stated.

The main task of the city councils is to bring together different actors who expect the law from it and to ensure participation of these actors in local administrations. Again, the ruling class has a right to control what administrators do. However, if we need to evaluate the power of city councils, we could say that their area of influence is limited. There is no obligation to apply for the decisions to be taken in city councils. There is no legal regulation stating that the implementation of these decisions is mandatory. This suggests that city councils act as an advisory body rather than a

decision maker. The conveyance of decisions taken by the city councils to the ruling class could be considered as a starting point for some services. However, this service might not occur. Because, if the ruling class does not implement this decision, there is no sanction it will face and there is no obligation to implement this decision.

If we want to make an assessment from this point of view, it would not be wrong to say that city councils have limited power. Therefore, considering the influence and power of the city councils today, it would not be wrong to say that these structures serve as an advisory mechanism.

3.1.4. Problems of City Councils

City councils have structural problems. These problems have negative effects in terms of functioning. For example, voluntarism has been determined as the basis in order to take part in the city councils. On the other hand, there is a situation where the members of the general assembly of the city councils include the mayor or the people deemed appropriate by the local administration. This situation causes citizens who are expected to participate on a voluntary basis to be reluctant to participate. In addition to this reluctance, it is also thought that participation moves away from its purpose and becomes meaningless. As a result of such situations, disruptions occur in the functioning of city councils (Bozkurt, 2014).

The City Council Regulation contains regulations regarding the financial resources of city councils. According to the regulation, municipalities are required to provide financial resources to city councils, either in cash or in kind, from the budgets they have. There is a point to be noted here. The method regarding how the municipalities will follow the financial resources they will provide to the city councils is not explained. In the current situation, it is thought that the financial resources to be provided to the city councils by the municipalities can be used for operating expenses. According to the provisions of the regulation, it is understood that the financial resources of the city councils that participate on a voluntary basis will be covered by the municipality. Not knowing how to provide resources to these structures, where participation is dominant on a voluntary basis, poses a problem. This is also a problem for city councils (Ulusoy and Tekdere, 2015). This uncertainty situation causes the authorities to act according to their own wishes in some

decision-making processes and to prepare a budget in line with their wishes. We could think that city councils are under tutelage in terms of providing their basic needs. Since they do not have economic freedom, they could act according to wishes of other actors who have economic power rather than their own will. Based on this situation, the will of the citizens in terms of public participation is affected badly.

The fact that the city councils mentioned in the previous section do not have the power of sanction and only assume the task of advisory unit causes them to be thought of as powerless. For this reason, citizens do not believe that city councils could play an effective role as a public participation tool. Therefore, the impact of city councils on public participation is adversely affected.

These problems could be avoided with administrators who have a high sense of responsibility and prioritize the wishes of the citizens. In addition, the fact that city councils have an autonomous structure in terms of economy and administration could be seen as a solution to these problems.

General information about city councils, which is one of the public participation tools in Turkey, is explained in this section. In the following sections, information about Bursa Nilüfer Municipality and its public participation practices would be explained.

3.2. Public Participation in Nilüfer Municipality

Decision-making mechanisms in administrative units used to have a rigid and hierarchical structure. It was believed that it was more beneficial to control the duties and authorities by a single center. However, the needs of people living together began to change over time. Changing needs have also caused the current administration approach to change. It was thought that the administrative units should also be rebuilt.

According to Nabatchi and Amsler (2014: 9), along with this development, as explained in the above sections, public participation in local governments has increasingly become important around the world for the purposes of:

Informing the public (e.g., letting the public know about issues, changes, resources, and policies), collecting data (e.g., gathering information from the public about their concerns, needs, values, opinions, and preferences), generating ideas (e.g., getting new suggestions and alternatives about an issue or its solutions), obtaining feedback (e.g., understanding the public's views of and preferences for an issue, policy, or proposed solution), or generating consensus (e.g., developing agreement around proposal or decision).

Influenced by the existence of these purposes, many local governments in Turkey have also started to pay attention to these practices.

One of the well-known examples in Turkey in this regard is Bursa Nilüfer District Municipality. The most basic feature of Nilüfer Municipality is that it strives to take decisions in accordance with all kinds of social needs in matters that fall within the scope of the services it will provide within the boundaries of the municipality. At this point, Nilüfer Municipality differs from other municipalities in the sense that it has different tools compared to other municipalities to enable citizens to participate in decision-making processes. Neighborhood Committees Project distinguishes Nilüfer Municipality from other municipalities at that point. This project is carried out by the Nilüfer City Council, which could be considered as a sub-unit of the Municipality. Nilüfer City Council is a structure that supports the inclusion of women, youth, and other segments of society in decision-making processes in line with its participatory administration approach.

The success of that structure is really interesting because there are two different political parties in power; one in Bursa Metropolitan Municipality and other one in Nilüfer Municipality. Also, the ideologies of those parties are different from each other. However, that situation could not be an obstacle in terms of achievement of Nilüfer Municipality. The one of reasons for that situation is sourced from Nilüfer City Council because it ensures citizens to participate in the decision-making process of local administration. The reason of why Nilüfer City Council is more successful than other structures is directly related with its organizational structure. There is not strict and vertical hierarchy like classical organizational theory in here. Instead of that, there is a horizontal hierarchy in here. Also, there are three different councils within Nilüfer City Council. These councils are about women, youth and children. They work in specific areas, then the effect of their decisions become more powerful.

Administrators of Nilüfer could learn what their citizens want easily thanks to these institutions. Moreover, they search for a solution of these needs with their citizens. This situation increases the quality of services that are carried out by local administration. Thanks to this process, increasing rate of local participation has an effect over the success of Nilüfer Municipality.

Bursa Nilüfer Municipality is a municipality that is frequently shown as an example in participatory practices in local governments, as it has established Neighborhood Committees as a method that is not used in certain periods, but constantly, in the participation of its citizens in the decisions about the city (Akay, 2016: 15).

For this reason, Nilüfer Municipality is in a remarkable position with the practices it carries out.

3.2.1. Nilüfer City Council

Turkey LA21 Program, which expresses the understanding of multi-actor administration based on transparency, participation, working harmony, expediency and social partnerships for their cities, by determining their own problems and priorities together with civil society and other partners under the leadership of Local Authorities, started to be implemented in 1997. In 2009, in accordance with Article 76 of Municipal Law No 5393, it was aimed to ensure that the LA21 processes would continue within the body of the city councils from now on. In this context, Nilüfer City Council was established with the First General Assembly Meeting held on 24.10.2009 (<https://www.nilufer.bel.tr/kategoriler/tesisler/sivil-toplum-alanlari/nilufer-kent-konseyi>).

Detailed information on the structural status and duties of the Nilüfer City Council is included in the Work Guideline of Nilüfer City Council, which entered into force in 2009. This guideline has been revised three times in 2014, 2017 and 2021. The First Article of the Work Guideline states that the aim of that guideline is to implement the principles of social assistance and solidarity, transparency, accountability and accountability, participation, governance and decentralization in Nilüfer Municipality. In addition, it is said that this directive regulates the working procedures and principles of the Nilüfer City Council.

Duties of the Nilüfer City Council are explained in the Work Guideline of Nilüfer City Council. According to that guideline, duties of the Council are as follows:

- To ensure the dissemination of democratic participation at the local level, the development of citizenship law and awareness of common life, and the adoption of a multi-partner and multi-actor governance approach,
- To ensure sustainable development and to prepare and implement plans for the solution of problems that arise in this regard,
- To contribute to the creation of a common mind covering the whole city in the determination of basic strategies and activity plans regarding the city, and in the implementation and monitoring processes,
- To develop participation, democracy and a culture of reconciliation within the framework of the principle of locality,
- To protect and develop the historical, cultural, natural and similar values related to the identity of the city,
- Contributing to the effective, efficient and fair use of urban resources,
- To support environmentally friendly and poverty alleviating programs that improve the city's quality of life based on a sustainable development approach,
- Contributing the development and institutionalization of civil society,
- To increase the activities of children, youth, women and disabled people in social life and to ensure that they take an active role in local decision-making mechanisms,
- Contributing to the implementation of the principles of transparency, participation, accountability and predictability in city administration,
- To ensure that opinions formed in the city council are sent to the Nilüfer Municipality Council for consideration (Article 6).

The working principles of the Nilüfer City Council are explained in another article of the guideline. According to that document, working principles of Nilüfer City Council are:

- Contributing to the transport of cities to a livable future within the scope of the Local Agenda 21 process, in the integrity of the principles of protecting the city, active participation and partnership in solution,
- To implement the basic principles of the city and urban life in the United Nations Summits and other international conventions signed and ratified by the State of the Republic of Turkey,

- To develop the city vision and citizenship awareness, to protect the rights and law of the city, to keep the principles of sustainable development, environmental awareness, social assistance and solidarity, transparency, accountability, participation and decentralization at the forefront,
- To form opinions and suggestions with an impartial approach, considering international developments and country conditions,
- Adopting consensus based on participation and common sense,
- To adopt a result-oriented working culture by noticing innovations in advance (Article 7).

In the Twelfth Article of the guideline, it is emphasized that the Nilüfer City Council could form sub-units in matters related to its working areas. In line with this purpose, we could see that the Nilüfer City Council started to carry out the Neighborhood Committees Project in 2009, based on the proposal of the Nilüfer Municipality. Detailed information about this project, which covers sixty-four neighborhoods, is explained in the Neighborhood Committees Operating Guideline and will be given in the following section.

3.2.2. Nilüfer Neighborhood Committees

There are various local government mechanisms in Turkey. However, there is no local government application at the neighborhood scale (except for Nilüfer Municipality). With the implementation of local governments on a neighborhood scale, an advantage is provided in terms of meeting the needs of the residents of the neighborhood. In addition to this situation, it is possible to develop the ideas of direct democracy and participation (Polat, 2014). For this purpose, Nilüfer Municipality started to implement the Neighborhood Committees Project in 2009. According to current data, this project is used for sixty-four neighborhoods within the borders of Nilüfer Municipality.

These sixty-four neighborhood committees are as follows (<http://www.niluferkentkonseyi.org/komiteler.php>):

Table 2: *Neighborhood committees*

1.	19 Mayıs Neighborhood Committee
2.	23 Nisan Neighborhood Committee
3.	29 Ekim Neighborhood Committee
4.	30 Ağustos Zafer Neighborhood Committee
5.	Ahmet Yesevi Neighborhood Committee
6.	Akçalar Neighborhood Committee
7.	Alaaddinbey Neighborhood Committee
8.	Altınşehir Neighborhood Committee
9.	Ataevler Neighborhood Committee
10.	Atlas Neighborhood Committee
11.	Ayvaköy Neighborhood Committee
12.	Badırğa Neighborhood Committee
13.	Balat Neighborhood Committee
14.	Balkan Neighborhood Committee
15.	Barış Neighborhood Committee
16.	Başköy Neighborhood Committee
17.	Beşevler Neighborhood Committee
18.	Büyükbalıklı Neighborhood Committee
19.	Cumhuriyet Neighborhood Committee
20.	Çalı Neighborhood Committee
21.	Çamlıca Neighborhood Committee
22.	Çatalağıl Neighborhood Committee
23.	Çaylı Neighborhood Committee
24.	Dağyenice Neighborhood Committee
25.	Demirci Neighborhood Committee

Table 2 (cont'd)	
26.	Doğanköy Neighborhood Committee
27.	Dumlupınar Neighborhood Committee
28.	Ertuğrul Neighborhood Committee
29.	Esentepe Neighborhood Committee
30.	Fadıllı Neighborhood Committee
31.	Fethiye Neighborhood Committee
32.	Gökçe Neighborhood Committee
33.	Gölyazı Neighborhood Committee
34.	Görükle Neighborhood Committee
35.	Gümüštepe Neighborhood Committee
36.	Güngören Neighborhood Committee
37.	Hasanağa Neighborhood Committee
38.	Işıktepe Neighborhood Committee
39.	İhsaniye Neighborhood Committee
40.	İnegazi Neighborhood Committee
41.	İrfaniye Neighborhood Committee
42.	Kadriye Neighborhood Committee
43.	Karacaoba Neighborhood Committee
44.	Karaman Neighborhood Committee
45.	Kayapa Neighborhood Committee
46.	Kızılcıklı Neighborhood Committee
47.	Konak Neighborhood Committee
48.	Konaklı Neighborhood Committee
49.	Korubaşı Neighborhood Committee
50.	Kurtuluş Neighborhood Committee

Table 2 (cont'd)	
51.	Kuruçeşme Neighborhood Committee
52.	Kültür Neighborhood Committee
53.	Maksempınar Neighborhood Committee
54.	Minareli Çavuş Neighborhood Committee
55.	Oduluk Neighborhood Committee
56.	Özlüce Neighborhood Committee
57.	Tahtalı Neighborhood Committee
58.	Unçukuru Neighborhood Committee
59.	Üçevler Neighborhood Committee
60.	Üçpınar Neighborhood Committee
61.	Ürünlü Neighborhood Committee
62.	Yaylacık Neighborhood Committee
63.	Yolçatı Neighborhood Committee
64.	Yüzüncüyıl Neighborhood Committee

We could say that it is the neighborhood committees who institutionalize the phenomenon of the city council and bring it into a structural integrity. The reason why the practice of neighborhood committees could be observed within the borders of Nilüfer Municipality could be discussed in two different contexts. The first of them could be considered in terms of the political authority in Bursa. The political atmosphere in Nilüfer Municipality is different from other municipalities of Bursa. According to the results of the local elections held in 2019, a different political party was elected only in Nilüfer Municipality, out of the Bursa districts where the number of voters is over one hundred thousand. The mayor of Nilüfer Municipality promoted the participation of the public as a policy from the beginning. It is also necessary to pay attention to this issue from another context. We should not limit the focal point to Bursa, but think across the country. When we do this, we could see that the political party that is authorized in the decision-making processes in Nilüfer

Municipality also has power in districts located in other cities of Turkey. However, this did not ensure that neighborhood committees could be observed elsewhere. Therefore, in addition to the political context, the personal initiatives were effective in Nilüfer Municipality context.

