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A NEW INSTITUTIONAL MODEL IN TURKISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS ON AREA PRESIDENCIES

TÜRK KAMU YÖNETİMİNDE YENİ BİR KURUMSAL MODEL: ALAN BAŞKANLIKLARI ÜZERİNE YAPISAL BİR İNCELEME

Adnan KARATAŞ[1]

[1] Asst. Prof. Dr, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Atatürk University, adnan.karatas@atauni.edu.tr, 0000-0003-2399-8013

Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive structural analysis of "Area Presidencies," a relatively new and distinctive institutional model within Turkish public administration, established to manage and protect cultural and natural heritage sites. The significance of the research lies in addressing the institutional ambiguities, governance challenges, and democratic deficits that these entities generate, particularly due to their overlapping duties with existing public institutions. Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilizes a comparative case analysis of Cappadocia, Gallipoli, and Uludağ Area Presidencies, supplemented by international examples such as Stonehenge (UK), Pompeii (Italy), and the Acropolis (Greece). Through document analysis of legal frameworks, organizational structures, and administrative practices, the research critically evaluates the positioning, functioning, and authority conflicts surrounding Area Presidencies. The findings reveal that these entities, while aiming to enhance heritage protection and administrative efficiency, exacerbate institutional overlaps, weaken local governance, and generate jurisdictional confusion. The study concludes by proposing legal and administrative reforms to clarify institutional boundaries, strengthen inter-institutional coordination, and enhance participatory governance. By highlighting an overlooked dimension of Area Presidencies, the research contributes to both the theoretical understanding and practical improvement of Türkiye's public administration system.

Keywords: Public Administration Organization, Area Presidencies, Institutional Ambiguity, Administrative Integrity

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de kamu yönetimi yapısı içinde kültürel ve doğal miras alanlarının korunması ve yönetilmesi amacıyla kurulan ve görece yeni bir kurumsal model olan "Alan Başkanlıkları"nı kapsamlı bir yapısal analiz çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Araştırmanın önemi, Alan Başkanlıklarının mevcut kamu kurumlarıyla örtüşen görev ve yetkilerinin yarattığı kurumsal belirsizlik, yönetişim sorunları ve demokratik meşruiyet eksikliklerini ortaya koymasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Nitel araştırma yöntemine dayanan çalışmada, Kapadokya, Gelibolu ve Uludağ Alan Başkanlıkları örnek olay analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiş; ayrıca İngiltere'de Stonehenge, İtalya'da Pompeii ve Yunanistan'da Atina Akropolis'i gibi uluslararası örneklerle karşılaştırmalı değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında yasal düzenlemeler, kurumsal yapılar ve idari uygulamalar belge analizi yoluyla derinlemesine analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, Alan Başkanlıklarının kültürel mirasın korunması ve idari etkinliğin artırılması hedeflerine rağmen, mevcut kurumsal yapılarla yetki çakışmaları yarattığını, yerel yönetimlerin etkinliğini zayıflattığını ve yetki alanları konusunda belirsizlik ürettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmada, bu yapısal sorunların çözümü için kurumsal sınırların açık şekilde tanımlanması, kurumlar arası koordinasyonun güçlendirilmesi ve katılımcı yönetişim mekanizmalarının geliştirilmesine yönelik hukuki ve idari reform önerileri sunulmaktadır. Alan Başkanlıklarının mevcut literatürde yeterince ele alınmayan bu yönünün derinlemesine incelenmesi, hem teorik anlamda Türk kamu yönetimi alanına katkı sağlamakta hem de uygulamaya dönük yapısal iyileştirmelere zemin hazırlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamu Yönetimi, Alan Başkanlıkları, Kurumsal Belirsizlik, İdari Bütünlük

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration systems, though shaped by varying political regimes, generally operate on the principle of the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches (Montesquieu, 2021). Within this framework, the executive branch encompasses the realm of public administration, which is responsible for implementing public policies and delivering public services (Goodnow, 2017). In Türkiye, the structure of public administration reflects the characteristics of a unitary state, with a predominantly centralized organization, yet includes local governments and functionally autonomous entities that contribute to the provision of public services (Helling et al., 2005).

This study aims to examine the institutional role and positioning of Area Presidencies—a relatively new administrative phenomenon in Türkiye—within the broader context of Turkish public administration. Initially developed in response to the processes of inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, these bodies represent a departure from traditional administrative structures and bring with them a set of legal, organizational, and democratic ambiguities. The study investigates the rationale behind their establishment, their legal basis, organizational structure, financial models, and decision-making mechanisms. Furthermore, it interrogates the extent to which these entities align with or diverge from the principles of local democracy, participation, and governance.

The significance of this research stems from its critical inquiry into how new institutional forms—emerging at the intersection of heritage preservation and administrative reform—reshape the conventional boundaries of state authority. Area Presidencies exemplify hybrid organizational models that transcend the binary opposition of centralization versus decentralization. However, they also raise concerns regarding legal clarity, accountability, and the weakening of local government authority in heritage management. In this regard, the study contributes to ongoing debates on administrative restructuring and participatory governance in the field of public administration.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, involving an in-depth analysis of the relevant legal texts, regulatory frameworks, and institutional documents. It focuses specifically on three cases—Cappadocia, Gallipoli, and Uludağ Area Presidencies—through a case study methodology. A comparative dimension is also incorporated by examining area management practices in other countries, including the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, and China.

The study is structured around three key propositions. First, Area Presidencies represent hybrid administrative entities that do not conform to the conventional central-local governance dichotomy, but rather operate with functional autonomy while bypassing elected local bodies. Second, while these structures have the potential to enhance administrative efficiency in heritage protection, they simultaneously pose risks to local democratic participation and accountability. Third, ambiguities regarding their legal status and institutional mandate challenge the principle of administrative coherence and may lead to organizational fragmentation within the public administration system.

In light of these considerations, the study seeks to analyze the institutional functions, governance implications, and legal status of Area Presidencies, ultimately offering theoretical and practical policy recommendations for improving their effectiveness and democratic legitimacy.

2. THE STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN TURKIYE

Public administration encompasses various dimensions, primarily viewed in three key aspects: art, academic discipline, and profession (Lynn, 1996). However, it is often examined through its structural dimension, referring to the state's organizational framework. Structurally, public administration represents the executive arm of the state, responsible for implementing public policies and enforcing laws. To fulfill these duties, states rely on national and local organizations, ensuring the stability of both the state and social order (Kettl, 2015). The continuity of state and society depends on the efficient functioning of public administration.

