

Chapter 8

Searching for a Program in National Participation

An action research experiment in Turkey

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I. Introduction

Numerous scholars in different countries are investigating how institutions within a single country, or even between different countries, can collaborate with one another in order to, for instance, beat the Japanese at their own game; there has also been reflection upon how these groups may collaborate on some grounds and compete on others. Competition and competitive strategy have been in the limelight for many years, yet, until fairly recently, collaboration has been limited to industrial relations issues. Currently, a significant level of interest has also arisen regarding questions of how collaboration may unfold between countries, with social partners, between firms and within companies. Collaboration configurations can be found in some countries, which are either designed central social partners (Germany), or in which a process is nurtured by a facilitating institution, as in the recent Swedish¹ and Norwegian² national development programs. The project reported on in this paper is an experiment in testing the 'process' approach to initiating a national development program in Turkey. More specifically, this action research experiment is a means of finding an answer to the following questions: 'How does one generate a societal mechanism for consensus building?'; and 'Can we develop a means of managing the process of generating consensus in Turkish society?'

One link with national institutional infrastructures is what might be called 'process monitors.'³ To cite some examples, one might note that in the Japanese case, MITI is the process monitor for economic development; in the Swedish case, the process monitor can be conceived as the labor-management-government tripartite type of arrangement. Therefore, our experiment should answer the

following question: What should be the Turkish process monitor? The answer must be grounded in the assumption that it is necessary to develop a unique participation model, that incorporates indigenous characteristics. Thus, this is an attempt to develop an indigenous Turkish model for national participation in generating consensus. The hypothesis we will be testing is that *the national participation model is a collective searching process*. Our strategy, then, is to develop a process that will define the relevant stakeholder consensus domains in an emergent way as well as to facilitate the learning and adoption of democratic dialogue principles.

The experiment was undertaken with few resources and was instigated by convincing and persuading one key stakeholder, TUSIAD — Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association — that they should search for consensus within a process first, rather than pushing for a structure such as a social and economic council. As such they would also be searching for some way to collaborate with each other, and some way to develop a consensus.⁴ We were not insinuating that there should not be a social economic council, although TUSIAD had unsuccessfully attempted to convince the government for over a year⁵ to go along with such a structure.

This report is limited to macro level consensus building on the participation process, recognizing that macro level processes must be supported by micro level processes. However, such a coverage would have to be provided following the results of several micro level experiments. The project should not be regarded as similar to the start-up conferences typical of the Scandinavian programs that have already been approved and funded by various existing tripartite institutions. Instead, it should be viewed as an initiative that tests the possibility of a process-oriented approach to national development programs when there is no comparable institutional infrastructure.

The paper is presented in four sections; (1) The context — how the organizational ecology is structured; (2) The process — what principles were designed to be followed in the pursuit of a formula for national participation; (3) The outcomes — how action unfolded; and (4) What can we learn from this experiment for action and for theory?

II. Research strategy

Action research is particularly well suited to developing a strategy for national participation and consensus. In other words, if a strategy is going to emerge then we must focus on the process for bringing it about: we must focus on the methodology. Action research as a methodology fulfils two purposes. The first is to act and to trigger within the organization a system of action through a process whereby all affected can participate and exert influence. This is based on the

belief that one can only understand social systems by inducing or introducing change from within them. From an epistemological standpoint this is to say that one can only understand a social system by inducing change inside it. The second purpose, the research element in action-research methodology, implies the premiss that when one is engaged in an action, one is also engaged in research.⁶ In other words, in the same course of action, or in the engagement with the social system, one is also trying to satisfy the goals of social science. The primary goal of social science is regarded as being *to develop an understanding*, and this often implies the development of a theory to explain a phenomenon. In sum, action research always has a dual purpose: it aims to change and to contribute to the current state of knowledge.

The action question, which is also the research question, is as follows: How does one generate a means of developing participation and consensus in Turkish society?

III. The context: structuring the organizational ecology

In an existing configuration of the organizational ecology, we must find a set of relationships that will facilitate national consensus. Modeling the Scandinavian system, we began with a tripartite configuration as a minimum condition for bringing about a national consensus. The tripartite arrangement entails workers, management or business, and government, without which lasting consensus is not achievable. Tripartite institutional relationships are very rare in the Turkish context,⁷ therefore this was also an experiment in basing the national consensus process on a tripartite model. An attempt has been made, then, to demonstrate that this type of relationship is plausible in the Turkish context. This initiative, to develop a formula for national participation, implies that these stakeholder groups are the decision makers, as shown in Table 1, and that they are the ones who will be acting if this kind of participation model is likely to be ratified.