General information about the Neighborhood Committees Project is included in the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline document. This guideline entered into force in 2009 and was revised in 2010, 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2019. According to the First Article of that document, neighborhood committees have the aim of ensuring the participation of people in local government and decision processes, raising the quality of life by organizing the experience and potential of the neighborhood, improving neighborhood awareness at the neighborhood level, providing the opportunity for economic, social, cultural, scientific and democratic development of the neighborhood, and developing a culture of solidarity and reconciliation. It is a volunteer-based structure where the sustainability, problems and vision of the city are discussed, solutions are developed. Also, it aims participation of residents of each neighborhood in the Nilüfer District in the city administration and taking an active role in the administration of a quality and livable city. The legal source of this project is the Ninth and the Thirteenth Articles of the 5393 Municipality Law. The Ninth Article is related to municipalities having the aim of fulfilling the wishes of their citizens. In the Thirteenth Article, it is emphasized that citizens have right to participate in decisions and services of municipalities they are affiliated with. In this context, the Neighborhood Committees Project gain a legal basis, thanks to these two articles of the 5393 Municipality Law (the Second Article of the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline).

The working principles of the Nilüfer Neighborhood Committees are explained in the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline. According to that guideline, working principles of Nilüfer Neighborhood Committees are:

- It determines common needs and priorities of the neighborhood to improve the quality of life.
- It produces solutions, ideas and projects on the basis of neighborhoods to problems related to the neighborhood.

- It organizes workshops and trainings that will ensure the active participation of women, children and disabled people in urban life, and participates in training and activities organized by the Municipality and City Council.
- It works to improve the culture of neighborhood and democracy awareness. It organizes events such as festivals, exhibitions, tournaments and meetings, where citizens could come together and provide solidarity for a better neighborhood life.
- It expresses opinions on issues related to the neighborhood, cooperates with other institutions, and carries out studies on ensuring the participation of residents in the decision processes of public administrations.
- It cooperates with the City Council Assembly and Working Groups on issues related to the city agenda (Article 5).

Principles of neighborhood committees; transparency, voluntariness, impartiality and respect for universal human rights are explained in the Sixth Article of the guideline.

Transparency, which is one of the important mechanisms that ensure the accountability of the state, is the state's regular, understandable, consistent and reliable presentation of the information necessary to monitor its goals, the policies it implements to achieve these goals, and the results of these policies (Kalkan and Alpaslan, 2009: 27).

“Voluntariness is defined as presenting the power, time, knowledge, talent and experience for the ordinary or project-based work of non-governmental organizations and not expecting monetary gain in return” (Altın and Şahin, 2019: 89). “According to the principle of impartiality, local governments should provide equal service to all citizens in regions they represent” (Çelik, Çelik and Usta, 2008: 93). There should be no discrimination in terms of service provision. No privilege should be granted to any person or group in terms of their supported political party. “The consolidation of democracy is closely related to the protection and development of human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Güler and Yılmaz, 2018: 1804). Neighborhood committees also act with respect to human rights in line with this aim and do not discriminate between people in terms of their language, religion or race.

Information about members who will take place in the neighborhood committees is explained in the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline. According to this guideline, neighborhood committees have two types of members. These are natural

members and elected members. The information regarding elected members in the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline is as follows:

- Elected members are elected at the rate of one person to represent every five hundred voters (500/1), according to the number of neighborhood voters, in neighborhood committees elections held on the basis of the local election period (5 years).
- Every citizen has the right to be a candidate and vote in the neighborhood where he/she resides.
- Candidatship applications are made to the neighborhood headman or the City Council at least two weeks before the election.
- The City Council announces the candidates for the committee by posting a list to the neighborhood headman at least seven days before the election.
- In the elections, the principle of open counting of secret ballots is applied.
- In neighborhoods where the number of members to be elected is lower than the number of natural members, committee members are elected as much as the number of natural members.
- If there is an application for candidatship in elections, a quota of 1/3 women, 1/3 youth, 1/5 disabled and 1/5 LGBTI is applied throughout the neighborhood. In the event that quota sufficiency is not achieved with the elected members, it is applied by increasing members until the quota rate is reached, starting from candidates who received the highest number of votes among the candidates who could not be elected.
- Membership of a committee member who does not attend the meetings 3 times in a row without giving an excuse is terminated by the decision of the neighborhood committee. A substitute member is taken instead. The determination is made by making a ranking starting from the candidate with the highest number of votes among the unelected candidates.
- For the cases where there is no provision in this guideline regarding the election, the application is made in accordance with the Election Law procedures (Article 7).

The headmen, member (assistant) of the headmen, the parent-teacher association representative, the student representative, the family health center representative and the representatives of the NGOs in the neighborhood are the natural members of the neighborhood committees.

How the neighborhood committees will operate in their work to achieve their goals is explained in the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline. The information on the functioning of the neighborhood committees in the guideline is as follows:

- Neighborhood Committees meet at least six times a year.
- After the members and volunteers participating in the meeting sign the list of attendees, the meeting starts.
- The agenda of the meeting is created by the Chairman of the Committee with the suggestions of the members.
- If there are answers as a result of transferring the decisions taken in previous meetings to the relevant institutions/organizations, these written answers are shared with the committee members first.
- Decisions in the neighborhood committee are taken by consensus. In cases where there is no unanimity, the decision is taken by the majority of participants. Volunteer members could not vote during voting. In cases where a decision could not be taken by voting, a public meeting could be held with the decision of the committee.
- Decisions taken at the meeting are written in the Neighborhood Committee Decision Book, signed and photocopied by the members of the Executive Board, and delivered to the City Council Neighborhood Committees Office with a copy of the list of attendees.
- In applications that will significantly affect a part or the whole of the neighborhood (construction plan changes, urban renewal, visionary projects, etc.), a public meeting is held by calling the residents of the neighborhood in the relevant part or general of the neighborhood, and the decision that comes out of the meeting is accepted as the decision of the neighborhood committee.
- If a decision could not be reached at the Public Meeting, a referendum could be held in the neighborhood or in a part of it, with the decision to be taken at the meeting.
- Neighborhood Committees could create project/subject-based commissions (Environment Commission, Education Commission, Women Commission, Youth Commission, Site Managers Commission, etc.).
- Neighborhood Committees could work together with other neighborhood committees and take regional decisions when necessary (Article 8).

Neighborhood committees also have right to be represented in the Nilüfer City Council (the Ninth Article of the Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline). Persons deemed appropriate to be representatives are determined by the election of

members corresponding to 1/5 of the total number of members in each neighborhood committee. In addition to that situation, the youth representative between the ages of 15 and 29, to be determined by the neighborhood committee itself, is also a delegate in the Nilüfer City Council Youth Assembly.

To summarize, one of the most important formations to increase the participation of the public is the city councils. Different city council applications have been realized in our country. Nilüfer Municipality City Council is an example of these. In addition, there is the Neighborhood Committees Project developed to increase public participation in Nilüfer Municipality. With this project, Nilüfer Municipality is separated from other municipalities. Because the only application in our country is made by Nilüfer Municipality. For this reason, it is planned to carry out the study specifically for Nilüfer Municipality, considering that this pioneering practice could be an example for other municipalities. After this section, which includes the legal resources regarding the participation of the public in the decision-making processes in Turkey and the basic participation tools specific to Nilüfer Municipality, the field study findings regarding effectiveness of the tools developed for public participation in the municipality will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

FIELD RESEARCH

This section presents the methodology of the study and the findings from the field research that was carried out in order to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality in Turkey.

4.1. Methodology of the Study

4.1.1. Population and Sample

Nilüfer Municipality of Bursa Province, with a population of 415.818, is selected as a case study as it is well-recognized with its public participation practices including neighborhood committees.

23 individuals were selected from among the Nilüfer Municipality City Council members, administrative staff, and the representatives of neighborhood committees in Nilüfer City Council on the basis of their presence and availability during the interviews conducted in the Nilüfer Municipality City Council between 15 June - 29 September, 2017. Since the municipality is special due to its neighborhood committee initiative as a participation method, the study mostly preferred to interview the individuals having a relation with this initiative. That is, the focus of the study was on people who experienced the practice of neighborhood committees. The positions of 23 interviewees were as follows:

- President of Nilüfer Municipality City Council
- General Secretary of Nilüfer Municipality City Council
- Office Assistant of Neighborhood Committees

- Coordinator of Neighborhood Committees
- Facilitator of Nilüfer Municipality City Council
- City Council Delegate + Member of a Neighborhood Committee
- Headman (Natural Member of a Neighborhood Committee)
- Member of a Neighborhood Committee + Member of the Board of the Neighborhood Committee
- Member of a Neighborhood Committee
- Natural Member of a Neighborhood Committee
- Member of a Neighborhood Committee + Attendant of Retirees Working Group
- Attendant of Retirees Working Group
- Attendant of Woman Council
- Attendant of Woman Council
- Attendant of Retirees Working Group
- Member of the Youth Council
- Member of the Youth Council
- Facilitator of Nilüfer Municipality City Council
- City Council Member Responsible for Neighborhood Committees
- Elected Member of a Neighborhood Committee
- Member (Assistant) of the Headman
- Elected Member of a Neighborhood Committee
- Headman (Natural Member of a Neighborhood Committee)

Ten participants in the study were female and thirteen participants were male. Five of them were between the ages of 20-30, three of them were between the ages of 30-40, and fifteen participants were over the age of 40. Only one of the participants had primary education, while six of them were high school graduates and twelve were higher education graduates. The other four participants had graduate-level degrees.

4.1.2. Data Collection and Methods

In order to investigate the effectiveness of citizen participation on the decision-making process in local governments, data was collected with face-to-face interviews between 15 June - 29 September 2017. The analysis of the data collected on the subject of the research was carried out by using qualitative and quantitative methods. The analyses of the interviews were carried out and the dimensions, impact, problems and related suggestions of public participation were evaluated by the researcher. Since the neighborhood committee application is a novel participation method for local governments in Turkey, interviewing those who mostly have experiences with the neighborhood committee practices of Nilüfer Municipality was preferred in the study. Getting direct information from the people who describe this structure gives us the opportunity to comment on the neighborhood committees. It is aimed to measure the effectiveness of public participation from the perspective of the individuals who were directly involved in the process and took an active role instead of studying all citizens in the municipality.

The use of in-depth interviews as a research method also necessitates one-to-one interviews with the interested parties. In this process, with the support of Nilüfer City Council employees, the relevant people are reached; interview times are determined and carried out according to their availability. Instead of a fixed place or time, the availability of the people who will participate in the interview is taken into consideration. For this reason, interviews were conducted at different times and in different fields. In the interview, eight open-ended questions and sixteen Likert-scale-rating questions were directed to the participants of the study, in addition to the demographic questions. Perceptions of the participants about public participation in Nilüfer Municipality were collected on the following issues:

- Conceptualization of participation in municipal decision-making
- The most effective method of public participation
- Level of public participation
- Effects of public participation over municipal services
- Effects of public participation in municipal decision-making
- Opinion on the neighborhood committees
- Problems/Challenges of public participation
- Improving the effectiveness of public participation
- Attitude of the municipal administration towards public participation related issues

4.2. Research Findings

In order to understand the approach to the idea of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality, to evaluate the level of public participation and its effectiveness and to understand the current problems, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the participation of Nilüfer Municipality City Council members, employees and those who are members of Nilüfer Municipality neighborhood committees were conducted.

The findings of the research carried out for this purpose are summarized in the following sections.