The state serves to meet the collective needs of its citizens and protect public interests within national borders. This is achieved through two primary organizational principles. The first, centralized administration, involves the execution of national public services by organs under the central government, especially those impractical at the local level. The second, decentralization, involves regional and local services (such as science, culture, and trade) being managed by autonomous units outside the central hierarchy.

Regardless of political systems, all countries structure their governance based on two organizational principles: centralization and decentralization (Faguet, 2014, p. 2). No state relies solely on one model, but adapts these principles according to their social, economic, cultural, political, and historical contexts (Karataş, 2019). Consequently, some states prioritize centralized governance, while others emphasize decentralization, or strive for a balance between both. Typically, as democratization and economic development increase, there is a trend toward

strengthening decentralization. Centralized governance leads to the creation of public institutions like ministries, while decentralization fosters autonomous bodies such as local governments and federated entities (Ateş, 2022).

The Republic of Türkiye is based on the principle of separation of powers, with the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches functioning independently, balanced by checks and balances (Kabasakal, 2019). The executive branch comprises two main components: the political wing and the administrative structure, the latter implementing decisions of the former. Public administration, distinct from the political wing, is divided into centralized and decentralized governance.

Türkiye's public administration operates under two primary categories: central government and decentralized institutions. The central government, also referred to as "general administration," oversees fundamental services nationwide (Genç, 1998). This structure includes central and provincial organizations of ministries, which are further divided into "provincial," "district," and "regional" levels. Additionally, auxiliary and subordinate bodies support the central government (Eryılmaz, 2019). Organizing and executing all public services solely through central administration often proves inefficient and ineffective. To enhance administrative efficiency, foster participation, promote democratic values, mitigate the negative effects of excessive centralization, and provide more tailored solutions to local needs, decentralized institutions have been structured independently from the central government. Decentralized organizations are classified into two main categories: geographical and functional decentralization. Geographical decentralization refers to local governments, while functional decentralization includes entities such as universities, state economic enterprises, regulatory and supervisory bodies, and professional organizations with public institution characteristics (Eryılmaz, 2019).

The organizational structure of Turkish public administration, as outlined above, aligns with the unitary nature of the country's political system. Article 123 of the Turkish Constitution enshrines the principle of administrative unity. However, the system is predominantly centralized. Even many decentralized institutions operate under the central government's framework as bodies affiliated with, or associated with, ministries. For instance, independent regulatory authorities are often related to ministries that oversee similar domains.

This study will analyze the position that area administrations currently hold and should ideally hold within this organizational framework. Consequently, the broader organizational structure described above will be further examined under specific sections.

3. THE CONCEPT, OBJECTIVES AND PRACTICE OF AREA MANAGEMENT

There are three primary components involved in the management of cultural heritage sites. The first is the area subject to management, referred to as the "Management Area." The second component is "Site Management," which encompasses the entirety of managerial actions related to the site's protection, including the methods, stakeholders, objectives, and timelines for safeguarding the site. The third element is the "Management Plan," designed to ensure the effective and efficient execution of area management and to coordinate all related activities (Güler & Ekinci, 2010, p. 2).

Site management is grounded in interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder conservation efforts, which incorporate legal, administrative, and financial dimensions. The core objective of this approach is to facilitate the generation of knowledge across various disciplines, promote public participation through the dissemination of this knowledge, and systematically manage developments in a structured and planned manner (TMMOB, 2008, pp. 219-220). Functioning as a coordination platform, site management facilitates communication among the institutions responsible for cultural heritage sites, local communities, and temporary users of the site. Moreover, site management operates as an administrative mechanism without establishing a new local administrative unit (Güler & Ekinci, 2010, p. 3).

The "Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Importance: Burra Charter" underscores the significance of site management for conservation efforts. Article 2, titled "Conservation and Management," highlights the importance of preserving areas of cultural value, emphasizing that the purpose of conservation is to safeguard cultural assets without loss. It further stresses the importance of historical site management as a crucial task and calls for the careful protection of cultural areas to ensure they are not exposed to risk (Öz & Güner, 2011, p. 139).

The concept of site management emerged to safeguard assets in environments requiring protection, minimize risks to their preservation, and ensure these areas are transmitted to future generations as living heritage. Since the 1950s, increasing urbanization, information exchange, and capital flows have posed threats to these areas, necessitating the development of specialized protection strategies. Consequently, site management and management plans are formulated to mitigate negative impacts and ensure effective conservation of these protected areas (Dinçer, 2013). In this context, site management serves as a proactive approach designed to resolve or preempt potential issues.

The principal objective of site management is to oversee the processes of identifying sites in accordance with international standards, preparing and implementing management plans, and monitoring and updating them as necessary (Ulusan, 2016, p. 375). However, the definition, importance, conservation, and management of cultural heritage often spark debates (Lopez-Guzman et al., 2018, p. 193). The protection and management of such areas are shaped by legal frameworks and philosophical approaches to cultural heritage, which differ across countries. The efforts undertaken in the UK and Denmark during the 1970s, when cultural asset management became a key focus, represent some of the earliest initiatives in heritage site management. These early efforts approached heritage management, conservation, and spatial planning in an integrated manner. For instance, in Denmark, a 100-meter conservation zone was established around monuments, creating a link between these monuments and their physical environment (Kristiansen, 1998, p. 116).

The perspective on site management has undergone significant changes over time. In the "classical period" (1800s–1970s), site management was largely focused on managing historical and cultural areas for visitors. In the "modern period" (1970s–2000s), the focus shifted towards managing historical sites with the local community in mind. Since the 2000s, the prevailing understanding of site management has been broadened to include social, economic, and ecological values (Ervin et al., 2010, p. 11). These paradigm shifts in the management of cultural heritage sites necessitate different management units or approaches. Accordingly, during the classical period, area management was primarily the responsibility of the central government. In the modern period, local communities began to play an integral role alongside the central government. In the contemporary model, there is a governance-focused approach where stakeholder participation is prioritized, reflecting a more collaborative management framework.