TUSIAD wants to keep the consensus process alive, seemingly more than any other organization in the organizational ecology. While other organizations have avowedly been concerned with their own interests, TUSIAD has been seeking projects that concern the nation as a whole for the last four years. The executive committee in particular has come to the conclusion that without consensus on the major policies affecting the country, there can be no rapid development. Perhaps owing to the long term orientation of big business, the executive committee of TUSIAD is also serving its members' interest by promoting consensus in national policy making. Their function in the existing configuration of the organizational ecology is to keep the 'consensus mission' on the national agenda. In these terms, they have come very close to functioning as a referent organization.⁸ The other element in the structuring of the organizational

Table 1

POLITICAL PARTIES	
DYP	True Path Party
SHP	Social Democratic People's Party
ANAP	Motherland Party
BUREAUCRACY	
HDTM	Treasury and Foreign Trade Administration
DPT	National Planning Organization
MPM	National Productivity Center
KOI	Public Participation Fund
TUBITAK	Scientific and Technical Research Council
UNIONS	
T. Denizciler & Dokgemi İş	Unions from shipping industry
Petrol İş	A union from petroleum industry
Las Petkim İş	A union from chemical industry
Cimse İş	A union from cement industry
Türk Harb İş	A union from defense industry
Teksif İş	A union from textile industry
Tek Gıda İş	A union from food industry
OTHERS	
TUSİAD	Turkish Industrialists and Business men Association
İSO	Istanbul Chamber of Industry
TESK	Turkish Artisans and Small Business Confederation
TİSK	Confederation of Employers Unions
TOBB	Turkish Chambers of Commerce Association
TMMOB	Turkish Engineers and Architects Association

ecology is a facilitator institution, Bilkent University's Business School. The Business School has offered the conceptual framework within which an action research project can come to fruition and the methodological means for holding a participative forum to search for consensus. Furthermore, it functions as a safe and legitimate haven that can maintain neutrality among the stakeholder institutions.

The facilitating institution's strategy was to demonstrate that consensus would be possible through a specialized participative methodology, a search conference. A search conference is a forum that makes democratic dialogue possible and is based on the principles of participative, as opposed to representative democracy. Over the course of two and half days or more it builds a learning community that becomes capable of appreciating the changes that are occurring in the environment, and of developing a common ground. This common ground is another way of referring to what we have earlier called consensus.

The next design issue faced by the facilitating organization was to decide on where the first attempt for nurturing the common ground should take place. It is known that it is easier to reach consensus on the future, than on current problems.

Moreover, this is true for any organization or any social system and hence this should be the major vehicle for stimulating agreement. Therefore, the ground where consensus would be possible was the future of Turkish industry. This ground was not explicitly designed through a collective effort and TUSIAD, the sponsoring organization, was very much aware of the need to embark on such a collective course. Fortunately, it was immediately obvious to other stakeholders that it would be highly desirable for such an effort to be undertaken.

For the structure of the organizational ecology described above to be mobilized, some guiding principles of intervention had to be observed. These principles represent the conditions under which a genuine and indigenous formula for national participation can emerge.

IV. Process principles

1. Process over structure

This principle has been explained adequately above. However, given that a competing approach was also commissioned by TUSIAD, it is necessary to discuss it further. The report, prepared by two Bosphorous University professors, advocated the integration of the interest groups into super-interest-group councils first, before they merge into a body that could constitute a socio-economic council. This exemplifies an approach that gives primacy to structure. The Business School at Bilkent proposed to work on the same topic of inquiry, but it was in terms of a process that TUSIAD funded instead of an authoritative report. We, in the Business School, wanted to engage TUSIAD together with the entire set of stakeholders in a relationship. The assumption was that the process would create the conditions for the stakeholders to discover a national participation model, while at the same time practicing it through action. Instead of talking about the need for a socio-economic council, they would try to reach consensus over the future of Turkish industry. Given the fragmented nature of the organizational environment in Turkey, if a structure is needed for the organization of the relevant consensus issues, it should emerge as a product of a search process. This would preempt a struggle over who should be on the council since interested parties would have developed a working mechanism for reaching consensus.

2. Voluntary participation over forced participation

Participants should not be under any obligatory or coercive pressure to represent a particular interest group. They should be willing to take part in a larger system of decision making rather than to consider purely localized concerns. Therefore,

our task was to convince the stakeholders that the frame of reference, that is the future of Turkish industry, was of value to them. Once they understood the value of the larger system of decision making, they would volunteer their time and energy toward a collective design of the common ground.