4.2.1. Conceptualization of Participation in Municipal Decision-Making Processes

No one could say that the needs of local people have a certain limit or could be met within a certain standard.

The continuous increase of quantity and quality of the services needed by the local people and the complexity of their problems requires the existence of an administration approach that ensures the participation of the public in the decision-making process of local governments. Collaborating with and

directing local governments in meeting these needs and solving problems of the people who know the local needs best and who are faced with problems plays an important role in making the right decisions and achieving success of these units (Ünal, 2012).

In order to understand how the participants of the study conceptualize the meaning and the role of participation in municipal decision-making processes, the following question is asked to the interviewees:

- What does the phrase “participation in municipal decision-making processes” mean to you? What comes to your mind?

The interviewees state that the word “participation in municipal decision-making processes” generally means two different things for them. The first of these meanings is related to the relationship between participation in municipal decision-making processes and the intermediary units. In other words, they say that the existence of neighborhood committees, city councils etc. means participation in decision-making processes. In particular, some participants emphasize that this sentence evokes the structure of neighborhood committees for them. For example, one of the participants answers the question as follows: “Our ability to have a say in the annual strategic plans of the Nilüfer Municipality through the neighborhood committee” (Interview 9). Another participant reports that “It reminds me the purpose of establishment neighborhood committees. Neighborhood committees take decisions. These decisions go to the city council. The city council also conveys them to relevant units of the municipality. Thus, citizens participate in the municipal administration” (Interview 21).

On the other hand, some of the interviewees also report that it means municipality asks the public’s opinion before implementing a project or taking a decision, and giving importance to the public. One of the participants answers that question as follows:

To be involved in the service planning phase, strategy determination, method selection, target group determination, implementation and evaluation processes. Having the freedom to add options to these processes. Developing options together with the decision-making body. Being a decision maker, apart from the influence on the decision makers (Interview 16).

In addition to these answers, interviewees describe public participation as “urban awareness”, “taking responsibility”, “decision together” and “a right”. These answers may generally imply that the participants are aware of the functions of participation in municipal decision-making processes and acknowledge its value and importance as a collective activity.

4.2.2. Public Participation Methods in Nilüfer Municipality

Nilüfer Municipality, which is the leading municipality with its activities in public participation, has different application methods in order to increase public participation. While the city council and the neighborhood committee are prominent practices in terms of public participation, Associations, Sports Clubs, Women’s Councils, and Non-Governmental Organizations are other existing methods for ensuring public participation. In addition to them, public participation is provided in Nilüfer Municipality with the individual application method. “The President is Here” and “the Deputies Meet with the Public” projects are also aimed at ensuring public participation. Besides, with the effect of technological developments in Nilüfer Municipality, public participation is ensured easily through social media applications such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat. From this point of view, the interviewees are asked to indicate which of the various public participation methods has the greatest effectiveness according to them, using the following question:

- What is the most effective public participation method in Nilüfer Municipality?

The participants provided different answers to this question, and the most prominent answer was the neighborhood committees. It is stated by most of the interviewees that the neighborhood committees are the most influential method for the public participation in Nilüfer Municipality because citizens could convey their thoughts directly, thanks to them. From this viewpoint, they also emphasized that this public participation practice should not be limited to just one region like Nilüfer, it should be implemented throughout the whole country.

On the other hand, there are also some interviewees who have the opinion that it is possible to talk about the effectiveness of the neighborhood committees with the existence of the city council. The main reason of that situation is that the neighborhood committees take place under the roof of the Nilüfer City Council and carry out their work. As a result of this idea, it is emphasized that the most effective public participation method in Nilüfer Municipality is the city council. Also, it is said that the working groups affiliated to the city council have an impact to increase the effect of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality.

In addition to these answers, another answer given by interviewees for this question is non-governmental organizations. However, it is stated that NGOs should work together with neighborhood committees in order to be an effective method for public participation. It is also emphasized that the power of getting feedback from decision makers could increase with the establishment of this unity. One of the participants answers this question as “As people act together with NGOs, their power increases. In this way, their power to get a response to their demands also increases” (Interview 16).

4.2.3. Public Participation Level in Nilüfer Municipality

Public participation mechanisms developed by Nilüfer Municipality in order for citizens to take an active role in decision-making processes are of great importance. With these mechanisms, the active participation of citizens is ensured and their level of participation is increased. Whether this participation reached the desired level or not was another element of the research. The following questions is asked to the interviewees to obtain information about this situation:

- How do you evaluate the level of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality? Do you find it sufficient?

Regarding this question, interestingly, the general answer of the participants is that the level of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality is not at the desired level and is not sufficient. However, the participants expanded this answer within the framework of different dynamics. They believe that what is done to increase the level of public participation has a positive effect, but it should be increased with new

structures for local government units because the existing structure is thought to be insufficient to increase public participation. It is emphasized that participant-oriented planning is necessary at this point. Also, they emphasize that what has been done in terms of public participation is very new and the most important issue that needs to be developed at this point is the internal functioning of public participation mechanisms. In addition to this situation, they say that the level of participation will increase as citizens also have awareness of public participation. One of them thinks that “Participation is insufficient due to lack of information. Citizens are reluctant to participate in matters that they do not know” (Interview 22). Another one says that “Establishing the awareness of local participation in the corporate culture of the Local Government Units and developing the related activities increases the level of participation” (Interview 16).

On the other hand, it should be noted that the participants emphasized that the existing practices in Nilüfer Municipality have a great importance and benefit compared to the practices that support public participation in other municipalities. One of them thinks that “The level of local participation in Nilüfer Municipality is at a good point in terms of Turkey. However, it is not at a sufficient level. Neighborhood Committees Project should be expanded and people should be included in this project” (Interview 14).

One of the participants stated that “With public participation mechanisms in the Municipality of Nilüfer, citizens could present their ideas and projects they want to develop to the local government body, and in this body, they make positive or negative decisions by addressing the citizens” (Interview 6). From this point of view, the level of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality is interpreted as sufficient.

4.2.4. Relationship Between Public Participation and Municipal Services

We could say that Nilüfer Municipality has taken important steps to increase public participation level with its unique actions. However, it is an important issue to be considered whether these actions have any effect on the services offered by the municipality. The importance of increased public participation level should be examined by the degree of its impact over services. Even if Nilüfer Municipality

increases the level of public participation, new structures that do not have any effect on municipal services may adversely affect what is done by Nilüfer Municipality to increase public participation, and may cause people to withdraw their support. This situation may create a reputational risk for the practices that are taken as an example and implemented by other municipalities in Turkey. For this reason, the following questions are asked to participants in order to learn the situation in the current structure:

- Could you evaluate the effects of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality on municipal services? Could it be effective? In what respect?

The answers given by the participants to this question are in two different ways. The one of them is that public participation has an impact over Nilüfer municipal services. Another answer is that public participation has a partial effect on these services.

Those who think that public participation has an impact over municipal services constitute the majority of the participants. According to them, public participation enables the municipality to produce new projects and put them into operation. Citizens' opinions are taken into consideration during the decision-making or project approval processes. In line with this view, the "to do list" of the municipality is determined.

The project involving the construction of the park and the car park in the same area was presented as an example to this subject by one of the participants. According to this participant, "In this project, the idea of car park was abandoned by taking a joint decision with the municipality in line with the wishes of the citizens, then only a park is built" (Interview 12). This situation proves the effect of public participation to us. The municipality considered the opinions of the citizens during the project phase regarding this municipal service. Taking an action against the citizens' wishes or objections was prevented thanks to public participation in this case.

The public participation and the effect of municipal services make citizens more conscious about the environment they live in and disrupt the unchangeable municipal understanding. One of the participants says that, "Thanks to local participation,

citizens think more about the area they live in'' (Interview 18). In addition, it is also stated by participants that the issues or services that were not in the plans of the municipality could be brought to the agenda according to the wishes or needs of citizens.

On the other hand, some of the participants do not think in this way. According to them, public participation has a partial effect on municipal services. They support this view based on two different elements. According to one view, Nilüfer Municipality could not provide effective response to the citizens who expressed their demands through public participation because of the constraints of the municipality such as the budget and strategic plans. According to another view, it is observed that the wishes of the stronger side of public participation determine the outcome of the process. In other words, decisions are taken according to the municipality wishes. It is not possible to carry out an activity that the municipality does not want or deems inappropriate. According to the participants having this opinion, public participation is just a tool used by the municipality to make the services they perform legitimate. In other words, since public participation has a symbolic effect, it is not considered to have much impact over municipal services. The fact that the municipality does not include the participation of the public for works that are important in terms of financial resources is also a negative situation in terms of public participation efficiency. Public participation is not used for such decisions means that participation tools such as city council and neighborhood committees are used only on certain issues that do not constitute economic value. This means that participation tools could be used to legitimize political decision-making mechanisms instead of benefit of citizens and they are not methods used for all decisions to be taken.

4.2.5. Decisions Taken by Nilüfer Municipality and Public Participation

Local government units are closer to the public than central government units. This is beneficial in terms of fulfilling the demands of the people.

Local governments are the closest units of the public administration to citizens that provide key services to them, and their areas of activity include the most basic problems that citizens face in daily life. In other words, local governments are the units that are in the most advantageous position to

communicate with the citizens they serve and are obliged to establish this communication due to the duties assigned to them (Akay, 2016).

This communication means mutual exchange of information between citizens and the decision-making body, and decision-making processes are affected naturally.

It is expected that the decision-making processes will be affected with the transformation activities carried out by Nilüfer Municipality to increase public participation level. In order to obtain information about this situation, the following question was asked to people who participated in the interview:

- In which issues does public participation mostly affect the decisions taken by the Nilüfer Municipality Administration?

Although the participants gave different answers to this question, the majority stated that services related to environmental arrangements such as park and garden construction were the main areas mostly affected by public participation. One of them says that “Local participation mostly affects the municipal administration in environmental issues. For example, Ortanca Park, located in İhsaniye Neighborhood, is a building built with the decision of the neighborhood” (Interview 15). In addition to that, a significant part of participants states that public participation has a significant impact on road and asphalt construction. One of them says that “Local participation affects Nilüfer Municipality the most in terms of projects. The asphalt and pavement arrangement of Gazi Street in the Cumhuriyet Neighborhood was made with the decision of the neighborhood committee” (Interview 20). While determining the arrangements to be made for the relevant street, the Mayor of Nilüfer Municipality, the Nilüfer City Council and the Cumhuriyet Neighborhood Committee met and discussed the issue. The final decision to be made is based on the request of the neighborhood committee because it is believed that the unit closest to the region will make the best decision. These examples show that public participation has an impact on the decision-making processes of the local government.

In addition to these answers, there were other answers given by the participants for this question. According to these interviewees, public participation has an impact on the construction of new sports areas, social facilities, places of worship and

education areas. Also, it is thought that environmental cleaning activities in order to reduce environmental pollution is realized with active public participation.

4.2.6. Perceptions about Neighborhood Committees Project

In order to increase the effectiveness of public participation in decision-making processes, it is important to identify the extent to which the innovations made by Nilüfer Municipality are beneficial. From a theoretical point of view, no negative criticism can be brought to new structures. However, there might be some differences in the application of theoretical knowledge in daily life. It is necessary to evaluate how effective the new practices are for citizens who are public participation actors.

In line with this purpose, it is requested to obtain information about the process and outcomes of the neighborhood committee implementation from the viewpoint of the citizens, and then the following question is asked to the participants:

- How do you find the practice of neighborhood committees?

According to the interviewees, neighborhood committees are the formations that make Nilüfer Municipality a leading structure among local governments and distinguish it from others. Practice of neighborhood committees serves a process that could be considered as rising of democracy from the local. Together with that process, it is ensured that people have a right for decisions to be taken specific to the regions they live in. According to one participant “Neighborhood committees create a living space for democracy” (Interview 16). Also, citizens could get to know something well about the place they live in with this practice. One of the participants reports that “Neighborhood committees are useful for mutual communication between local administration and the people administered” (Interview 13). Also, this structure that was realized by Municipality of Nilüfer, should be taken as an example and implemented by all local governments in Turkey. One of the participants says that “The Neighborhood Committees Project is great as a system. I would like it to spread all over Turkey” (Interview 9).

Despite all these features of the neighborhood committees, it is stated by the participants that this practice is still at the beginning of the road and it is emphasized

that they are open for development. It is stated that a time period is needed in order for the elements planned in theory to reach the desired level. It is said that the process would be more effective by instilling the culture of being a resident of a neighborhood and raising their awareness about local government and public participation at this time period. In addition to the explanations so far, some participants say that neighborhood committees are very well constructed in theory, but our traditional management approach does not give neighborhood committees the importance they deserve. For this reason, this practice could not be considered as a very useful.