Site management plays a crucial role in systematically gathering all relevant information about a given region and establishing priorities through a sound decision-making framework. This allows for the management of cultural heritage sites to be approached holistically, ensuring the true value of the site is accurately identified and effectively communicated to the public and other stakeholders. By uniting all parties involved in conservation efforts, disparate initiatives can be consolidated, and strategies can be developed to monitor and manage potential changes within the site. In this context, when unexpected situations arise, decisions can be made in accordance with a pre-established plan, rather than relying on ad-hoc solutions. Additionally, comprehensive studies and ongoing political developments can help prevent problems before they occur (Bahçeci, 2004, pp. 10-11).

Upon examining the definitions and explanations of site management, it becomes evident that this approach involves the creation of a designated management area for cultural heritage sites, along with the implementation of a step-by-step management plan for the oversight of that area. Moreover, processes such as the continuous execution of this plan, its revision as necessary in response to changing conditions, and regular auditing to ensure it remains aligned with its intended purpose, are all integral components of effective site management.

4. AREA MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN TURKIYE

When considering the protection of cultural heritage and historical sites in Türkiye, inconsistencies in the legal and organizational structures are particularly notable. A review of the relevant institutions reveals a landscape characterized by organizational ambiguity. Nevertheless, even within this framework, it is essential to recognize that the most effective approach to resolving these challenges would be through decentralized management structures. Issues may arise due to the central government's reservations in protecting areas or artifacts that are of significant importance and represent the shared heritage of humanity. Therefore, a unified and authorized mechanism is necessary to oversee the management of such sites. Whether this decentralized entity is a municipality or an organization established under special legislation, it is better suited to serve the objectives of preservation and management (Schiavo-Campo & Sundaram, 2000).

In the 2000s, the process of globalization and liberalization, alongside numerous legal reforms in alignment with Türkiye's European Union accession process, and the establishment of the Union of Historic Cities, significantly influenced local governments' adoption of conservation policies (Yürü, 2009, p. 26). During this period, both capital groups and the government recognized the economic potential of cultural heritage in the context of popular tourism, which subsequently raised concerns about balancing heritage conservation with efforts to exploit urban space for profit. In fact, amendments made to conservation legislation in 2004 officially introduced the concept of site management in Türkiye, marking its first formal application in preservation efforts. As a result, new terms such as “management area,” “site management,” and “management plan” entered the conservation discourse (Yürü, 2009, p. 27).

In 2004, the concepts of “management area” and “management plan” were legally defined under Article 1 of Law No. 5226, which amended Law No. 2863. From a legal perspective, area management is generally applied to archaeological and natural heritage sites, i.e., “protected areas.” However, the legislation also promotes a multidimensional approach to conservation, incorporating legal, administrative, and financial considerations, thus pointing towards a multilateral conservation model in the management process. Moreover, the inclusion of

"protected area" within the legal definition of a management area underscores the conceptual and legal alignment with this multilateral conservation approach (Gültekin, 2012, p. 235).

The concept of management areas, within the scope of heritage management, is legally defined as zones requiring protection and management. The "Regulation on the Principles and Guidelines for the Determination and Duties of Management Areas within the Foundation of Site Management and Monumental Works Council," dated November 27, 2005, stipulates that protected areas, historical sites, and interaction zones are managed by the Ministry in consultation with relevant institutions to ensure their preservation, accessibility, and enhancement in their natural integrity. The regulation also highlights the significance of collaboration between central and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in planning and conservation activities. Article 6 of the regulation provides a detailed outline of the process for determining the management area (Gültekin, 2012, p. 238).

When considering the complexity and dynamic nature of natural resources within the scope of area management, it is crucial to acknowledge a wide array of factors, including environmental, economic, ecological, technological, and social dimensions. Equally important is the need for flexible and transparent decision-making processes that take these factors into account (Çolakkadıoğlu, 2012, p. 2). Although various challenges at the administrative, operational, and legal levels in the protection of cultural heritage pose significant obstacles, these issues are considered external to the scope of site management. Thus, the plans and actions taken within area management are evaluated independently of such problems (Ulusan, 2016, p. 389).

The process of area management, which involves defining the scope and developing actionable plans, unfolds in four fundamental stages. The first stage involves conducting analyses, while the second stage focuses on determining the vision, themes, objectives, and strategies for area management, with risk management being supported by the development of guiding projects. In the third stage, action plans and specific projects are prepared, and finally, the master plan's implementation, monitoring, and necessary updates are carried out (Akça, 2017, p. 590). This structured approach allows for the comprehensive management of heritage sites, ensuring that protection strategies are not only designed but also continuously adapted and supervised to address evolving risks and challenges.

In a study presented by Leverington and Harper at the 2000 forest management conference organized by the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Bangkok, management practices at cultural heritage sites were classified into four key categories: protection of natural and cultural resources, promotion of the site and recreational uses, stakeholder relations and participation, and management capacity. The fourth category, management capacity, is particularly critical as it encompasses the resources needed to implement the other three areas, including the budget, personnel, equipment, and organizational structure (Kuvan, 2005, p. 97).

In Türkiye, there are various public institutions responsible for conducting area management activities and implementing the theorized concepts mentioned above. The most prominent and well-known of these are structures established under special laws, particularly for the protection of highly valuable areas. In addition to these, area management structures are also embedded within the organizational frameworks of municipalities. This creates a dual structure in which both central government and local government bodies manage different regions through area administrations.

These two types of management systems, while operating under distinct frameworks—centralized at the national level or decentralized at the local level—sometimes share the same nomenclature. This similarity in names, despite differences in operational scope and geographical responsibility, can lead to confusion. Therefore, a more detailed examination of the characteristics and functions of these two distinct types of area management structures is provided below to clarify their roles.

The centralized area administrations tend to be governed by national legislation and often focus on managing sites of national significance, particularly those with cultural or natural value that demand higher-level protection and coordination. On the other hand, local area administrations function within the municipal framework, dealing more with urban and regional planning, cultural site management within cities, and addressing local community involvement. Each plays a crucial role in heritage conservation and management, but their differing structures and authority levels necessitate clear distinctions in their functions.

4.1. Institutions Established by Special Law under the Name of Area Presidency (Cappadocia, Gelibolu, Uludağ)

Within the framework of "affiliated and related institutions" under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, three Area Presidencies have been established, each governed by its own special law. These presidencies, which include Cappadocia, Gelibolu, and Uludağ, were created based on the Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets

No. 2863 (TBMM, 1983) (Additional Article 2). Their primary objectives are to protect, sustainably maintain, promote, and transfer the historical and cultural heritage elements, as well as geological/geomorphological structures and natural resources, to future generations. Additionally, they are responsible for planning, managing, and supervising these assets within their designated areas.