3. *Pluralist periphery over the center*

We want to start from the periphery. This tactic expresses our expectation that innovative approaches can more easily be generated from this location. The periphery embodies a greater variety of perspectives and offers a wider degree of freedom for action. In comparison, the center is typically represented by the government, which occupies a seat of monolithic power. Unless change is introduced during the early phase of each government's tenure, significant change — let alone innovative approaches — can rarely be accomplished during a term of office. This is due to the nature of the government agencies, which are bureaucracies designed to preserve the previous system. If we had started with the government rather than with a voluntary association such as TUSIAD, and if we had tried to solicit the participation of stakeholders, it would have been very difficult to preserve the other principles discussed in this section. So intervening from the periphery and not from the center is essential to nurturing a genuine common ground, with the support of all concerned. Since we are interested in discovering the Turkish national participation formula and we expect it to emerge within an unconstrained process, centrist tendencies should only be incorporated on an equal basis with other tendencies in the environment.

4. *Proactive over reactive*

The tripartite stakeholders ordinarily confront each other in different situations and over many issues. Typically they approach the table with predetermined positions, to which the others react. Naturally, they want to protect those interests and often negotiate to maximize their own interests. Our aim was to bring these parties together to test and experience a proactive orientation, as opposed to the reactive one that they had been accustomed to in previous encounters. Furthermore, the search conference process, which is designed for a proactive orientation, would allow them to design a future for the Turkish industry in a participative way.

5. *Consensus-seeking over adversarial*

The process should not bear the characteristics of a collective bargaining forum that epitomizes the adversarial posture. Both employer and employee unions have a predetermined position, and when they come to the negotiating table they

fight for their particular position. Parties tend to regard each other as enemies and hope to win at the expense of the other party. The assumption in adversarial relations is that one party must lose if the other wins. In consensus seeking the parties come together to create a win-win solution that neither party could have provided without the creative and imaginative skills and resources of others. The search is for a common ground that satisfies all parties and for consensus that is meaningful for all concerned.

6. *The “force of a better argument” over any other force*

We would like to create, in Habermas’s terms, “the ideal speech situation” in which a consensus can be attained. The rules which constitute an ideal speech situation are as follows: (1) Each subject who is capable of speech and action is allowed to participate in discourses. (2) (a) Each is allowed to call any proposal into question. (b) Each is allowed to introduce any proposal into the discourse. (c) Each is allowed to express his/her attitudes, wishes, and needs. (3) No speaker should be hindered by compulsion (whether arising from inside the discourse or outside of it) from making use of the rights secured under 1 and 2.⁹

The third rule implies further rules for eliminating the effects of deception, power and ideology. White¹⁰ indicates that the third rule is intended to prevent barriers both to the initiation of discourse and the way it is carried out.

7. *Creative and playful over rigid and dogmatic*

Creativity is about a quality of originality that leads to novel ideas and new ways of looking at a situation.¹¹ Even the most improbable suggestions should be considered in the search process since they might gain a creative meaning in the overall picture. Winnicott¹² combined creative thought and play, and showed that creativity requires adults who are able to play. Therefore, the dialogue process should entail some features of play where adults can engage in “child-like” behavior to induce the intermediate state between real and not-real or play. We require that the stakeholders are able to change their positions rather than always stick to their own ideas or ones dictated by some dogma.

8. *Active participation over passive observation*

Active participation means that all participants have an obligation to contribute not only by proposing their own ideas, but also by helping others develop their ideas.¹³ Mere attendance, observation, and non-active listening are passive means of participation not desirable in the search process. Passive observation is therefore contrary to the desired characteristic of the process. Furthermore,

Gustavsen indicates that it is not possible to contribute in abstentia or on paper. Therefore, the stakeholders must have the opportunity to engage in real-time and face-to-face dialogue during the process.

9. *Individual judgement over “company line”*

The stakeholders speak, not on behalf of their institutions, but on behalf of themselves in these kinds of forums. They should not be able to hide behind the company policy and avoid confronting the issues. Furthermore, if they are permitted to represent their company, they should abstain from discussions that concern the ‘company line.’

V. The outcomes: how action unfolded

1. *Preparation of the domain: relationship with the sponsoring organization*

We have established a dialogue with TUSIAD through the executive in the classroom program at Bilkent University, which started in 1989. One of the speakers was Cem Boyner, then chairman of the executive committee of TUSIAD. We initiated a dialogue in terms of what they were interested in, and what was possible for Bilkent to accomplish in at least six meetings with Cem Boyner, including one in the United States. We then followed up the meetings with Bülent Eczacıbaşı who became the next chairman of the executive committee of TUSIAD. We had three or four meetings with him before he assigned his chief aid to work with us. The preparation of the sponsoring agency was very intensive, and the upfront work in terms of trying to give the search process a chance was both very demanding and delicate.