To summarize answers from people who attended the interviews, the practice of Neighborhood Committees of Nilüfer Municipality is a very important and valuable position for them. However, it is also emphasized that time is needed to gain the effectiveness considered in theory. It is believed that this practice will become more widespread as its effectiveness increases.

In order to evaluate the participants' perceptions about Neighborhood Committees Project implemented by the Nilüfer Municipality further, nine Likert-scale rating questions were also asked. The answers given ranged from 1 to 5 as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree, and were reported in the tables below.

Table 3: *Neighborhood committees are effective mechanisms for participation.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	6	26,09
Agree	9	39,13
Strongly Agree	8	34,78
TOTAL	23	100

Based on the answers given presented in Table 3, it is seen that neighborhood committees have a significant impact on public participation for the participants of the study. It is thought that neighborhood committees can influence the decision-making process of local governments.

Table 4: *Neighborhood committees represent local people.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	4,35
Disagree	-	-
Neutral	5	21,74
Agree	12	52,17
Strongly Agree	5	21,74
TOTAL	23	100

There is considerable agreement with the notion that neighborhood committees act as representatives to reflect the wishes of local people.

Table 5: *Neighborhood committees work actively at the local level.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	2	8,70
Neutral	5	21,74
Agree	9	39,13
Strongly Agree	7	30,43
TOTAL	23	100

Most of the interviewees think that neighborhood committees play an active role in terms of local government.

Table 6: *Local awareness of neighborhood committees is sufficient.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	4,35
Disagree	4	17,39
Neutral	13	56,52
Agree	5	21,74
Strongly Agree	-	-
TOTAL	23	100

Regarding the level of local awareness regarding neighborhood committees, the answer given by the participants is neither agree nor disagree. An important part of

the participants wanted to explain this answer. According to them, awareness of any public participation tool in Nilüfer Municipality, including neighborhood committees, is higher than the other municipalities. However, this does not mean that it is at an optimal level. They believe that the level of awareness regarding neighborhood committees should be increased.

Table 7: *Neighborhood committees should be formally made a sub-organization of the municipality.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	8	34,78
Disagree	3	13,05
Neutral	5	21,74
Agree	-	-
Strongly Agree	7	30,43
TOTAL	23	100

Different responses are given by participants to the question developed about the neighborhood committees to be a sub-unit affiliated to the municipality in the organization chart of the municipality. Some of participants believe that this situation could limit the ability of neighborhood committees to act freely and it could weaken the structures. Others believe that this will enable neighborhood committees to have greater opportunities like financial ones.

Table 8: *The effect of neighborhood committees on the municipality is at the required level.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	5	21,74
Neutral	10	43,48
Agree	8	34,78
Strongly Agree	-	-
TOTAL	23	100

According to Table 8, the effects of neighborhood committees on the Municipality can be considered as near the required level, although it can be improved.

Table 9: *Neighborhood committees should act as advisory bodies.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	1	4,35
Disagree	7	30,43
Neutral	2	8,70
Agree	8	34,78
Strongly Agree	5	21,74
TOTAL	23	100

It was explained in detail in the previous section that city councils operate as an advisory institution. In this context, city councils are structures that act as consultants rather than providing services. Similarly, the idea of neighborhood committees being an advisory institution is supported by majority of the participants in the study.

Table 10: *Neighborhood committees should consist of elected members only.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	52,17
Disagree	7	30,43
Neutral	1	4,35
Agree	1	4,35
Strongly Agree	2	8,70
TOTAL	23	100

The idea that neighborhood committees should consist of only elected members is the least supported statement among the rating questions. The idea of removing natural members from the neighborhood committee structure is not accepted. Considering that the main purpose of the neighborhood committees is to ensure the participation of different segments of the society in the decision-making processes, leaving the natural members out of the structure creates a negative effect, according to the participants. For this reason, the idea of neighborhood committees, which will be formed only by elected people, did not receive support.

Table 11: *Legal arrangements for neighborhood committees should be developed.*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	4,35
Neutral	-	-
Agree	5	21,74
Strongly Agree	17	73,91
TOTAL	23	100

The most supported opinion by participants is the development of neighborhood committees in the light of legal regulations. In this way, it is believed that neighborhood committees will be acknowledged throughout the country. Also, neighborhood committees will be strengthened with the introduction of new regulations in addition to the legal bases explained in the previous sections. With the new legal arrangements to be made, fields of activity, duties and institutional structures of the neighborhood committees could be protected by laws.

4.2.7. Barriers to Public Participation

It is not always easy to give up structures that are generally accepted and used for a long time in society. People might experience anxiety about the sudden change of their possessions. In addition, it is thought that changing the existing structure will cause harmful consequences for them. Due to such reasons, the planned transformation processes involving novelties might encounter problems.

With the neighborhood committees project developed by Nilüfer Municipality, it is desired to change the local administration approach that has been dominant for many years. It is aimed to reconstruct the balance of power existing in the old structure and to increase the diversity of actors in the decision-making processes. In this way, it is aimed to increase the level of public participation. However, there are problems faced by the transformation process in terms of public participation.

Understanding the content of these problems is an element in the current study. In order to obtain information on this subject, the following question is asked to the interviewees:

- What are the problems encountered in public participation?

Responses received varied, and different factors are considered by the participants as problems in public participation. Apart from the answer that there is no problem, problems declared by participants are included in the following section.

An important part of the participants emphasizes that the most important problem in terms of public participation is human-based. The problem of public participation is that people do not have full belief in participation and are against the idea of organizing. It is emphasized that the increase in the existing belief in participation will raise the awareness of organizing and remove the barriers to participation. One of the participants states that “The low level of confidence in participation of the people living in the city is a problem faced by local participation. If the awareness about organizing is high, the main obstacles to local participation can be removed” (Interview 17).

Since the concept of public participation is a relatively new phenomenon because it requires a different management approach, it is difficult for people to know exactly what purpose it serves. This is one of the problems faced by public participation. As it becomes more widespread, more information will be available about it. One of the participants believes that “Community unawareness about local participation is a problem for local participation. People are even afraid of the word ‘Organization’. Existing obstacles could be removed by introducing and exemplifying unknown concepts” (Interview 16). As stated for Nilüfer Municipality, it is difficult to talk about the existence of organizational awareness on participation in the national sense. However, together with the neighborhood committees it has developed Nilüfer Municipality, enables the citizens living in a region to come together and participate in the decision-making processes. In addition to the activities to raise awareness of the public, a direct application example is also offered by the Nilüfer Municipality for the development of participation. The encounter of the citizens with the implementation of the idea of organization is a factor that distinguishes Nilüfer Municipality from other municipalities. Participation in Nilüfer Municipality is developing as people have organizational awareness and act with awareness. Neighborhood committees, which have the idea of acting in an organized way at the

starting point, also have a feature such as gaining the habit of organized structure. Thanks to this feature, Nilüfer Municipality differs from other municipalities. Despite the negative situation in Turkey in terms of public participation, Nilüfer Municipality is in an effective position in terms of participation of citizens in decision-making processes.

The low belief of people in democracy is another problem expressed by the participants. One of them says that “Processes carried out in the form of monologues reduce people’s belief in participation and this situation poses a problem” (Interview 7). It is also a problem that people think selfishly and see their own interests above the interests of the region they live in in terms of public participation.

Apart from the human-induced problems, it is a problem that the existing legal regulations do not sufficiently support public participation. In addition to this situation, the presence of political pressures and bureaucratic structure has a negative effect on the presence of new actors in decision-making processes. The fact that public participation does not have any sanctioning power and the continuation of the understanding of getting unearned income are other problems.

In short, main problems for the participants are that people do not have sufficient knowledge and awareness in terms of public participation, and also legal regulations, political pressures, bureaucratic structure, lack of sanction power and the existence of an understanding of rent constitute the major challenges for the process.

4.2.8. Improving Effectiveness of Public Participation

Based on answers given by the participants to the questions in the previous parts of the interview, it is understood that an effective role could be taken in the decision-making processes with public participation, but efficiency of that process is not at the desired level and has some problems. Some actions need to be taken in order for the public participation to achieve the desired efficiency and overcome problems it has. With the research carried out, it is aimed to obtain information about these possible actions. For this purpose, the following question is asked to people who participated in the interview:

- In your opinion, how could public participation be improved and make participation effective?

According to one of the participants, “Trainings should be given to citizens in order to develop public participation and make it more effective” (Interview 9). Thanks to these trainings, citizens could be informed about public participation.

In addition to trainings, brochures about public participation could be distributed; also, citizens could be informed about that process through social media and television. Their awareness of public participation increases and they tend to participate in the decisions to be taken about the environment they live in. One of the participants says that “If citizens are informed through tools such as brochures, social media and television, participation will increase” (Interview 22). In this way, the possibility of living democracy could be realized.

The interviewees also emphasized that meeting arrangements in order to inform citizens of the people working in the Local Government Units will positively affect the public participation. With these meetings, it would be seen that the different political views that dominate the administration are not a restrictive factor, so solidarity would increase and public participation would be able to develop. The belief and trust in public participation would increase by ensuring that people are represented equally and that decisions are taken in line with their wishes.

One of the participants believes that “The realization of public wishes as a result of working with public institutions and universities in decision-making processes will positively affect the perception of citizens” (Interview 13). In this way, public participation will become more effective. Moreover, the implementation processes of the decisions taken by the public participation tools for participants by local administrations have an impact on this issue. The fact that the decision-making processes are accelerated compared to the existing structure will change the perspective on public participation. Participation will increase and become more effective with quick decisions. Public participation would be developed and become more effective when the actors in the decision-making process think of the whole society, in other words, act with organizational awareness. It is also important at this point that these people adopt public participation practices without fear of criticism.

Other answers given by the participants to this question were related to the fact that the financial opportunities allocated for public participation processes fall short of the current needs and some legal arrangements need to be made. One of the participants says that “Financial resources should be provided for the development of local participation” (Interview 21). Another one states that “Necessary legal arrangements should be made and the structures owned should be clearly included in the laws” (Interview 19). “Opportunities for (and constraints upon) associational activity are shaped by constitutional and legal frameworks, the structures and conventions of government, and the traditions and conventions of political life” (Lowndes and Wilson, 2001: 631). With the provision of these elements, the power of public participation tools would increase and these tools would have a specific job description. This has a positive effect in terms of public participation.

4.2.9. Perceptions Regarding the Responsiveness of Nilüfer Municipal Administration toward Citizens’ Needs

Nilüfer Municipality has other practices besides the Neighborhood Committees Project to ensure that citizens’ needs, concerns and opinions are taken into consideration. In order to better understand how useful these practices are, and how the participants perceive the attitudes of the municipality to citizens in general, various Likert-scale rating questions were also asked in the study, with answer choices as 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied.

Table 12: Online services of Nilüfer Municipality

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	-	-
Satisfied	6	26,09
Very Satisfied	17	73,91
TOTAL	23	100

Nilüfer Municipality has an advantage in terms of interaction with the public with its online tools. With this method, it is aimed to ensure public participation in decision-

making processes or service delivery through online channels, which are used by a significant part of citizens, including social media tools. Based on the answers received, we understand that the satisfaction levels of the participants were high for the online services implemented by Nilüfer Municipality.

Table 13: *Informing the public about the works carried out by the Nilüfer Municipality*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	1	4,35
Satisfied	9	39,13
Very Satisfied	13	56,52
TOTAL	23	100

As explained in the earlier sections, one level of participation is informing the public about the decisions and actions of the municipality. According to Table 13, it is understood that the interviewees are quite satisfied with Nilüfer Municipality that it aims to inform people about the actions that it takes.

Table 14: *Solving problems of citizens in a timely manner*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	2	8,70
Neutral	9	39,13
Satisfied	12	52,17
Very Satisfied	-	-
TOTAL	23	100

Through public participation, it is ensured that people take an active role in the service and decision-making processes. In this process, there is no delay as people's requests are quickly obtained directly from the person concerned. Nilüfer Municipality is expected to produce a quick solution with the notification made to it. However, when we look at the answers in Table 14, we understand that although

majority of the participants are generally satisfied, there is also room for improvement as shown by the rate of dissatisfied and neutral answers.

Table 15: *Municipality employees are always willing to help citizens*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	4	17,39
Satisfied	17	73,91
Very Satisfied	2	8,70
TOTAL	23	100

When we evaluate the answers on Table 15, we understand that employees of Nilüfer Municipality are willing to help the citizens and that a significant part of the participants are satisfied. This may also imply that the municipality is responsive to the citizens' concerns, needs, and opinions, thus is ready to encourage their participation in municipal processes.

Table 16: *Showing citizens ways to benefit from services*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	5	21,74
Satisfied	7	30,43
Very Satisfied	11	47,83
TOTAL	23	100

Nilüfer Municipality makes notifications about new services. These notifications could be sourced from online or physical documents. With this method, information is given about what kind of rights citizens have and how to use these rights. When we look at answers from interviewees in Table 16, we see that the level of satisfaction in this subject is quite high. It is understood that the interviewees see Nilüfer Municipality as a guide for benefiting from services, and perceives that the municipality values the citizens.