These area presidencies are recognized as having public legal entity status and are organized as institutional entities under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The appointment process for the heads of these presidencies is specified in Presidential Decree No. 3. According to this decree, the heads of the Cappadocia, Gelibolu, and Uludağ Area Presidencies are appointed for the duration of the President's term. This procedure is similar to that applied to other high-level public managers, including the President of Religious Affairs, the President of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), governors, deputy ministers, ambassadors, rectors, and general managers.

The appointments tend to favor individuals with significant experience in public administration, often including those who have previously served as general managers, civil administrators, or ministry advisors. Among the three presidencies, the Çanakkale Area Manager has served for 10 years, the Cappadocia Area Manager for 5 years, and the Uludağ Area Manager for 1 year. This prolonged tenure indicates that personnel trained within relevant institutions and possessing expertise in cultural heritage management have not yet had the opportunity to ascend to these managerial roles.

Currently, the presidencies are headed by individuals from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism who are recognized experts in their areas. However, the criteria for selecting future managers may evolve to ensure that appointees possess a robust understanding of cultural heritage, management knowledge, and the ability to implement effective management policies responsive to contemporary conditions. Candidates for these managerial positions are expected to have a relevant academic background, typically requiring a bachelor's degree in areas such as architecture, urban and regional planning, archaeology, art history, history, law, public administration, business, or economics from accredited higher education institutions, whether domestic or international.

Notably, the current Presidential Decree No. 3 also allows for the appointment of area heads by the President without strict adherence to specific specialization requirements, which raises questions about the consistency and expertise of leadership within these critical positions.

Since all three Area Presidencies are tasked with the protection of cultural, historical, and natural heritage, their affiliation with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is essential. One of the core responsibilities of this ministry is to “protect historical and cultural assets” (CBK No. 1, Article 277). Consequently, the ministry has established a presidency organization to fulfill this mandate. From an external viewpoint, it may appear that these presidencies function merely as extensions of the central administration, operating within a hierarchical framework where decisions are dictated from above. However, the presidencies are governed by commissions within their own organizational structures. This indicates that they function less like a strictly hierarchical entity and more like a local administrative organization.

The governing commission typically comprises faculty members from universities, representatives from the governor's office, and members from provincial special administrations and municipalities. Since each Area Presidency is established under its own unique legal framework, their organizational structures differ. For instance, while the Cappadocia and Uludağ Area Presidencies operate with area commissions, the Çanakkale Area Presidency employs a coordination board model. Each of these boards or commissions has a varying number of representatives from different institutions, leading to a lack of a standardized, country-wide area management legislation. Instead, the structures are tailored to meet the specific needs of each area management unit.

Another significant aspect to note about these Area Presidencies is that they are situated within regions designated as national or nature parks, which are protected by the General Directorate of National Parks. Before the establishment of these Area Presidencies, specialized institutions affiliated with the ministry were organized to manage locations already under the protection of the general directorate. As a result, the ministry can enhance the protection and utilization of these special areas by delegating responsibilities to these new management forms. The trend of appointing chairpersons from these Area Presidencies to positions within the General Directorate of National Parks over time suggests a potential return to earlier operational practices.

The most important and distinguishing feature of these three presidencies is that the aforementioned commissions include members from diverse units, facilitating a collaborative decision-making process. This approach is reminiscent of city councils within municipalities. Therefore, even though these new management units may not explicitly identify themselves as such, it can be argued that they operate with a governance-oriented understanding, fostering cooperation and stakeholder participation in the management of cultural and natural heritage.

Another significant characteristic of the Area Presidencies is their income structure. Initially, their financial resources are primarily derived from shares allocated from the central budget. This is typical in a highly centralized nation like Türkiye. Additionally, substantial penalties imposed on individuals or entities that damage protected

areas serve as another source of revenue. For instance, unauthorized construction within the Cappadocia region incurs a hefty fine of one million liras. Furthermore, income generated from the management and operation of these areas, such as cultural tours and museum operations, also contributes to the overall revenue of the institution.

This dual role means that while the Area Presidencies are responsible for the protection of these sites, they also manage their operational aspects. Revenue streams include rental or sale income from properties deemed suitable for development within these protected areas. Consequently, the income structure of the Area Presidencies resembles that of local government units within their jurisdictions. A portion of the revenues collected by municipalities or special provincial administrations pertaining to these areas is redirected to the Area Presidencies. As a result, local governments lack administrative authority over these areas and are deprived of potential revenue from them.

However, the regions managed by these three Area Presidencies hold significant cultural and historical value, offering benefits that extend to society as a whole. Therefore, it is beneficial for any generated income to be redistributed for the common good rather than remaining localized. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that the operational structures providing services in these areas cannot function entirely independently of the municipalities in the relevant regions. The Area Presidencies do not solely cater to tourists visiting these sites; local municipalities also engage in a variety of activities within their jurisdictions, including accommodation, infrastructure development, entertainment, and sports.

Thus, municipalities continue to fulfill their responsibilities concerning these areas and can derive income from their activities. The relationship between the Area Presidencies and local governments exemplifies a complex interplay where both entities must collaborate to effectively manage and capitalize on the cultural and natural resources, ensuring that the benefits of these sites are maximized for the broader community.

4.2. Area Presidencies Affiliated with Municipalities (Istanbul, Bursa, İznik, Bergama)

In Türkiye, while Area Management and Presidencies are primarily established by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, municipalities also have the authority to create their own area management presidencies. Currently, there are four such presidencies—located in Istanbul, Bursa, İznik, and Bergama—that have been officially established by municipal councils and whose operations can be monitored via their websites. These presidencies operate under the framework of the "Law on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets" No. 2863, which provides municipalities with the necessary legal authority to establish these entities.

The establishment of these area presidencies was further shaped by legal regulations following Türkiye’s ratification of UNESCO's "Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage." Specifically, the "Regulation on the Establishment and Duties of the Area Management and Monument Board and the Determination of Management Areas," issued on November 27, 2005, based on Article 2/a of Annex-2 of Law No. 2863, serves as a foundation for their operation. According to this regulation, area presidencies are formed following decisions made by municipal councils, and they are tasked with responsibilities outlined in the relevant laws.

Municipalities appoint the leaders of these area presidencies for a term of three years, which can be extended as needed. Within these structures, various organizational entities, such as Advisory Boards, Coordination and Supervision Boards, and Supervision Units, exist to facilitate their operations.