Initially TUSIAD wanted to establish continuity with the country strategy study that was being carried out. They were explicitly aware that they had not addressed the vision for Turkish Industry in that study, and knew very well that this had to be a participative effort. In other words, they could not design it themselves since this would be to say to the government or to the workers, ‘Here is the mission that the business community wants.’ So they were very much aware of the fact that this could not be a unilateral mission. This realization enabled us (the academic community) to speak immediately with both sides because they needed the methodology and know-how that we could offer. We tried to incorporate this in the country’s strategies report, but in the end it was not possible because TUSIAD viewed our project from another perspective. According to TUSIAD, the project was by and large an experiment in consensus generation which would imply that the experiment may not result in a vision substance.

2. *Stakeholder map*

The agreement signed with Bilkent University entailed two events; a search conference and a symposium. The search conference was expected to generate an outcome that may or may not have produced a significant consensus. This outcome would be folded into the next event that would enable a large audience to hear the outcome. TUSIAD runs a symposium on a topic that is of national interest each year. We proposed to label the conference “national participation and consensus” so that we would have a forum for discussing the output of the search conference. To create a comparative dimension, we decided to also bring in scholars experienced in other countries’ national participation formulas.

Immediately after the aforementioned agreement was signed, we approached the president TURK-İŞ, the largest trade union confederation in Turkey and obtained their support. We asked for a liaison person, one of their chief people, to work with us because we had someone from TUSIAD. Then we asked for a representative from the government so that the initiative would be founded on at least two legs of the tri-partite framework.

TURK-İŞ presented us with a list of who they thought should represent the labor community and TUSIAD’s executive committee almost exclusively volunteered to participate on the other side. The other stakeholders (including the employers’ confederation) were generated with the help of the TUSIAD executive committee and the consultant to TURK-İŞ’s president. The value of composing the stakeholder by key stakeholders themselves was achieved with a significant contribution by the president of TURK-İŞ. He insisted upon the participation of the press, who would then report the entire discussion on television. Since such exposure is harmful for search conference principles, we were able to satisfy TURK-İŞ, by inviting a representative from each major newspaper as a participant to the search conference. As such, we built in a public relations component into the design of the stakeholder map.

The abovementioned steering group for selecting the stakeholders immediately approached the Ministry of Industry, the other governmental ministries, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. We received no immediate response from them. Given the tripartite framework, we first made a list that would correspond to an institutional list as presented in Figure 1, the designed stakeholder map, and tried to identify names to contact.

We aimed to reach the three most prominent political party parliamentarians in order to fill in the legislative and national policy making outlook and aimed to bring in the most influential and outspoken deputies. In terms of the government bureaucracy, the heads of major governmental agencies were invited, as indicated in the stakeholder map.