Table 17: Easy conveying of complaints to relevant units

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	2	8,70
Satisfied	6	26,09
Very Satisfied	15	65,21
TOTAL	23	100

Unlike the ratings about problem-solving process in Nilüfer Municipality, it is observed that interviewees are very satisfied in terms of citizens conveying complaints to relevant units of Nilüfer Municipality. Tools that ensure public participation are thought to be the main actor in this situation. By using these tools, it is seen that people are able to forward their complaints to relevant units easily. Citizens in Nilüfer Municipality have a right to express their complaints directly without the need of any intermediary institution and the interviewees are very satisfied with this situation.

Table 18: The municipal administration values the opinion of citizens

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Dissatisfied	-	-
Dissatisfied	-	-
Neutral	1	4,35
Satisfied	9	39,13
Very Satisfied	13	56,52
TOTAL	23	100

According to Table 18, the interviewees think citizens feel themselves and their ideas valuable as a result of the participation process. Based on answers to the question asked, we could say that the level of satisfaction regarding this situation is high.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Local government is a structure that brings together different stakeholders. The features and stakeholders of this structure show different characteristics. We do not have a chance to talk about the existence of a single local government style. The understanding of local government has witnessed developments and changes over time. One of the important issues observed in this process is the move away from the strict centralized administration approach. This thought has left its place to the understanding that people living in a region should also be able to participate in the decision-making processes. In this way, it is aimed to use public resources in the most efficient way and to increase citizen satisfaction.

Administrative units have the purpose of meeting the demands and needs of citizens. Participation of the public in the decision-making processes is thought to have a positive effect on this situation. In this context, different local government practices could be observed in our country as well. Different participation tools such as participatory budgeting activities, city councils and neighborhood committees are used to ensure participation. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Nilüfer Municipality, which differs from other municipalities with its participation tools, especially the neighborhood committees, as a case study.

Neighborhood Committees Project which is implemented by Nilüfer Municipality is one of them. Nilüfer Municipality, together with the neighborhood committees, ensures that the citizens are the decision-making authority for the region where they live. As an example of local participation, neighborhood committees have an impact on citizens and this led this local government form to be distinguished from other local government forms. In regions where local participation is increasing, the perceptions of citizens about the services offered to them have also changed.

In order to understand the impact of the changes in local participation, Nilüfer Municipality, which is in the leading position, is chosen as an example and the study that is the subject of this thesis is carried out. Within the scope of the research, different stakeholders of local participation are selected and it is desired to learn their perspectives on local participation, and their thoughts on whether local participation is effective or not. A total of twenty-three people was interviewed by using the face-to-face interview technique as the data collection technique. In this study, descriptive analyses were used as the analysis method.

In this conclusion part, the findings of the study are briefly summarized and discussed, and then recommendations are made for policy and future research.

5.1. Summary of the Findings

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality, and the enablers and barriers of local public participation. In line with this, local participation practices that have been implemented by Nilüfer Municipality were considered from the perspective of city council members, administrative staff, and natural and elected members of neighborhood committees. For this purpose, information was obtained from participants with interview questions determined. Interview questions were prepared in such a way as to get information about the methods of local participation, the means of local participation, the level of citizen participation, effects of citizen participation on the community, the evaluation of the neighborhood committee practice, and issues that are encouraging and problematic for local participation.

According to the findings, democracy could develop and local needs could be met with local participation of citizens. Neighborhood committees are local participation practices that have a great importance in line with this purpose. On the other hand, participants do not think that the level of local participation is at the desired level. Although Neighborhood Committees Project is an application that has a positive effect, it is thought that there is a long and open road to development in front of local participation. For this reason, in order for local participation to reach the desired level, both the administrators and the governed should internalize the idea of democracy. In addition, those in government should encourage citizens to participate

when necessary to adopt participation as a culture. In this way, it should be ensured that citizens have a say in the regions where they live.

The data obtained from the interviewees also show that neighborhood committees enable participation in the municipal decision-making processes. Citizens are asked for their opinion through the neighborhood committees and their preferences usually determine the services to be provided. The most effective method of local participation practices in Nilüfer Municipality is considered as neighborhood committees. It is emphasized that thanks to the neighborhood committees, citizens could freely and most importantly directly convey their ideas. However, it is stated that what is done to increase local participation has positive effects, but existing structures are an obstacle to reaching the desired level. It is thought that this situation could be changed with restructuring and planning and the level of local participation in Nilüfer Municipality could reach the desired level. In addition, increasing the knowledge level of people on local participation and democracy could help. Similarly, it is stated that the legal arrangements can be made to have a positive effect. The trainings to be given to the citizens are also considered as one of the most important elements for the development of local participation. It is thought that these trainings, brochures to be organized, social media elements, and studies to be carried out by public institutions and universities can have a positive effect on the development of local participation.

5.2. Discussion and Recommendations

The determination of the municipal services and policies to be realized with the involvement of the people who will benefit from the service, instead of being decided only by the administration, increases the power of democracy. With local participation, the desired democratic living conditions are one step closer. The practice of neighborhood committees is therefore of great importance. We could understand general outlines of effects of the practice of neighborhood committees, and these effects have value in terms of increasing the application areas of neighborhood committees. However, whether they are at the desired level is a matter of debate. Based on the findings obtained from the study, it is possible to make the following suggestions for the neighborhood committees to become more effective:

One of the factors that negatively affect citizen participation is the ineffectiveness of the existing neighborhood committees from time to time. In some decisions to be taken under the influence of the budget and strategic plans, it is possible to determine services by considering the opinions of the municipal administration, apart from the wishes of the citizens. This situation does not take the neighborhood committees beyond preparing a legitimate basis for the services to be provided. In order to eliminate this situation, it is necessary to strengthen the legal and institutional status of neighborhood committees in the administrative system in Turkey.

Another obstacle is that the practice of neighborhood committees is very new and the local participation culture of the citizens is not yet at the desired level. This situation also negatively affects the increase in belief in democracy. This challenge could be eliminated by organizing informative seminars or encouraging participation in trainings that teach local participation.

In summary, although the biggest obstacle in front of local participation is human-based, limitations could be eliminated by increasing the participative opportunities especially for citizens. Internalizing democracy, adopting local participation culture by the municipal administration and encouraging citizens to be informed about this issue and increasing the education level of the people are examples of activities that may improve the effectiveness of public participation.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study is that the practice of neighborhood committees, one of the local participation methods in Turkey, is very new. For this reason, the number of academic studies that address the effect of neighborhood committees on local participation in Turkey is very limited.

In addition to this situation, the fact that Nilüfer Municipality is the pioneer and the only one in the practice of neighborhood committees makes it incomparable with another neighborhood committee practice in Turkey.

Another limitation of our study is that the findings could not be generalized. The data in question relate to generalizations made from a predetermined group. We could not say that the results expressed in the previous sections contain a final judgment, both

because the number of participants is limited and because it is not possible to reach all segments of the society and it was a case study that focused on a single municipality.

5.4. Future Research

In this research, local public participation practices, including the Neighborhood Committees Project which is implemented in different parts of the world and led by the Nilüfer Municipality in our country, are examined and an analysis is made on effectiveness of participation.

The study provides an overview of what kind of gains could be achieved in terms of local participation by implementing various participation methods and what the enablers and barriers to local participation are. Future research involving other local government units and larger samples might provide further insights about how the effectiveness of local participation might be improved. In addition, neighborhood committees are likely to be implemented in different local governments in the future, thus can be examined in more detail.

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Interview 3 Office Assistant of Neighborhood Committees, held on 15.06.2017

Interview 4 Coordinator of Neighborhood Committees held on, 15.06.2017

Interview 5 Facilitator of Nilüfer Municipality City Council, held on 15.06.2017

Interview 6 City Council Delegate + Member of a Neighborhood Committee, held on 15.06.2017

Interview 7 Headman (Natural Member of a Neighborhood Committee), held on 15.06.2017

Interview 8 Member of a Neighborhood Committee + Member of the Board of the Neighborhood Committee, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 9 Member of a Neighborhood Committee, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 10 Natural Member of a Neighborhood Committee, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 11 Member of a Neighborhood Committee + Attendant of Retirees Working Group, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 12 Attendant of Retirees Working Group, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 13 Attendant of Woman Council, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 14 Attendant of Woman Council, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 15 Attendant of Retirees Working Group, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 16 Member of the Youth Council, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 17 Member of the Youth Council, held on 16.06.2017

Interview 18 Facilitator of Nilüfer Municipality City Council, held on 29.09.2017

Interview 19 City Council Member Responsible for Neighborhood Committees, held on 29.09.2017

Interview 20 Elected Member of a Neighborhood Committee, held on 29.09.2017

Interview 21 Member (Assistant) of the Headman, held on 29.09.2017

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- **Complementary Sources**

City Council Regulation

Municipality Law no. 5393

Neighborhood Committees Operational Guideline

APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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20 Ağustos 2014

Gönderilen: Y. Doç. Dr. Nilay Yavuz
Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

Gönderen : Prof. Dr. Canan Özgen
IAK Başkanı

İlgi : Etik Onayı

"Büyükşehirlerde Katılım Uygulamalarıyla İlgili Belediye Siyasetçilerinin Algı, Tutum ve Davranışları" isimli araştırmanız "İnsan Araştırmaları Komitesi" tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Etik Komite Onayı

Uygundur

20/08/2014

Prof.Dr. Canan Özgen
Uygulamalı Etik Araştırma Merkezi
(UEAM) Başkanı
ODTÜ 06531 ANKARA

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Age:

Gender:

Female Male

Educational Status:

None Primary Education
 Secondary Education High School
 Higher Education and Undergraduate Graduate

Employment Status:

YES Self-Employment Public Employee
 Private Sector Other _____

NO Retired Housewife
 Student Other _____

Your assignment in Nilüfer City Council: _____

Do you take part in any assembly or working group? Which one?

Are you a member of the Neighborhood Committee?

YES

NO

Which neighborhood do you live in?

How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

Have you lived in another neighborhood of Nilüfer District before? Which district?

How satisfied are you with your current neighborhood?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

How satisfied are you with the following service and quality aspects of Nilüfer Municipality (Note: 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied)?

1. Online services of Nilüfer Municipality

1 2 3 4 5

2. Informing public about works carried out by the Nilüfer Municipality

1 2 3 4 5

3. Solving problems of citizens in a timely manner

1 2 3 4 5

4. Municipality employees are always willing to help citizens

1 2 3 4 5

5. Showing citizens ways to benefit from services

1 2 3 4 5

6. Easy conveying of complaints to relevant units

1 2 3 4 5

7. The municipal administration values the opinion of citizens

1 2 3 4 5

Open-Ended Questions

1. What does the word participation in municipal decision-making processes mean to you? What comes to your mind?

2. What is the most effective public participation method in Nilüfer Municipality?

3. How do you evaluate the level of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality? Do you find it sufficient?

4. Could you evaluate the effect of public participation in Nilüfer Municipality on municipal services? Could it be effective? In what respect?

5. In which issues does public participation affect the decisions taken by the Nilüfer municipality administration?

6. How do you find the practice of neighborhood committees?

7. What are the problems encountered in public participation?

8. In your opinion, how could public participation be improved and make participation effective?

Tick the most favorable answer for the following statements (Note: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Neighborhood Committees are an effective mechanism for participation.					
2. Neighborhood Committees represent local people.					
3. Neighborhood Committees work actively at the local level.					
4. Local awareness of Neighborhood Committees is sufficient.					
5. Neighborhood Committees should be formally made a sub-organization of the municipality.					
6. The effect of the Neighborhood Committees on the municipality is at the required level.					
7. The primary function of Neighborhood Committees should be to act as advisory bodies.					
8. Neighborhood Committees should consist of elected members only.					
9. Legal arrangements for Neighborhood Committees should be developed.					

C. QUOTATIONS IN TURKISH

“Mahalle Komitesi aracılığıyla Nilüfer Belediyesi'nin yıllık stratejik planlarında söz sahibi olabilmemizi anlıyorum” (Mülakat 9).

“Mahalle Komitelerinin kurulma amacı aklıma geliyor. Mahalle Komiteleri karar alır. Bu kararlar Kent Konseyi'ne gider. Kent Konseyi de kararları belediyenin ilgili birimlerine iletir. Böylece vatandaşlar belediye yönetimine katılır” (Mülakat 21).

“Hizmet planlama aşamasında strateji belirlenmesi, yöntem seçilmesinde, hedef grup belirlenmesinde ‘uygulama ve değerlendirme süreçlerine’ dahil olmak. Bu sürece seçenek ekleyebilme özgürlüğünün olması. Seçenekleri birlikte geliştirmek. Karar alıcılara etkinin dışında, karar alıcı da olabilme” (Mülakat 16).

“Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları ile birlikte hareket etme. Çünkü örgütlenme ile daha çok kişi bir arada hareket ederek geri dönüş alma gücünü artırabilir” (Mülakat 16).

“Bilgi eksikliğinden dolayı katılımı yetersiz buluyorum. Vatandaş bilmediği şeylere karşı tepkili oluyor ve çekimser kalıyor” (Mülakat 22).

“Kurumsal kültürün içine yerel katılım bilincinin oturtulması ve buna yönelik yapıların geliştirilmesi” (Mülakat 16).

“Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde yerel katılım seviyesi Türkiye açısından iyi bir noktada ama yeterli değil. Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi yaygınlaştırılmalı ve insanlar projeye dahil edilmeli” (Mülakat 14).

“Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde yerel katılım mekanizmaları ile vatandaşlar fikirlerini ve yapmak istedikleri projeleri yerel yönetim organına sunabiliyor. Buna karşılık, bu organ da vatandaşlara olumlu ya da olumsuz bir dönüş yapıyor” (Mülakat 6).

“Bu projede vatandaşların istekleri doğrultusunda belediye ile ortak karar alınarak otopark fikrinden vazgeçildi, ardından sadece park yapıldı” (Mülakat 12).

“Yerel katılım sayesinde vatandaş kendi yaşadığı alanla ilgili daha fazla düşünüyor” (Mülakat 18).

“Yerel katılım en çok çevre konularında Nilüfer Belediyesi’nin aldığı kararları etkiliyor. Örneğin, İhsaniye Mahallesi’nde bulunan Ortanca Parkı mahallenin kararı ile yapılan bir yapıdır” (Mülakat 15).

“Yerel katılım Nilüfer Belediye’ni en çok projelerde etkilemektedir. Cumhuriyet Mahallesi’nde Gazi Caddesi asfalt ve kaldırım düzenlemesi tamamen Mahalle Komitesi kararı doğrultusunda yapılmıştır” (Mülakat 20).

“Mahalle Komiteleri demokrasi için bir yaşam alanı oluşturuyor” (Mülakat 16).

“Mahalle Komiteleri yerel yönetim ve yönetilenler arasında karşılıklı iletişim açısından faydalı” (Mülakat 13).

“Mahalle Komitesi sistem olarak harika. Tüm Türkiye’de yaygınlaşmasını isterim” (Mülakat 9).

“Kentte yaşayan insanların katılıma olan inancının az olması yerel katılımın karşılaştığı bir problemdir. Eğer örgütlenme bilinci yüksek olursa, yerel katılımın önünde olan temel engel ortadan kalkabilir” (Mülakat 17).

“Yerel katılım konusunda toplumun bilgisizliği bir problemdir. İnsanlar ‘Örgüt’ kelimesinden bile korkmaktadır. Bilinmeyen kavramlar tanıtılıp örneklendirilirse bu mevcut engeller ortadan kalkabilir” (Mülakat 16).

“Monolog şeklinde yapılan toplantılar insanların yerel katılıma olan inancını azaltıyor ve bu sorun teşkil ediyor” (Mülakat 7).

“Yerel katılımın gelişmesi ve daha etkin olması için vatandaşlara eğitimler verilmeli” (Mülakat 9).

“Halk broşür, sosyal medya ve televizyon aracılığıyla bilgi sahibi olursa katılım artar” (Mülakat 22).

“Yerel istekler, karar alma süreçlerinde kamu kuruluşları ve üniversiteler ile iş birliği yapılarak yerine getirilirse insanların algısını olumlu etkiler” (Mülakat 13).

“Yerel katılımın gelişmesi için finansal kaynak sağlanmalıdır” (Mülakat 21).

“Gerekli yasal düzenlemeler yapılmalı ve sahip olunan yapılar kanunlarda yer almalıdır” (Mülakat 19).

D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Yerel yönetimlerin yerel ihtiyaçları karşılaması temel sorumluluğudur. Ancak, tarihsel süreçte ihtiyaçların giderilmesi açısından yeniden yapılanma gerekmiştir. Meydana gelen değişimlerle birlikte katı ve merkezi yönetim anlayışına sahip, hiyerarşinin hakin olduğu yönetim yapısından uzaklaşarak, merkezi yönetimin sahip olduğu güçleri yerel yönetimler ile paylaşmasını esas alan yapılara geçiş yaşanmıştır. Bu kapsamda vatandaşların karar alma sürecine katılımının çözüm olabileceği tasarlanmıştır. Halka daha yakın bir yönetim anlayışı ile karar alma mekanizmalarının etkinliğinin artacağı düşünülmüştür. Katılım ile birlikte vatandaşların kamu politikalarında yer alması istenmiştir.

Kamu gelirleri ile kamunun ihtiyaçlarının giderilmesi amaçlanır. Ancak, mevcut gelirler ile ihtiyaçların karşılanmaması durumunda gelirlerin daha etkin kullanılması amacıyla vatandaş merkezli yönetime geçilmiştir. Bu sayede, vatandaşlar sadece kamu hizmeti sunulan kişiler olmak yerine karar alma sürecine dahil olan aktörler haline gelmiştir. İnsanların bu haklarını kullanabilmesi için de birbirinden farklı mekanizmalar geliştirilmiştir. Kent Konseyleri ve bu yapının içerisinde oluşturulan Mahalle Komiteleri katılım mekanizmalarına örnektir. Kent Konseyleri toplumun farklı kesimlerini bir araya getirerek karar alma süreçlerine etkide bulunan organizasyonlardır. Kent Konseyleri aracılığıyla farklı kesimden insanlar/gruplar iletişime geçerler. Bu iletişim sürecinde birbirleriyle fikir alışverişinde bulunurlar. Merkezi yönetimlerin aksine Kent Konseyleri ile birlikte kararların vatandaş düzeyinde alınması sağlanır. Karar alma süreçlerine vatandaşların aktif katılımı sağlanır. Türkiye’de Kent Konseylerinin yasal dayanağı 5393 sayılı Belediye Kanunu’dur.

Bursa’nın Nilüfer İlçesi’nde bulunan Nilüfer Kent Konseyi ülkemizdeki uygulama örneklerinden biridir. Nilüfer Kent Konseyi’ni diğer uygulamalardan ayıran bir temel özelliği vardır. Katılımın mahalle ölçeğinde gerçekleşebilmesi adına Nilüfer Kent Konseyi bünyesinde Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi geliştirilmiştir. Mahalle Komiteleri

ile birlikte bir bölge ile ilgili karar alınmadan önce, o bölgede yaşayan vatandaşların söz hakkı sahibi olması sağlanmıştır. Nilüfer Belediye dışında herhangi bir belediye tarafından benzer bir katılım mekanizmasının geliştirilmemesi, Nilüfer Belediyesi'ni öncü belediye konuma getirmiştir. Bu durum Nilüfer Belediyesi'ni yerel katılım açısından değerli hale getirmekte ve hakkında araştırma yapmaya teşvik etmektedir.

Bu noktadan hareketle, Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından geliştirilen yerel katılım uygulamaları gerçekleştirmiş olduğumuz çalışmanın çıkış noktası olmuş ve Nilüfer Kent Konseyi üyeleri, idari personel ve Mahalle Komitesi üyeleri ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu tezde nitel ve nicel yöntemler kullanılarak aşağıdaki araştırma soruları ele alınmıştır:

- Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde yerel katılımı ne kadar etkili?
- Neden etkili veya etkisiz? Hangi şekillerde?
- Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde en etkili katılım aracı/araçları nedir/nelerdir?
- Yerel katılım açısından Belediye özelinde destekleyici ve engelleyici unsurlar nelerdir?
- Belediyelerde yerel katılım nasıl artırılabilir?

Nilüfer Belediyesi'ne bağlı Kent Konseyi ve Mahalle Komitelerine üye 23 kişiyle mülakat gerçekleştirilerek yukarıda yer alan sorulara cevap bulabilmek adına açık uçlu ve derecelendirme sorular sorulmuştur. Bu çalışma belediye ölçeğinde yerel katılımı incelemektedir. İlgili konu hakkında literatürde çok fazla çalışmanın bulunmaması çalışmayı önemli hale getirmektedir. Bu çalışma ile birlikte mahalle düzeyinde yerel katılım hakkında bilgi verilerek literatüre katkıda bulunulmak istenmektedir. Ek olarak, Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından geliştirilen ve başka herhangi bir belediye tarafından uygulanmayan yerel katılım aracı hakkında bu çalışmada bilgi verilerek diğer belediyeler için örnek teşkil etmesi istenmektedir.

1992 yılında Rio'da düzenlenen Birleşmiş Milletler zirvesinde sürdürülebilir kalkınma 21. yüzyılda bütün insanlığın ortak hedefi olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda Gündem 21 başlıklı doküman ile belirlenmiş hedefe ulaşmak için olması gereken ilke ve eylemler açıklanmıştır. Gündem 21 sonrasında yerel yöntemlerde katılımı sağlamak adına Yerel Gündem 21 ile gerekli görülen

mekanizmalar açıklanmıştır. Yerel Gündem 21 ile birlikte gerçekleşmesi planlanan projeler için yerel yönetimler ve vatandaşların bir arada hareket etmesi istenmiştir. Katılım ile birlikte insanların yaşadıkları bölgeler hakkında farkındalığının ve bilgi düzeyinin artacağı, ek olarak yerel yönetimlerde vatandaş katılımının hesap verilebilirliği sağlayacağı düşünülmüştür.

Katılım kavramı yönetilen grubun yöneten grubun eylem ve planlarını etkilemesi olarak ifade edilebilir. Bu sayede, vatandaşların yerel yönetimlerde beklentileri artmakta ve aynı zamanda yerel yönetimler sorumluluk sahibi hale gelmektedir. Katılım ile birlikte, halkın egemenliği kavramı daha anlamlı hale gelmekte ve denetim mekanizması sağlanmaktadır.

Katılım ve demokrasi kavramlarının ilişkili olduğu söylenebilir. Monarşide sadece tek bir kişiye yönetme yetkisi sunulmuş, oligarşide ise küçük bir gruba bu yetki verilmiştir. Bu iki yöntemin sürdürülebilir olmadığı anlaşıldığı noktada demokrasiye ihtiyaç duyulmuştur. Demokrasi belirli bir kişi ya da grubun yönetimine karşın halkın yönetimini esas almaktadır. Dolayısıyla demokrasi düzeyinin gelişmişliğini halkın katılımı ile ölçebiliriz. Bu katılımın sağlanabilmesi noktasında farklı araçlara ihtiyaç duyulmuştur.

Yerel katılımın çeşitli avantajları vardır. Yerel katılım ile birlikte halkın ihtiyaçları belirlenmekte ve mevcut kaynaklar daha etkin kullanılabilir. Katılım sayesinde artan hesap verilebilirlik ile meşruiyet olgusu değer kazanmaktadır. Yönetici sınıfın kendi istekleri doğrultusunda karar alması ve hareket etmesi engellenmektedir. Farklı görüşlere sahip gruplar ortak amaç doğrultusunda bir araya geldiği için birbirlerinin görüşlerini dinlemektedirler. Göz ardı edilen herhangi bir hususun olmaması bakımından bu süreç değerlidir. Bu sayede sunulan hizmetin kalitesinde ve insanların teknik bilgi düzeyinde artış gerçekleşir. Bir konuya ilişkin bilgi sahibi olan insanlardan fikir alınması ile hem katılım süreci aktörleri kişisel bilgi düzeyinin geliştirir hem de sunulan hizmetin kalitesi artar. Katılım ile birlikte vatandaşların taleplerini doğrudan iletmesine fırsat verildiği için sunulacak olan hizmetlerin taleplere ilişkin olması sağlanır. Bu sayede daha hızlı, etkin ve amaca uygun kararların alınarak uygulanması sağlanır. Katılımın bu gibi avantajları bulunmasına karşın gelişmesini engelleyici bazı durumlar da vardır. Yönetim grupları tarafından sahip olunan kaynaklar vatandaşların ihtiyaçlarından ziyade etki

alanı daha güçlü olarak görülen Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarına verilmektedir. Bu vatandaş odaklı katılım açısından bir engeldir. Bir bölgede yaşayan kişilerden ziyade bir konu hakkında örgütlenmiş toplulukların fikirleri ön planda tutulmaktadır.