The establishment of area presidencies within municipalities is crucial for emphasizing the role of local governments in heritage management. These presidencies not only work towards the protection of historical and cultural heritage but also align with the principles of local governance and decentralization, particularly in relation to tourism. By empowering local entities to manage cultural sites, the approach encourages community involvement and prioritizes local perspectives in decision-making processes.

However, the coexistence of area presidencies established by municipalities and those affiliated with the central government can create confusion, especially when both entities share the same designation. This overlapping nomenclature complicates the governance structure and can lead to inefficiencies. To mitigate this issue, it would be prudent to consider renaming these institutions or redefining their roles to clarify their distinct responsibilities. The duplication of terms highlights a lack of systematic organization within public administration, necessitating a thorough discussion and reevaluation of naming conventions and operational frameworks. This will help ensure a more cohesive and efficient management of cultural and natural heritage across various levels of governance.

5. THE POSITION OF AREA MANAGEMENT TYPES WITHIN THE TURKISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATION

As previously discussed, area management types in Türkiye are structured in two primary categories: those affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and those associated with municipalities. The designation of certain entities as "presidencies" reflects a distinct organizational framework that differentiates them from traditional governmental structures. This naming convention aligns area presidencies with other significant organizations within the Turkish Public Administration, such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the National Intelligence Organization, the Revenue Administration, and the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, all of which operate under a similar presidential structure.

The establishment of these area presidencies, each governed by special laws, allows them to function autonomously, focusing on specific mandates that are somewhat insulated from the hierarchical constraints typical of ministries (Dohler, 2002). For instance, the Cappadocia, Çanakkale, and Uludağ area presidencies possess public legal personality, granting them the authority to acquire property and incur debt independently of the state's legal persona. Consequently, these presidencies do not merely serve as extensions of local governments or provincial branches of central authority; rather, they are designated as the primary authorities for the protection and development of cultural and natural heritage within their respective regions.

The area presidencies assume critical roles, particularly in resolving long-standing jurisdictional conflicts and enhancing inadequate protection measures that have historically plagued these regions. Their mandate includes transforming these areas into prominent tourism destinations. However, the establishment of these presidencies has also sparked significant debate across various sectors. One of the primary concerns revolves around the presiding authority's control over protection activities. Despite the inclusion of local government representatives in Area Commissions, their influence in decision-making processes remains limited.

While efforts have been made to include representatives from both the public and private sectors in these commissions in line with governance principles, effective participation from civil society organizations and local communities has not been adequately achieved. This gap in representation is particularly problematic in areas where protection zones overlap with private property, leading to conflicts and dissatisfaction among local stakeholders.

To address these challenges, enhancing the involvement of local governments and civil society within the commission framework could facilitate more democratic decision-making processes. Such changes would promote transparency and accountability in the management of heritage areas. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that experts within the commissions retain the independence to make decisions without undue political pressures from local authorities. This independence is vital for fostering trust and ensuring that management decisions are based on expertise and the best interests of the heritage sites.

In summary, while the area presidencies play a crucial role in the management of cultural and natural heritage in Türkiye, there is a pressing need for reform in their governance structures. By increasing local participation and ensuring expert autonomy, these presidencies can better fulfill their mandates and contribute to the sustainable development of the regions they oversee.

Another issue criticized is zoning plans and local governance (Briffault, 1995). A significant point of criticism regarding the area presidencies pertains to the authority over zoning plans. By assuming control over zoning planning within designated area borders, the presidencies have significantly curtailed the powers of local governments. As a result, local authorities can only contribute suggestions during the planning process, lacking direct participation in decision-making. This situation is particularly concerning as local governments are elected representatives of the populace, and their subordination to an appointed institution undermines local democracy and diminishes opportunities for civic engagement in management processes.

To enhance the involvement of local governments in zoning and planning activities, it may be beneficial to establish an advisory body composed exclusively of local government representatives. This body should have a permanent presence within the Area Commission, fostering a more democratic structure for management processes and ensuring that local voices are adequately represented in decision-making.

Another critical discussion surrounding area management concerns the delineation of area borders, which often do not align with provincial boundaries (Westerink-Petersen, 2016). This misalignment can lead to the exclusion of regions with similar characteristics and historical significance, even when they lie within the same province. Therefore, it is imperative to reconsider the geographical scope of area management presidencies, ensuring that they encompass all areas containing historical sites or structures. However, broadening the area management borders may further marginalize local governments, stripping them of their jurisdictional authority.

Consequently, it is essential to conduct a thorough analysis of the areas within which the presidencies are authorized, particularly in regions like Cappadocia or expansive areas like Gelibolu. These considerations must take into account the complexities of local governance and historical preservation, seeking a balance that empowers both the area presidencies and local authorities.

In recent years, the emergence of specialized organizations with public legal personality and distinct budgets in areas that necessitate expertise signals a shift from traditional public administration approaches toward more adaptable management models. These new structures reflect a paradigm shift within the Turkish administrative framework, where addressing public service challenges is increasingly handled through innovative mechanisms rather than conventional methodologies.

Although the precise positioning of these new entities within the classical public administration structure remains ambiguous, they can be classified as service-oriented management organizations that deliver specialized services across various sectors. This evolving landscape underscores the necessity for public administration to adapt to contemporary challenges, emphasizing flexibility and responsiveness to the dynamic needs of society.

On the other hand, area managers established within municipalities are municipal organizations created under the authority granted to municipalities to formulate area management plans. Consequently, their areas of authority are analogous to those of the municipalities (Cappadocia Area Presidency, 2022). This situation encompasses two key aspects. First, all historical artifacts and cultural heritage areas located within municipal boundaries fall under the jurisdiction of these institutions. As a result, they lack the sharply defined boundaries characteristic of area managers established by special laws. This situation is particularly significant in terms of the effectiveness of the institutions. For instance, there are notable historical artifacts that do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Cappadocia Area Manager. Specifically, the castle and the underground city beneath the castle have been excluded from the purview of this board. Although these sites are integrated with settlements and have ancient histories, their exclusion has led to the relevant institutions being authorized to oversee a limited area where many historical artifacts exist, rather than preserving the historical integrity of the broader region. Conversely, had it been established as an area manager within the municipalities, this institution would have been authorized to operate in all adjacent areas within the municipality's jurisdiction.