Shortly after the letters were sent, the stakeholders were contacted by

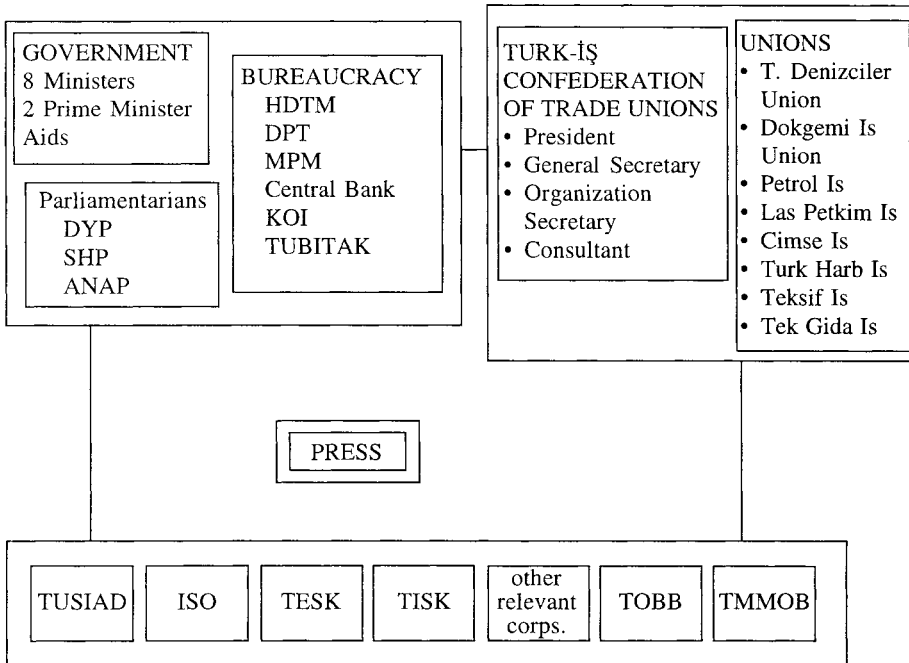


Figure 1. Stakeholder map

telephone and a meeting was requested to explain the purpose and the methodology of the search conference. With the exception of two or three people, with whom were conducted telephone meetings, we met each participant in their own work environment to explain the process and to ask them if they had any reservations, or if they wanted to make us aware of some issues beforehand.

3. Actual system boundary: the realized stakeholder map

The composition of attendance formed the actual system boundary for designing the future of Turkish industry. The actual domain and the design team was therefore composed of the participants who were present in person, and active on 17-18 April.

Comparing the design with what was realized, as shown in Figure 2, we can state that a partial representation from all three legs was possible. It was not possible to convince all stakeholders to attend the search conference. The most visible absence was among government representatives. We were only able to bring in a consultant to the leader of one of the political parties in the government. Although his title is “consultant to the prime minister” he in fact functions as a consultant to the leader of the Social Democratic People’s Party. The

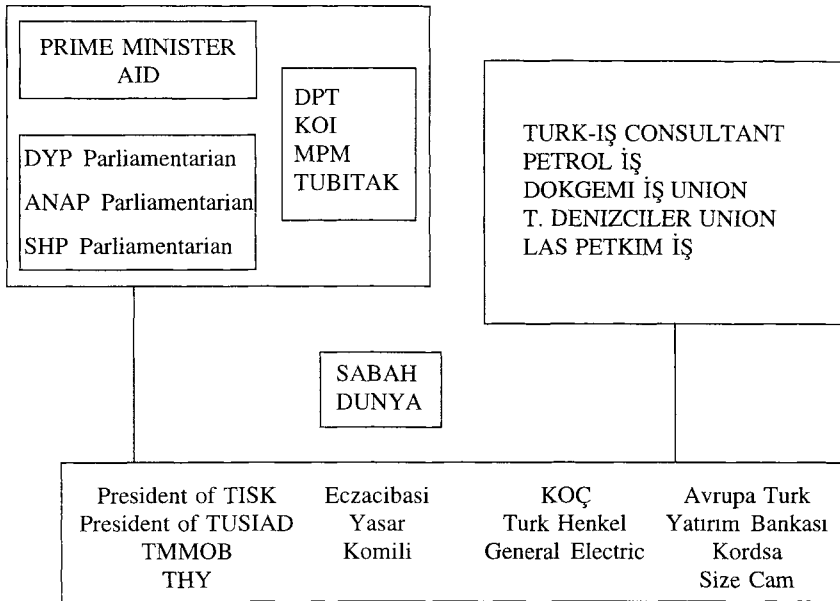


Figure 2. Realized stakeholder map

absence of the government ministers or deputy ministers can be explained by the response of the Minister of Housing and Development. He remarked that the coalition government itself is the result of a consensus, and that other structures such as a social and economic council were not included in the coalition government's program. His remarks were aimed at TUSIAD, which was pushing for a social and economic council that would act as an advisory body represented by business and labor organizations.

Apart from the prime minister's consultant we were able to bring in one member of parliament from the other party in the coalition government. The other two parliamentarians were from the opposition party, and both were willing to actively participate in the search conference itself. We were able to bring in the heads or deputy heads of four out of six government agencies that we targeted and this in many ways balanced the absence of cabinet members.

The other leg, the labor community, was represented by TURK-İŞ, which is one of the three labor union confederations. We intended to bring in the other two confederations, but were unable to as the TURK-İŞ consultant in our steering team pointed out that his group would completely veto the search conference if we were to invite the other confederations (the Revolutionary Trade Union and Muslim Trade Union Confederations). They promised us that the top level of the confederation management would attend and recommended that we get in touch with twelve union presidents. We succeeded in bolstering up the attendance of

four out of eight union presidents out of the twelve who were targeted, but TURK-İŞ's top level management did not attend, giving petty reasons¹⁵ for their lack of attendance. Instead they sent one of their junior consultants. This may be explained by the generally insecure position of the confederation management, who lost the internal elections a year later.