Yerel katılım açısından bir bölgede yönetimi sağlayan idari birime ek başka aktörler de bulunmaktadır. Bu aktörler; belirli bir bölgede yaşayan vatandaşlar, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları ve üyeleri, meslek örgütleri ve üyeleri, kamu kuruluşu çalışanları, siyasi parti üyeleri, üniversite yönetiminde görevli kişiler ve muhtarlardır. Katılımın gerçekleşmesi bakımından ise farklı araçlar bulunmaktadır. Danışma kurulları, bireysel başvuru yöntemi, kamuoyu araştırması, referandum, e-belediyeçilik, geri çağırma, veto, proje demokrasisi, kent konseyleri ve mahalle komiteleri bu araçlara örnektir.

Kent konseyleri kendi organizasyon yapısına sahip katılım araçlarındandır. Bünyesinde kadın meclisi, engelliler meclisi, mahalle komiteleri gibi farklı birimleri barındırmaktadır. Kent konseyleri yerel karar alma organlarının çalışmalarını destekleyen kuruluşlardır. Vatandaşları bir araya getirmenin yanında, yönetici sınıf için de rehber niteliğinde çalışmalar gerçekleştirir. Belediyeler ve vatandaşlar arasında köprü görevi üstlenir. Vatandaşların taleplerini kent konseylerinde dile getirmesi akabinde belediyelerin ilgili konularda çalışma gerçekleştirmesi adına kent konseyleri fikir beyan eder. Ek olarak, belediyelere teknik ve mali konularda da danışmanlık hizmeti sunar. Mahalle komiteleri ise kent konseyi bünyesinde kurulmuş olan mahalle ölçeğinde katılımı artırmayı amaçlayan yapılardır. Vatandaşların yaşadıkları mahalle hakkında söz sahibi olmasını sağlar.

Katılım araçlarının varlığı kadar katılım ne ölçüde etkin olduğu da önemlidir. Katılımın etkinliğinin ölçülmesine ilişkin olarak gerçekleştirilecek olan değerlendirme açısından tek bir yöntemin varlığından söz edemeyeceğimiz gibi katılım oranı ve kimlerin katılım gösterdiği hususlarına dikkat ederek bir değerlendirme yapılabileceğini söyleyebiliriz. Yine katılım mekanizmalarının incelenmesi de gerçekleştirilecek değerlendirme için faydalı olacaktır. Gerçekleşen değerlendirme sonunda yerel katılım ile alınacak olan kararlar üzerinde bir etkinin olduğunun gözlemlenmesi önemlidir. Bu sonucun gözlemlenmesi katılım oranının ve katılıma olan güvenin artacağı anlamına gelir. Ek olarak, vatandaşların aldıkları hizmetlere ilişkin memnuniyet dereceleri de artacaktır. Kısaca özetlemek istersek, yalnızca yerel

katılımın sağlanması için geliştirilen katılım mekanizmalarının varlığının tek başına bir anlamı bulunmamaktadır. Geliştirilen bu mekanizmaların aynı zamanda alınacak olan kararlar üzerinde etkisinin olması gerekir. Bu özelliklere dikkat edilerek, sahip olunan katılım araçları ve katılımın etkinliği ölçülebilir. Gerçekleştirmiş olduğumuz çalışmada da mülakat sorularının belirlenmesi ve alan çalışması süreçlerinde bu hususlara dikkat edilmiştir.

Türkiye’de belediyelerin karar alma süreçleri bakımından yerel katılım imkanının yasal dayanağını 5393 sayılı Belediye Kanunu sağlar. Bu kanun, vatandaşların belediye karar ve hizmetlerine katılma hakkı olduğuna atıfta bulunur. Benzer bir şekilde kent konseylerinin yasal dayanağı da 5393 sayılı kanundur. Bu dokümana ek olarak Kent Konseyi Yönetmelikleri de bulunmaktadır. Bu yönetmeliklerde kent konseylerinin görevleri açıklanmaktadır. Yerel düzeyde katılımı sağlamak, verilecek olan kararların ve yapılacak olan hizmetlerin ortak bir aklın ürünü olmasını sağlamak, demokrasi kültürünü geliştirmek, kaynakları etkin kullanmak, sivil toplumun gelişmesini sağlamak, toplumun farklı bileşenlerini katılım sürecine dahil etmek ve şehir yönetiminde şeffaflık ilkesine uygun hareket etmek bu görevlerdendir.

Kent konseyleri Gündem 21etkisiyle gelişen Yerel Gündem 21’in bir ürünüdür. Gündem 21 ile ortaya atılan sürdürülebilir kalkınma fikri yerel yönetimlerin de güçlenmesini gerektirmiştir. Bunun üzerine geliştirilmiş olan Yerel Gündem 21’de karar alma mekanizmalarının yeniden şekillenmesi, farklı kesimler arasında iş birliğinin sağlanması amaçlanmıştır. Alınan kararların farklı görüşe sahip insanların ortak ürünü olması istenmiştir. Türkiye’de de bu doğrultuda gelişmeler yaşanmış ve Yerel Gündem 21 programının uygulama örnekleri gözlemlenmiştir. Sonraki dönemlerde Yerel Gündem 21 ile geliştirilen, katılımı destekleyici yapılar kent konseyi adını alarak varlıklarını sürdürmüştür.

Kanunların kent konseylerine tanımış olduğu yetkiler, kent konseylerinin danışma mekanizması olarak hareket etmesi yönündedir. Kent konseyinin alacağı kararlar tavsiye niteliğindedir. Alınan kararları bir nevi yönetime sunulan öneri olarak da değerlendirmek yanlış olmaz. Kent konseyi tarafından dile getirilen bir talebin yerine getirilmesi için yönetim kimi zaman harekete geçerken kimi zaman da herhangi bir

aksiyon almayabilir. Bu durumda yönetimde söz sahibi olan grup için herhangi bir yaptırım bulunmamaktadır.

Kent konseyleri açısından vatandaşların katılıma karşı isteksiz tutum sergilemeleri bir sorundur. Kent Konseyi Yönetmeliği'nde belediyelerin kent konseylerine kaynak aktarmasının gerektiği belirtilmiş olmasına karşın bu sürecin hangi koşullarda ve ne şekilde olacağına ilişkin detay bilgilere yer verilmemiştir. Bu husus kent konseyleri için bir belirsizliğe sebep olmakta ve yapıyı olumsuz etkilemektedir. Ekonomik açıdan özgür bir yapıya sahip olmamaları sebebiyle vatandaşların yerel katılım konusundaki düşünceleri olumsuz etkilenmektedir. Ek olarak, bir önceki paragrafta belirtilmiş olan kent konseylerinin yaptırım gücünün bulunmaması da vatandaşlar özelinde bu yapıların güçsüz olarak değerlendirilmesine yol açmaktadır. Kent konseylerinde görev alan yönetici kadronun sorumluluk bilincinin artması, kent konseylerinin herhangi bir kuruma ihtiyacı olmadan özgürce hareket edebilecek imkana sahip olması bu sorunlar açısından bir çözüm olarak düşünülebilir.

Kent konseylerine ilişkin Türkiye'de gerçekleşen uygulama örneklerinden biri de Bursa ilinin Nilüfer ilçesine aittir. Nilüfer Kent Konseyi kadınların, gençlerin ve toplumun diğer kesimlerinin yönetime katılımını destekleyen bir yapı olmakla beraber geliştirmiş olduğu Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi ile Nilüfer Belediyesi'ni diğer belediyelerden ayırmaktadır. Nilüfer Kent Konseyi 24.10.2009 tarihinde kurulmuştur. Görevlerine ilişkin detay bilgiler ise 2009 tarihli Nilüfer Kent Konseyi Çalışma Yönergesi ile açıklanmıştır. İlgili yönergenin altıncı maddesinde Nilüfer Kent Konseyi'nin görevleri açıklanmakla birlikte konseyin çalışma esaslarına ise yedinci maddede yer verilmiştir. Yedinci maddeye göre, Nilüfer Kent Konseyi'nin kentlerin yaşanabilir bir geleceğe taşınmasına katkıda bulunmak, uluslararası sözleşmelerde bulunan ve kent yaşamını ilgilendiren konulara ilişkin ilkeleri uygulamak, katılıma dayalı fikir birliğini benimsemek gibi çalışma esasları bulunmaktadır.

Yönergenin on ikinci maddesi ise Nilüfer Kent Konseyi'nin faaliyet alanlarına ilişkin konularda alt birimler oluşturabileceği vurgulanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, 2009 yılında konsey tarafından Mahalle Komiteleri Projeleri hayata geçirilmiştir. Söz konusu proje öncesinde Türkiye genelinde mahalle ölçeğinde herhangi bir yerel yönetim birimi bulunmuyordu. Ancak, Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi ile birlikte yerel

yönetim anlayışı mahalle ölçeğine indirgenmiştir. Güncel durumda Nilüfer Belediyesi sınırları içerisinde altmış dört tane mahalle komitesi bulunmakla birlikte mahalle komitelerine ilişkin genel bilgiler Nilüfer Kent Konseyi Mahalle Komiteleri İşleyiş Yönergesi ile açıklanmıştır. Bu yönergenin birinci maddesinde mahalle komitelerinin amacının yerel yönetim ve karar alma süreçlerine vatandaşların katılımını sağlamak olduğu bilgisi yer almaktadır. Mahalle komitelerinin gönüllülük esasına dayanan yapılar olduğu belirtilmektedir. Beşinci maddede ise mahalle komitelerinin çalışma esasları; mahallenin ihtiyaçlarını ve önceliklerini belirlemek, mahalleye ilişkin sorunlara çözüm öneriler geliştirmek, toplumun farklı kesimlerinin kent yaşamına katılımını sağlayacak eğitimler düzenlemek, demokrasi bilincini geliştirmek, kent konseyi ve çalışma grupları ile iş birliği yapmak olarak açıklanmaktadır. Mahalle komitelerinin ilkeleri olan şeffaflık, gönüllülük, tarafsızlık ve evrensel insan haklarına saygı ise altıncı maddede yer almaktadır. Yönergenin yedinci maddesinde mahalle komitelerinin üyelerinin belirlenmesine ilişkin kriterler açıklanmaktadır. Mahalle komitelerinin seçilmiş üyelerinin, doğal üyelerinin ve yürütme kurulunun nasıl oluşacağı bu maddeden anlaşılmaktadır. Mahalle komitelerinin ne sıklıkla toplanacağı, kimlerin toplantılara katılacağı ve kararların ne şekilde alınacağı gibi işleyişe ilişkin bilgiler Nilüfer Kent Konseyi Mahalle Komiteleri İşleyiş Yönergesinin sekizinci maddesinde açıklanmaktadır. Ek olarak, yönergenin dokuzuncu maddesinde mahalle komitelerinin Kent Konseyi Genel Kurulu'nda temsil hakkı bulunduğu bilgisine yer verilmektedir.

Bu çalışma Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından hayata geçirilen yerel yönetime katılım araçları hakkında bilgi sağlanması adına gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilmiş olan saha çalışmasında toplanan veriler analiz edilmiştir. Saha çalışmasında yapılan mülakatlar Nilüfer Belediyesi Kent Konseyi'nde 19-29 Eylül tarihleri arasında, Nilüfer Belediyesi Kent Konseyi üyeleri, idari personel ve mahalle komitesi temsilcilerinden oluşan yirmi üç kişilik bir grupla gerçekleşmiştir. Yirmi üç kişilik grupta on kadın, on üç erkek bulunmaktadır. Bu kişilerden beş tanesi 20-30 yaş arasında, üç tanesi 30-40 yaş arasında ve on beş tanesi ise 40 yaş üzerindedir. Mülakata katılım gösteren kişilerden bir tanesi ilkokul, altı tanesi lise, on iki tanesi üniversite ve dört tanesi ise lisansüstü program mezunudur.

Gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar ile elde edilen veriler nitel ve nicel yöntemler ile değerlendirilmiştir. Verilere ilişkin analizler yapılarak yerel katılımın durumu hakkında bilgi edinmek amaçlanmıştır. Mahalle Komiteleri Projesinin diğer belediyeler için örnek teşkil edebileceği düşünülerek, bu projede yer alan üyelerle görüşme yapılmasına özen gösterilmiştir. Mülakatlara katılım gösteren vatandaşlara demografik özelliklere ilişkin soruların yanında sekiz tane açık uçlu ve on altı tane de Likert ölçeğine uygun sorular sorularak Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde yerel katılım hakkında bilgi edinilmiştir.

Görüşme yapılan kişiler için belediye karar alma süreçlerine katılımın ne anlama geldiğini öğrenmek adına “Belediye karar alma süreçlerine katılım sözü size neleri çağırıyor? Aklınıza ne geliyor?” sorusu sorulmuştur. Gelen cevaplar bu ifadenin genel olarak iki farklı anlam taşıdığı yönünde olmuştur. İlk olarak, katılım sürecinde yer alan mahalle komiteleri gibi aracı birimlerin akıllarına geldiğini söylemişlerdir. İkinci olarak ise belediyenin bir karar almadan önce vatandaşların fikrini almasının ve bu sayede onlara değer vermesinin akıllarına geldiğini söylemişlerdir. Ek olarak, mülakata katılan kişiler tarafından karar alma süreçlerine katılım sözünün farkındalık, sorumluluk, birlikte karar vermek ve hak kavramlarını çağrıştırdığı bilgisi alınmıştır.