The second significant aspect of the areas of authority for area managers within municipalities is that the authorities of other institutions arising from different laws remain in effect. More specifically, despite the establishment of area presidencies within municipalities, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs continue to maintain authority over the relevant areas. Thus, such area presidencies cannot effectively resolve the authority confusion present in the region. The area presidencies established within municipalities are sub-units formed within the Turkish public administration framework based on the municipalities' responsibility to protect cultural and natural assets as stipulated by municipal law. Therefore, they are classified as legal entities within local governments. Their budgets fall under the scope of the municipality's budget. Consequently, it is not feasible for the municipality to make decisions beyond administrative matters. While operating under the decisions made by the municipality's decision-making bodies, these area managers can also provide advisory information to these bodies and the executive branch. Therefore, it is evident that these structures occupy lower levels within the public governance framework.

5.1. The Overlapping Duties and Powers of Area Presidencies with Existing Public Institutions: A Structural Problem in Turkish Public Administration

The establishment of Area Presidencies within Türkiye's public administration framework, although aimed at enhancing the protection and management of cultural and natural heritage, has inadvertently led to significant overlaps in duties and powers with existing public institutions. This issue, which has been only superficially addressed in the literature and administrative debates, represents a critical structural problem that undermines administrative coherence, creates confusion among stakeholders, and weakens the effectiveness of public governance. A more systematic focus on this overlap is essential for both academic originality and practical solutions in the field of public administration.

Area Presidencies were designed to function as autonomous bodies with public legal personality, empowered to oversee the management, protection, and sustainable use of regions with cultural, historical, and natural significance (Cappadocia Area Presidency, 2022). However, these responsibilities frequently intersect with the legally mandated duties of numerous other public institutions, including, but not limited to, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the General Directorate of National Parks, municipalities, and provincial special administrations (Eryılmaz, 2022; Genç, 1998). The overlapping authority structure has created not only jurisdictional confusion but also institutional rivalry, leading

to fragmented governance, duplication of efforts, and, at times, conflicting policies within the same geographical areas.

One of the most striking examples of this issue arises in regions like Cappadocia and Uludağ, where the Area Presidencies exercise zoning, planning, conservation, and promotional activities within their designated boundaries. Simultaneously, municipalities retain certain legal powers over urban planning, infrastructure development, and service delivery, even within the borders of these protected areas. Furthermore, ministries such as Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change continue to hold authority over environmental protection, construction permits, and urban development regulations. This results in an ambiguous administrative landscape where multiple institutions, each with overlapping yet poorly coordinated mandates, attempt to exert influence over the same territory. The overlapping authority structure generates several practical and legal challenges:

Jurisdictional Confusion: Stakeholders, including local residents, investors, non-governmental organizations, and tourists, often struggle to identify which institution has final authority over decisions such as land use, development permissions, and infrastructure projects. This ambiguity not only delays administrative processes but also fosters legal disputes, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and public dissatisfaction (Çolakkadıoğlu, 2012).

Undermining Local Governance: Municipalities, as constitutionally recognized local governance units, see their roles and authority significantly constrained within the borders of Area Presidencies. While they retain responsibility for local services such as waste management, transportation, and urban maintenance, their ability to influence critical decisions on land use, zoning, and cultural heritage management is diminished. This dynamic weakens the principles of subsidiarity and local democracy, which are essential pillars of effective public administration in democratic societies (Akça, 2017).

Fragmentation of Conservation Efforts: Instead of fostering coordinated and comprehensive heritage management, the coexistence of multiple, partially overlapping institutions often leads to fragmented protection strategies. Ministries, local governments, and Area Presidencies may implement parallel but uncoordinated initiatives, resulting in resource wastage, contradictory planning documents, and inconsistent enforcement of conservation measures (Ulusan, 2016).

Inefficient Use of Financial Resources: The financial autonomy granted to Area Presidencies, while designed to ensure independent operations, can also produce overlaps in budgetary allocations. Central government funds, municipal revenues, and resources generated by Area Presidencies (e.g., tourism income, fines, rental fees) may be deployed independently, without sufficient coordination or strategic alignment. In some cases, this leads to redundant investments, while in others, critical conservation or infrastructure needs remain unmet due to inter-institutional competition or miscommunication (Dinçer, 2013).

Erosion of Accountability: The proliferation of institutions with overlapping mandates dilutes accountability mechanisms. When multiple bodies share responsibility for a particular area or issue, it becomes difficult to assign blame or responsibility when problems such as illegal construction, environmental degradation, or ineffective heritage management occur. Citizens and stakeholders face significant obstacles in holding public officials accountable, leading to decreased public trust in governance structures (Dohler, 2002).

This institutional overlap is not merely an operational inconvenience but reflects a deeper structural contradiction within the Turkish public administration system. It embodies the tensions between centralization and decentralization, sectoral governance and integrated management, and national priorities versus local interests. The issue also reflects the broader challenges of administrative fragmentation and institutional redundancy that have historically characterized the Turkish public sector (Eryılmaz, 2022).

From a comparative perspective, countries such as Italy (Pompeii), Greece (Acropolis), and the United Kingdom (Stonehenge and Avebury) have adopted governance models that, while incorporating autonomous or semi-autonomous area management units, ensure clearer delineation of authority and stronger coordination mechanisms with existing public institutions. These models emphasize the need for comprehensive legal frameworks that explicitly define the relationships, responsibilities, and coordination requirements among various public actors involved in heritage management.

In Türkiye, however, the legal and institutional framework governing Area Presidencies lacks such comprehensive clarity. The coexistence of Presidential Decrees, sectoral laws (e.g., Law No. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets), and municipal regulations has produced a complex and often contradictory legal environment. The absence of a unified, hierarchical legal structure that harmonizes the roles of Area Presidencies with those of existing ministries, local governments, and other public institutions exacerbates the problems of overlap, rivalry, and inefficiency.

The structural ambiguity surrounding Area Presidencies reflects broader issues within Turkish public administration, where hybrid institutional models have emerged without corresponding legal and administrative

harmonization (Eryılmaz, 2022). Comparative analysis offers valuable lessons. In countries such as Italy (Pompeii), the United Kingdom (Stonehenge), and Greece (Acropolis), area management entities operate with clearly delineated responsibilities, formalized coordination mechanisms, and strong stakeholder participation frameworks (PompeiiSites, 2024; English Heritage, 2024; YSMA, 2014).