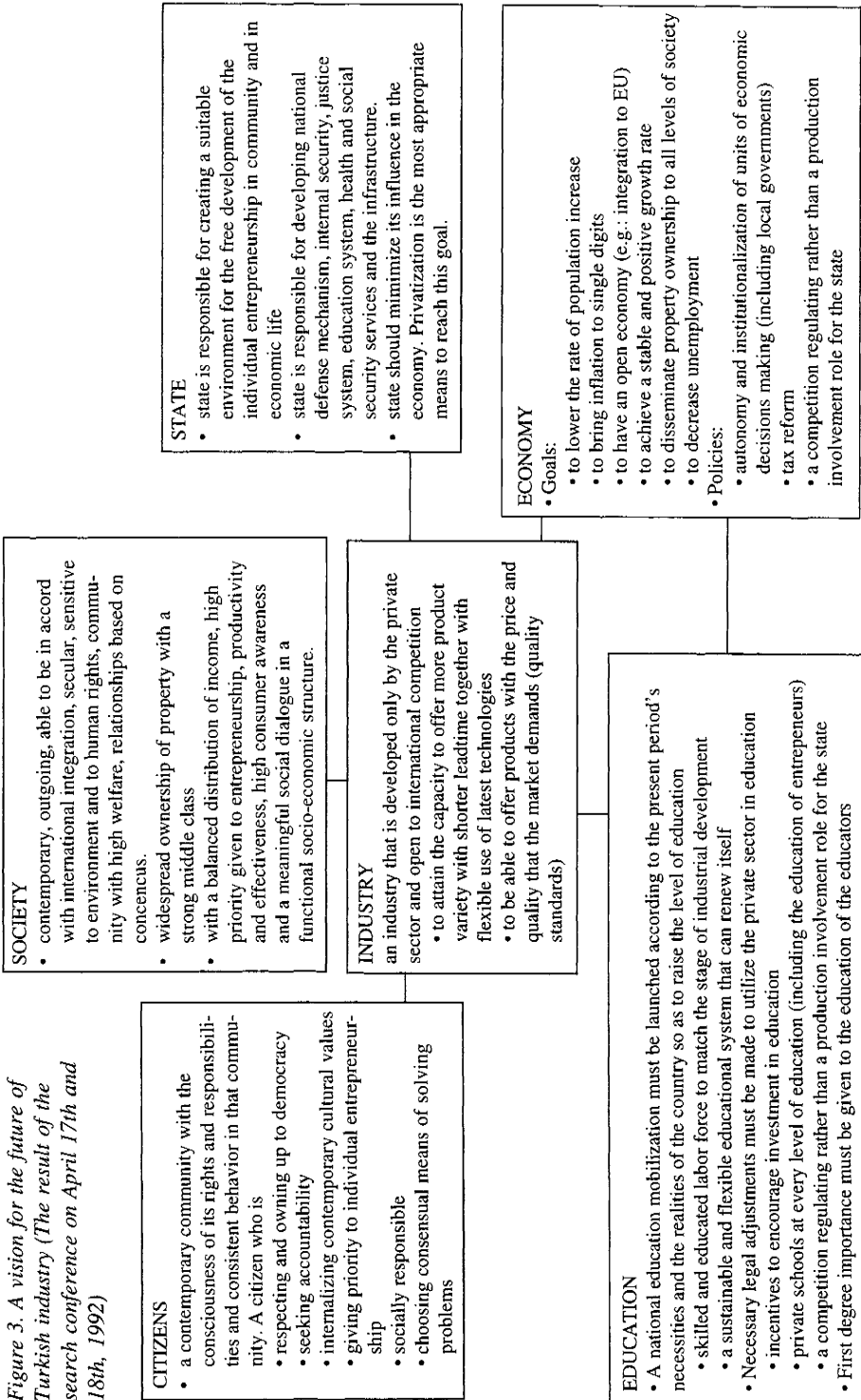
The third leg, the business community, was represented not only in terms of TUSIAD and TISK (the employer's confederation) through their top officers, but a good cross-section of the biggest enterprises in Turkey also attended. The top level managers of these enterprises also displayed a good distribution of owner-executives as well as professional executives. The extent of representation from the business community was due to the fact that TUSIAD was the sponsoring organization and most of the members of the executive committee attended enthusiastically. The only drawback from the business community came from the Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (TOBB) whose consultant, speaking on behalf of the president of the confederation, informed us that they could not attend the search because it was sponsored by TUSIAD. It would help to note at this point that membership of TOBB is compulsory for all businesses and therefore TOBB, by virtue of its membership, tends to safeguard the interests of the small and medium sized businesses. This tendency was confirmed when the TOBB's consultant further explained that these interests are by and large antithetical to those of TUSIAD.