Nilüfer Belediyesi'nde yerel katılımın sağlanabilmesi adına farklı katılım araçları bulunmaktadır. Bu katılım araçlarından hangisinin diğerlerine oranla daha etkili olduğunu öğrenmek için “Nilüfer Belediyesi'ndeki en etkili yerel katılım yöntemi nedir?” sorusu sorulmuştur. Katılımcılar tarafından bu soruya farklı cevaplar verilmekle birlikte ön plana çıkan cevap mahalle komiteleri olmuştur. Mahalle komitelerinin varlığı sayesinde vatandaşların yaşadıkları alana ilişkin sahip olduğu fikirleri doğrudan ifade edebilme hakkında sahip olduğu belirtilmiştir. Bu yanıtta ek olarak, katılımcılar tarafından mahalle komitelerinin Nilüfer Belediyesi Kent Konseyi çatısı altında meydana gelmesi sebebiyle en etkin katılım aracının Nilüfer Belediyesi Kent Konseyi olduğu da ifade edilmiştir. Kent konseyine bağlı çalışma gruplarının da etki düzeyini artırdığı vurgulanmıştır. Bu cevaplara ek olarak, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlarının varlığı ve bu kuruluşlarla hareket etmenin en etkili katılım yöntemi olduğu yönünde de görüş bildiren katılımcılar olmuştur.

Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından yerel katılımın artması için geliştirilen mekanizmalar dikkate alınarak, katılım düzeyinin istenilen seviyede olup olmadığını öğrenmek amacıyla “Nilüfer Belediyesi’ndeki yerel katılım düzeyini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Yeterli buluyor musunuz?” sorusu katılımcılara yöneltilmiştir. Katılımcılar genel olarak katılım düzeyinin istenilen düzeyde olmadığını ve yeterli olmadığını söylemişlerdir. Katılımın artması amacıyla yapılanların faydalı olmasına karşın mevcut yerel yönetim yapılarının katılım açısından bir engel olduğu ifade edilmiştir. Bu yapıların yenilenmesi gerektiği belirtilmiştir. Yapılanların yeni olması ve vatandaşların katılıma ilişkin bilgisinin eksik olmasının da katılım düzeyinin istenilen düzeye ulaşmasını engellediği söylenmiştir. Buna karşın, görüşülen kişilerden Nilüfer Belediyesi’ndeki katılım düzeyinin yeterli seviyede olduğunu belirten de olmuştur.

Nilüfer Belediyesi’nde yerel katılımın belediye hizmetleri üzerindeki etkisini anlayabilmek adına “Nilüfer Belediyesinde yerel katılımın, belediye hizmetlerine etkisini değerlendirir misiniz? Etkili olabiliyor mu? Ne açıdan?” sorusu mülakata katılanlara yöneltilmiştir. Gelen cevaplar genel olarak iki şekilde olmuştur. Katılımcıların bir bölümü yerel katılımın belediye hizmetleri üzerinde etkili olduğunu belirtirken, diğer bölümü ise yerel katılımın kısmi bir etkiye sahip olduğunu söylemiştir. Etkili olduğunu düşünenler yerel katılımın belediyenin yeni proje üretmesine ve bu projede vatandaşların isteklerini dikkate almasını sağladığını, kısmi bir etkiye sahip olduğunu düşünenler bütçe ve stratejik plan gibi unsurlar sebebiyle yerel katılımın etkisinin sınırlandığını ve gün sonunda yapılacak olanların belediyenin isteklerine göre belirlendiğini ifade etmiştir.

Nilüfer Belediyesi’nde yerel katılımın hangi alanlarda etkili olduğu hakkında bilgi edinebilmek amacıyla görüşme gerçekleştirilen kişilere “En çok hangi konularda yerel katılım Nilüfer belediye yönetiminin aldığı kararları etkilemektedir?” sorusu sorulmuştur. Bu soruya gelen cevaplar içerisinde park, bahçe gibi çevre düzenlemelerine ilişkin olan alanlar ön plana çıkmıştır. Bu alanların dışında; yol ve asfalt yapımı, spor alanları, sosyal tesisler, ibadethaneler ve eğitim alanlarının inşası ile çevre temizlik faaliyetlerine ilişkin kararlarda yerel katılımın etkisi olduğu belirtilmiştir.

Nilüfer Belediyesi'ni Türkiye'de öncü belediye konumuna getiren Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi'ne ilişkin vatandaşların tutumunu öğrenebilmek adına “Mahalle komiteleri uygulamasını nasıl buluyorsunuz?” sorusu mülakat katılımcılarına sorulmuştur. Bu soruya istinaden, mahalle komiteleri uygulamasının Nilüfer Belediyesi'ni diğer belediyelerden ayırdığı, demokrasinin yerelden yükselmesine aracılık ettiği ve insanlara yaşadıkları bölgelere ilişkin karar alma süreçlerine katılma fırsatı sunduğu belirtilmiştir. Bu uygulamanın henüz yolun başında olduğu ve gerekli özenin gösterilmesi ise gelişeceği de vurgulanmıştır. Bu konu hakkında detaylı bilgi edinebilmek için katılımcılara ek olarak Likert ölçekli sorularda sorulmuştur. Likert ölçekli sorulara gelen cevaplardan, vatandaşlar için mahalle komitelerinin etkin bir katılım aracı olduğu, yerel halkı temsil ettiği, yerel konularda aktif bir şekilde rol aldığı görülmüştür. Mahalle komitelerine ilişkin yeterli farkındalığın olmadığı yönünde görüşün bulunduğu da anlaşılmıştır. Ek olarak, mahalle komitelerinin belediyenin alt birimi olarak çalışması gerektiği konusunda katılımcıların ayrıma düştüğü, katılımcıların bir bölümü tarafından bu durumun mahalle komitelerinin özgürlüğünü kısıtlayıcı etkide bulunacağı, diğer bir bölümü tarafından ise kaynak sağlama açısından olumlu etkide bulunacağı dile getirilmiştir. Mahalle komitelerinin etki alanlarının istenilen düzeyde olmakla birlikte gelişmeye açık olduğu da belirtilmiştir. Mahalle komitelerinin görev alanının ise danışma merkezine benzer olması gerektiği söylenmiştir. Proje dahilindeki yapıların üyeleri bakımından ise sadece seçilmiş üyelerin olması gerektiği fikrine karşı çıkmıştır. Bu durumun komitelerdeki çeşitliliği olumsuz etkileyeceği ifade edilmiştir. Mahalle komitelerine ilişkin yasal düzenlemeler hakkında ise katılımcılar tarafından yasal düzenlemelerin gerçekleştirilmesi gerektiği yönünde fikir beyan edilmiştir.

Yerel katılım açısından karşılaşılan sorunların neler olduğu hakkında bilgi edinebilmek adına mülakat katılımcılarına “Yerel katılım konusunda karşılaşılan problemler neler?” sorusu yöneltilmiştir. Herhangi bir sorun olmadığını dile getiren cevaplar olduğu gibi bazı sorunların bulunduğunu dile getirenler de olmuştur. Bu sorunlar; insan kaynaklı olan katılım fikrine inanmama, örgütlenme fikrine karşı olumsuz tutum sergileme, katılım konusunda yeterli bilgiye sahip olamama, demokrasiye olan inancın düşük olması ile insan kaynaklı olmayan yasal düzenlemelerin katılım konusunda yetersiz kalması ve yerel katılımın herhangi bir yaptırım gücüne sahip olmaması olarak belirtilmiştir.

Yerel katılımın istenilen düzeye ve etkiye sahip olabilmesi için birtakım aksiyonların alınması gerekebilir. Bu aksiyonların neler olabileceğini görebilmek adına görüşme yapılan kişilere “Sizce yerel katılımın geliştirilmesi ve katılımın daha etkili olabilmesi için neler yapılabilir?” sorusu sorulmuştur. Bu soru üzerine katılımcılardan yerel katılıma ilişkin eğitimlerin verilmesinin faydalı olabileceğini söyleyenler olmuştur. Eğitimler dışında, broşürler, televizyon ve sosyal medya araçları ile yerel katılım hakkında bilgilendirmelerin yapılabileceği de söylenmiştir. Yerel yönetim birimlerinde vatandaşların istekleri doğrultusunda kararların alınması, karar alma süreçlerine kamu kurumları ve üniversitelerin dahil edilmesi, karar alma süreçlerinin hızlandırılması ve finansal kaynakların yeterli düzeye çıkartılmasının faydalı olabileceği de dile getirilmiştir.

Mahalle Komiteleri Projesi’nden bağımsız olarak Nilüfer Belediyesi’nin vatandaşlara yönelik gerçekleştirmiş olduğu uygulamalara karşı vatandaşların tutumlarının ne yönde olduğunu öğrenebilmek adına mülakat katılımcılarına Likert ölçekli sorular yöneltilmiştir. Özetle, Nilüfer Belediyesi’nin hizmetlerinde sosyal medya araçları da dahil olmak üzere teknolojiye faydalanması ve faaliyetleri hakkında kamuoyunu bilgilendirilmesi konularında memnuniyetin bulunduğu anlaşılmıştır. Katılım araçları ile sayesinde talep ve isteklerin zaman kaybı olmadan Nilüfer Belediyesi’ne iletilmesinin sağlandığını düşünen katılımcılar olduğu gibi, bu durum hakkında tarafsız kalan ve bu durumun sağlanmadığını dile getirenler de olmuştur. Nilüfer Belediyesi çalışanlarının vatandaşlara yardım etme konusunda istekli olmaları ve yapılacak olan hizmetler hakkında belediyenin vatandaşları bilgilendirmesi konularından memnun olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Yerel katılım araçları sayesinde şikayetlerin ilgili birimlere hızlıca ve rahatlıkla iletilmesinden memnun olduğu da görülmüştür. Son olarak, belediye tarafından vatandaşların görüşlerine değer verildiği, vatandaşların fikirleri doğrultusunda aksiyon alınmasının vatandaşları değerli hissettirdiği bilgisine ulaşılmıştır.

Gerçekleşen mülakatlar sonrası mahalle komitelerinin vatandaşların isteklerini dile getirebilmelerine aracılık ettiği, insanların fikirlerini özgürce ifade etmesini sağladığı, yerel katılım açısından en etkili araç olarak görüldükleri anlaşılmıştır. Ancak, eski yönetim yapısına anlayışıyla inşa edilmiş olan yapılar ve eski yönetim anlayışına sahip yöneticiler mahalle komiteleri için bir engel olarak görülmüşlerdir.

Yerel katılımın gücünün artması adına insanların katılıma ilişkin bilgi düzeyinin artırılması ve gerekli yasal düzenlemelerin yapılmasının olumlu bir etkisinin olacağı sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu çalışma, Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından uygulanmakta olan yerel katılım araçlarının başka belediyeler tarafından uygulanması durumunda ne gibi avantajlar sağlayacağını bilinmesi açısından öneme sahiptir. Bu avantajların neler olduğu aşağıdaki şekilde özetlenebilir:

- Karar alma süreçlerinde vatandaşların yer almasıyla birlikte yerel ihtiyaçların tespiti ve karşılanması daha kolay bir şekilde sağlanacaktır.
- Katılımın sağlanması ile birlikte demokrasi seviyesi olumlu yönde gelişecektir.
- Vatandaşların yaşadıkları bölge hakkında söz sahibi olması, onların sorumluluk bilincini artıracak ve kendilerini yönetim açısından değerli hissettirecektir.
- Mahalle komiteleri ile birlikte vatandaşlar fikirlerini özgürce ve doğrudan yönetim birimlerine iletebilecektir.

Bu çalışmada bazı sınırlar karşımıza çıkmıştır. Yerel katılım araçlarından biri olan ve bu çalışmada yer verilen mahalle komiteleri oldukça yeni bir uygulamadır. Bu sebeple de mahalle komiteleri hakkında literatürde çok fazla kaynak bulunmamaktadır. Türkiye genelinde tek uygulama örneğinin Nilüfer Belediyesi tarafından gerçekleştirilmiş olması sebebiyle Türkiye’de uygulanmakta olan başka bir mahalle komitesi baz alınarak karşılaştırmalı analiz yapılma şansı da yoktur.

İlerleyen dönemlerde benzer projelerin başka belediyeler tarafından hayata geçirilmesi mümkündür. Gerçekleştirmiş olduğumuz bu çalışma hayata geçirilen yeni projelerin değerlendirilmesine ve haklarında karşılaştırmalı çalışma yapılabilmesine fırsat vermektedir.

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