In contrast, Türkiye lacks a unified, hierarchical legal framework governing the relationship between Area Presidencies, ministries, and local governments. The co-existence of Presidential Decrees, Law No. 2863 on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets, municipal legislation, and sectoral regulations has produced legal fragmentation, institutional rivalries, and policy incoherence (Gültekin, 2012). To address this structural problem, several policy recommendations can be proposed:

Legislative Clarification: A comprehensive legislative reform is required to clearly delineate the duties, powers, and territorial authority of Area Presidencies vis-à-vis other public institutions. Such reform should aim to eliminate jurisdictional overlaps, define coordination mechanisms, and establish clear lines of accountability (Schiavo-Campo and Sundaram, 2000).

Strengthening Inter-Institutional Coordination: Formal coordination platforms, involving Area Presidencies, ministries, municipalities, and relevant stakeholders, should be institutionalized to facilitate information sharing, joint planning, and conflict resolution (Eryılmaz, 2022).

Empowering Local Participation: Reforms should ensure that local governments, civil society organizations, and local communities are meaningfully included in decision-making processes related to heritage management, consistent with democratic governance principles (Faguet 2014).

Harmonizing Financial Mechanisms: Budgetary planning and revenue-sharing arrangements should be restructured to prevent duplication of financial resources and to ensure that funds generated within heritage areas are strategically deployed to serve conservation and community development goals.

Capacity Building and Institutional Integration: Investments in administrative capacity building, including training programs for area managers and public officials, should be prioritized to promote a shared understanding of roles, reduce inter-institutional competition, and foster a culture of collaboration (Lopez-Guzman et al., 2018).

In conclusion, while the establishment of Area Presidencies represents an innovative step toward enhancing the protection and management of Türkiye's rich cultural and natural heritage, the failure to adequately address their overlapping duties with existing public institutions significantly undermines their effectiveness. Focusing academic and policy attention on this structural contradiction is essential to increase the originality and practical relevance of research on Area Presidencies. More importantly, resolving these overlaps is vital for building an administratively coherent, democratically legitimate, and functionally effective public administration model capable of safeguarding Türkiye's heritage for future generations.

6. STRUCTURE OF SITE MANAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

6.1. England - Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Management Board

This board is responsible for the protection of the areas encompassing the Stonehenge and Avebury monuments located in Wiltshire, England. Stonehenge, one of the most iconic structures in the United Kingdom, is regarded as a cultural symbol of the British people (Scott & Selwyn, 2010, p. 191). It has been legally protected as an Ancient Monument since 1882, when the Historic Monuments Protection Act was first enacted successfully in England. The site and its surroundings were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1986. Stonehenge is owned by the Crown and managed by English Heritage, while the surrounding land is under the stewardship of the National Trust (Ensglish Heritage, 2024; National Trust, 2024).

The management structure for this historic site comprises three main units and a coordination unit dedicated to its protection and management. The first of these is the Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group (ASAHRG), which consists of individuals engaged in archaeological and historical research pertaining to the Stonehenge and Avebury area, as well as the surrounding region. This group, comprising professional curators, academics, and independent researchers, convenes to exchange information, encourage collaboration, coordinate efforts, and disseminate research related to this historic area.

The second body is the Avebury World Heritage Area Steering Committee, composed of representatives from local stakeholders, including landowners and community members, currently chaired by Stephen Stacey of the Avebury Parish Council. The third body, the Stonehenge World Heritage Area Committee, similarly includes representatives from stakeholders in the area, including landowners and local communities, and is currently chaired by Hugh Morrison, the Stonehenge Farming Representative.

Overseeing these three units is the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Area Coordination Unit, a partnership between Wiltshire Council and Historic England, based at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham. Additionally, an oversight body known as the Partnership Panel exists to coordinate actions affecting both segments of the historic site and to oversee the work of the Coordination Unit. This Panel comprises representatives from both parts of the historic site and includes four key partners (English Heritage, Historic England, the National Trust, and Wiltshire Council), the chairs of the two local steering committees, and a representative from the ASAHRG. The Panel is currently chaired by an Independent Chair, Emma Sayer, and is supported by the Coordination Unit, which acts as a secretariat.

A crucial role of the Partnership Panel is to support the Coordination Unit and ensure that adequate funding is available for the implementation of projects arising from the Management Plan. Established in February 2014 following a review of the management practices at the Stonehenge and Avebury sites, the Partnership Panel is one of several measures aimed at enhancing the integration of site management (Stonehenge & Avebury World Heritage Site, 2024). It is evident that this area management organization was structured with stakeholder participation under the leadership of the local government unit.

6.2. Italy - Pompeii Archaeological Site Management Office

This office is a decentralized institution affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. It possesses special autonomy and is dedicated to the protection, preservation, and promotion of public access to the archaeological site. The Ministerial Decree of December 23, 2014, regarding the 'Organization and Functioning of State Museums,' established the following bodies responsible for managing museums and archaeological parks with special autonomy: Director, Board of Directors, Scientific Committee, and Supervisory Board. These bodies are entrusted with several responsibilities, including: a) Ensuring the fulfillment of the museum's mission; b) Evaluating the cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the museum; and c) Assessing the scientific quality of cultural activities, conservation methods, and the utilization, evaluation, and communication of the cultural heritage preserved by the museum (PompeiiSites, 2024).

6.3. Egypt - Giza Pyramids and Sphinx Site Management Office

The Giza Pyramids and Sphinx site is overseen by a specialized management unit established by the Egyptian government. This unit is responsible for the protection of the historical structures, restoration works, and tourism management. It operates as a unit of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2019).

6.4. Greece - The Protection and Management Office of the Acropolis of Athens

The Acropolis Restoration Service (YSMA) functions as a specialized environmental service of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. It was established by Presidential Decree No. 97/1999 (Government Gazette No. 104/A/26.5.99) to organize and carry out protection and restoration works on the Acropolis. Since 1975, academic responsibility for the execution of these works has been held by the Acropolis Monuments Protection Committee (ESMA), an interdisciplinary committee composed of expert academics. The YSMA Director is responsible for coordinating and ensuring the smooth execution of the works, adhering to the timetable, and communicating issues for which the Committee is responsible to ESMA (YSMA, 2014).

6.5. China - Great Wall Conservation Management Office

One of the most renowned structures in the world, the Great Wall of China, is protected and managed by a specialized conservation management office established by the Chinese government. This office operates as an administrative agency under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China. Its responsibilities include the development and management of museums, as well as the protection of nationally significant cultural relics.