A famous journalist, whose economics column appears in the newspaper with the second largest circulation in Turkey, and the editor of a would-be Turkish version of the Wall Street Journal, were among the participants from the press. They both turned out to be very critical in their evaluation of the value of the group's vision.

The realized stakeholder map therefore reflected the sensitivities and possibilities of the contextual environment. In our judgement it was quite adequate to the task of generating a vision for the future of Turkish industry. However, there arose a clear need to supplement the search process with follow up meetings that would involve the missing stakeholders.

4. *The Content of the Vision Statement*

In Figure 3, we can see the final vision that they came up with. It includes some statements about the industry, about the kind of state, about the economy, about society and about the profile of the most desired citizen who should be living in that society. This is their most desired future. The most remarkable aspect of this vision is that they were not given these headings from the start; rather, the headings emerged in the process of discussing the issues in the search conference process.¹⁶ The content of the vision statement reflects more of a liberal agenda,



and this is for two reasons. First, the political mood of the country swung to the right in the eighties and the liberal policies have not been fully completed. This indicates a slow process of implementation and a continuing commitment to these reforms until the liberal transformation is completed. The second reason derives from the composition of the realized stakeholder map. The labor community formed a minority opinion against that of the business community. Furthermore, the members of parliament in attendance were all from center-right parties and the bureaucrats were mostly appointees of the coalition government, whose policies were on the whole liberal. The outcome of such a conference composition would inevitably be more liberal. This should not, however, be taken as a criticism of the conference organizers since a concerted effort was undertaken to equalize the composition.

VI. Discussion of difficulties and dilemmas

Above, we began discussing the inadequate representation of the labor community. Had the leaders of TURK-İŞ attended the search conference as they promised, the numbers of stakeholders on the labor and the business sides would have been nearly equal. However, I called the day before, just to check whether their travel arrangements were in order, only to discover that they had decided not to attend. Although it is difficult to interpret their behavior, we can offer a few reasons. The president of TURK-İŞ was very persistent in his demand that one or more government ministers should be in attendance. He may have felt that a dialogue in the absence of some ministers would not be effective and instructed his team not to attend. Another reason might be that the unconstrained dialogue forum may have placed his group in a vulnerable position. Since unions are accustomed to a collective bargaining mode of discussion, they may have had some personal reservations as to the effectiveness of their communicative competence in a totally different arena.

Bilkent Business School was a neutral facilitator and this neutrality, we thought, would provide us with some advantages with respect to some stakeholder groups such as the unions. However, judging by the resulting level of union participation, we could not claim that this was a significant advantage at the time of the search conference. Moreover, it did not help us with the coalition government since they were most sensitive to political allies and patronage relationships with their respective parties. Of the eight government ministers we approached, we were able to conduct a pre-search conference meeting with only one of them, who then informed us that he could not attend. The Turkish business and political networks are very sensitive to either interest-based or personal relationships. This may not be such an unusual characteristic of such networks,

although Bilkent Business School, founded seven years ago, was a newcomer and was not able to effectively use non-academic leverage. TUSIAD, as the sponsoring organization, was reluctant to exert any influence to recruit stakeholders since this would imply the loss of some neutrality. We therefore functioned with a major constraint: that of being the 'new kid on the block.'

TUSIAD's proactive approach to the problems of the country and in terms of a pressure group representing the interests of big business in Turkey had disturbed different governments at different times in the past. So their reluctance to exert influence was understandable. TUSIAD nevertheless was taking an entrepreneurial risk by sponsoring a national search conference that would bring together parties who had previously not come together face-to-face to discuss a sensitive topic, particularly given that the premiss of the search conference was to search for probable consensus over the future of Turkish industry. The reluctance of some members of the executive committee was evident during several meetings with the project manager from the Bilkent Business School. This reluctance climaxed in a crisis, when the president of the executive committee expressed a desire to cancel the search conference about a month before the agreed conference date. The president's concern was the inadequate enthusiasm by some members of the executive committee. Fortunately, we were able to convince him that such reservations within his own ranks are understandable given the uncertainties associated with an innovative approach.

TUSIAD also displayed reluctance in regard to the duration of the full search conference. They were not prepared to spend two-and-a-half days in a retreat location. Consequently, we could not carry the discussion to a stage where strategies for accomplishing the most desired future could be articulated. We produced a vision, and one that received unanimous support. Unfortunately, we fell short in terms of designing strategies to bring this vision into fruition. This is admittedly a more difficult task and it would require a broader set of stakeholders. However, measures for dealing with this incomplete character are built into the generative logic of the process approach. As long as we were able to secure a commitment from the stakeholders for another meeting, which we did, the above shortcoming should not be considered detrimental.

The other outstanding issue is how agreements, reached in these voluntary forums, can be translated to formal forums and institutions. That is the missing element in the current experimental approach to developing a Turkish national participation formula and where it is in need of development. The question is to develop a folding mechanism with other decision making forums. For instance, one of the members of parliament who attended the search conference said in closing that he wanted to discuss the outcome with his own party before any press release was issued. One final observation came as a self-criticism and at the very end of the meeting. The newspaper columnist did not think that the vision

statement was very creative after all. He criticized it for expressing the same old goals that had been talked about for the last fifty years.

VII. Conclusion: major learning points

The major lessons derived from the experiment reported above relate to the questions we sought to answer within an action research process. We had the opportunity to experiment with a national participation formula when no formalized structure was put in place to seek consensus over issues of national importance. To this day, neither a socio-economic council, nor a formal structure has received the backing of all the stakeholders. The lack of consensus is a function of the fragmented texture of the organizational ecology. There are no strong centers of representation for the labor or business community.¹⁰ Given the fragmentation and the increasing number of confederations and associations, it is possible for one of the stakeholders to block the participation of another in a structure such as the socio-economic council. Furthermore, we cannot evaluate the effectiveness of such a structure when it does not exist. One measure of expected effectiveness of such a council is its potential to produce consensus over critical issues.

In the action research undertaking reported above, we have shown that multi-stakeholder, constructive dialogue is not only possible, but it can produce consensus over a critical national issue. A vision for the future of Turkish industry was co-generated by many stakeholders and the mechanism for generating it was implemented successfully. When we have such strong experiential evidence, it would not be necessary to wait for formalized structures to be put into place.

We have also learned that a lasting commitment is necessary to hold these dialogue forums. Clearly one-shot approaches are not going to pave the way towards a new model of participation and collaboration among the stakeholders. However, if the commitment of one large association from both labor and business communities is obtained, such forums will continue to attract the remaining stakeholders. If such minimum commitment cannot be obtained, then the top-down, structure-oriented approach should be preferred.

Notes

1. Naschold, F., Cole, R.E., Gustavsen, B. and van Beinum, H. 1993. *Constructing the New Industrial Society*, (Social science for social action: toward organizational renewal 3). Assen/ Maastricht: Van Gorcum.
2. SBA. 1993. Evaluation of the SBA Program. Oslo: Work Research Institute.

3. Naschold, F. *et al.* 1993. *op. cit.*, ref.1.
4. Some examples around which a consensus could be developed are wage freezes at a certain rate, no layoff policies, no price increases for a period of time, and a new economic investment priority.
5. It has now been more than two years, and the social and economic council is opposed by almost every stakeholder except TUSIAD for various reasons.
6. This is an interpretation of action research (Babüroğlu, O.N. and I. Raun, 1992. 'Normative Action Research.' *Organization Studies*, 13:229-295.) that is not shared by earlier authors who conceive of action and research as two mutually exclusive activities (Susman, G.I. and R. Evered, 1978. 'An assessment of the scientific merit of action research.' *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23:582-603).
7. The National Productivity Center is an exception, and does not get involved in the consensus generating processes.
8. Trist, E.L. 1983. 'Referent organizations and the development of inter-organizational domains.' *Human Relations*, 36(3), 269-284.
9. Habermas, J. 1973. *Theory and Practice*. Boston: Beacon Press.
10. White, F.W. 1991. *Participatory Action Research*. London: Sage publications.
11. Henry, J. (ed.) 1991. *Creative Management*. London: Sage.
12. Winnicott, D.W. 1980. *Playing and Reality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
13. Gustavsen, B. 1992. *Dialogue and Development*. (Social science for social action: toward organizational renewal 2). Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum.
14. Gustavsen, B. 1992. *op. cit.*
15. Their reasons included such things as the death of a neighbor, which they informed us of on the day before the search conference.
16. The search conference process began with a brainstorming session on the trends affecting the industry, followed by the design of the most desirable vision of the future of Turkish industry and eventually by various refinements of the vision.
17. Sunar, Y. and Öniş, Z. 1992. *Sanayileşmede yönetim ve toplumsal uzlaşma* [Management of industrialization and societal consensus]. Istanbul: Tusiad Publications.