7. CONCLUSION

The emergence of Area Presidencies within the Turkish public administration system represents a significant institutional innovation, particularly in the field of cultural and natural heritage management. However, as this study has comprehensively demonstrated, this innovation is accompanied by a complex set of structural, administrative, legal, and democratic challenges that demand critical evaluation and systematic reform.

Through a detailed structural analysis of Area Presidencies, including the cases of Cappadocia, Gallipoli, and Uludağ, as well as a comparative examination of international models such as Stonehenge (UK), Pompeii (Italy), and the Acropolis (Greece), this research has revealed that the institutional architecture of Area Presidencies

embodies both opportunities and contradictions. On the one hand, these entities, by virtue of their public legal personality, dedicated administrative frameworks, and specialized mandates, offer the potential for enhanced protection, sustainable management, and international promotion of Türkiye's invaluable cultural and natural heritage. On the other hand, their establishment, particularly when examined within the broader context of Turkish public administration, has exacerbated institutional fragmentation, weakened local governance structures, and contributed to legal ambiguities.

A critical finding of this research concerns the overlap of duties, powers, and territorial authority between Area Presidencies and pre-existing public institutions, including ministries, local governments, and specialized agencies. While Area Presidencies have been designed to streamline heritage management and eliminate jurisdictional confusion, their actual implementation has often generated precisely the opposite effect: institutional rivalry, duplication of responsibilities, inefficient resource allocation, and diminished democratic accountability. This paradox underscores a recurring theme within Turkish public administration, where hybrid institutional models emerge in response to pressing governance challenges but are inadequately harmonized with existing legal and organizational frameworks.

Another key finding of this study pertains to the democratic legitimacy and participatory dimensions of Area Presidencies. While the inclusion of multi-stakeholder commissions within their governance structures represents a step towards inclusive decision-making, the limited and often symbolic involvement of elected local governments and civil society organizations remains a critical deficiency. This undermines not only the principles of local democracy and subsidiarity but also erodes public trust in heritage management processes. The exclusion of local knowledge and interests from strategic decision-making further diminishes the potential for sustainable, context-sensitive, and socially legitimate heritage management.

The comparative dimension of this study highlights valuable lessons from international practices. The governance models adopted in countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, and Greece illustrate that area management structures can effectively balance autonomy, institutional coherence, and stakeholder participation, provided that clear legal frameworks, robust coordination mechanisms, and accountability structures are established. Notably, in these countries, area management bodies function not as isolated administrative entities but as integrated components of broader governance ecosystems, where the roles of local, regional, and national actors are clearly delineated and legally codified.

In contrast, Türkiye's fragmented legal landscape — characterized by the coexistence of Presidential Decrees, sectoral legislation (e.g., Law No. 2863), and municipal regulations — has created an ambiguous and often contradictory institutional environment for Area Presidencies. This legal incoherence not only fuels administrative competition but also limits the effectiveness of heritage protection efforts and constrains the capacity for coordinated, long-term strategic planning.

Furthermore, the financial dimension of Area Presidencies reflects both opportunity and risk. While these entities enjoy financial autonomy, including the ability to generate revenue through fines, tourism operations, and resource management, the absence of coordinated financial planning with local governments and central ministries has led to fragmented budgetary processes. This situation reinforces institutional silos, undermines resource efficiency, and may inadvertently divert funds away from heritage conservation toward unrelated administrative expenditures.

Importantly, this study also reveals that the current design of Area Presidencies reflects an unresolved tension between centralization and decentralization within the Turkish administrative system. While these entities nominally embody elements of decentralization — such as functional autonomy and multi-stakeholder governance structures — in practice, they often reinforce central authority at the expense of elected local bodies. This dynamic reflects broader trends within Turkish governance, where hybrid institutional forms are used to recentralize state authority under the guise of administrative efficiency, thereby diminishing opportunities for genuine local participation and democratic oversight.

In light of these findings, several critical policy recommendations emerge. First, comprehensive legislative reform is urgently needed to clarify the institutional status, duties, and powers of Area Presidencies. Such reform must aim to eliminate jurisdictional overlaps, codify coordination mechanisms, and establish transparent lines of accountability. Without these legal foundations, Area Presidencies will continue to operate in a structurally ambiguous space, undermining both their effectiveness and their democratic legitimacy.

Second, the governance structures of Area Presidencies should be revised to ensure meaningful participation from local governments, civil society organizations, and local communities. This requires more than token representation within advisory commissions; it necessitates institutional arrangements that empower local actors to shape decision-making processes, influence strategic planning, and hold area management bodies accountable for their actions.

Third, inter-institutional coordination platforms should be formalized and adequately resourced. These platforms must include representatives from Area Presidencies, relevant ministries, local governments, and key stakeholder groups. Their function should extend beyond information sharing to include joint planning, conflict resolution, and integrated resource management. Without such coordination, fragmented governance, policy incoherence, and inefficient resource use will persist.

Fourth, the financial mechanisms underpinning Area Presidencies require restructuring to promote transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment with conservation and community development objectives. Revenue generated within heritage areas should be equitably distributed to support both site protection and the socio-economic development of affected local communities.

Finally, investments in capacity building are essential. Area managers, public officials, and stakeholders must be provided with ongoing training in heritage management, participatory governance, legal frameworks, and conflict resolution. Building institutional capacity is not merely a technical issue; it is fundamental to cultivating a governance culture that values expertise, inclusivity, and collaborative problem-solving.

In conclusion, the establishment of Area Presidencies represents both a response to the pressing need for effective heritage protection and a reflection of the structural contradictions within Türkiye's public administration system. As this study has demonstrated, these entities cannot fulfill their potential without addressing the underlying institutional ambiguities, legal incoherence, and democratic deficits that characterize their current operation. Comparative experiences from other countries offer valuable models, but their successful adaptation requires a genuine commitment to administrative reform, democratic governance, and the prioritization of public interest over institutional competition.

The future of Area Presidencies — and indeed the sustainable protection of Türkiye's cultural and natural heritage — depends on transcending the binary logic of centralization versus decentralization. Instead, a new governance paradigm is needed: one that is grounded in legal clarity, institutional coherence, democratic participation, and coordinated action. Only through such a paradigm can Türkiye simultaneously safeguard its rich heritage, strengthen its administrative capacity, and uphold the democratic values essential to effective and legitimate public governance.

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