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Technological Forecasting & Social Change 72 (2005) 886–911

**Technological
Forecasting and
Social Change**

A systems approach to policy analysis and development planning: Construction sector in the Turkish 5-year development plans

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Received 28 April 2004; received in revised form 3 September 2004; accepted 1 November 2004

Abstract

In this study, we propose a new model for systems analysis ‘of’ policy and systems analysis ‘for’ policy with the example of construction sector in the Turkish 5-year development plans.

Our proposed model—integrated development management model (IDMM)—is conceptually based on the principles of systems thinking and integrated management approach.

We present and discuss the results of our work in which we extracted all construction-related policies and strategies from eight 5-year development plans and analyzed them using the IDMM. In the light of the analyses, we give several answers to the question: “Why did the development plans fail to meet their targets in Turkey?” We propose that any development plan has to have *claritas–unitas–integritas–consonantia* between the management levels (normative, strategic, and operational) and components (goals, structures, and behavior) of IDMM.

The paper is the first work that brings the concepts of development planning and foresight together. In a complementary stance, the time of integrating foresight and development planning has come.

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Keywords: Development planning; Systems thinking; Systemic analysis; Foresight; Turkey; Integrated development management model; Policy design; Country strategy; Construction sector

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1. Introduction

The rapid and unprecedented change in social, technological, economic, ecologic, and political issues creates an increasingly fluid, dynamic, and borderless environment that will be very different in the coming decades from the one we experience today.

Since the future is not the extension of the past—hence is uncertain—it will be different from anything we have seen before [1]. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, many developed and developing countries have adopted a future-oriented behavior and conducted institutionalized national foresight studies to shed light to their “undetermined future” [2]. Gavigan and Scapolo [3] define foresight in the broad sense of “anticipatory thinking as neither new nor particularly esoteric, but is a natural and essential feature of strategy and policy planning activities undertaken by private or public bodies.” One of the most advanced goals of the foresight studies is to develop robust policies and strategies that will guide and coordinate both public and private entrepreneurs while balancing the limited resources in the country.

We suggest that the policy and strategy makers/advisors should look back and understand what happened in the past and should explore how they can infer lessons from the past when they make/advice policy and strategy making. Flanagan [4] noticed that very few studies have gone back and asked the question: “Were our past forecasts correct?” Before the national foresight stream arose in the 1980s and 1990s, in the postwar era, the common practice among developed and developing countries was producing development plans. Development plans have been used to describe long-, medium-, and short-term policies and strategies to gain greater development.

Turkey has formulated eight development plans starting in 1963. In this study, we will analyze these eight development plans by assessing policies and strategies developed for the construction industry as a case. The reasons behind focusing on the construction industry are the industry’s vital socio-economic role in the country and its vulnerability to the economic, political, and social decisions taken by the government.

Stewart and Ayres [5] mention the use of systems analysis in policy making in two ways: systems analysis ‘of’ policy (understanding what is happening when policy is made) and systems analysis ‘for’ policy (generating concepts, ideas, and modes of action when policy makers try to make recommendations about policy problems). In this study, we apply both uses of systems analysis to examine construction policies and strategies in the Turkish development plans by proposing a new model, the integrated development management model (IDMM). Our proposed model is based on the principles of systems thinking [6,7] and integrated management approach [8,9]. The paper is the first work that combines development planning with foresight.

In Section 2, we will briefly review policy analysis and evaluation literature and development plans with their functions at the national level. Section 3 will review the vital role of the construction industry in Turkey’s economic and social life. In Section 4 of this study, we will set up a model based on systems thinking and integrated management concepts. In our study, we contend that the proposed model offers a different, and potentially useful, way of developing policies and their transformations into actions. In Section 5, we will show an application of this model on construction policies and strategies in the Turkish 5-year development plans. In Section 6, we give several answers to the question of: “Why did the development plans fail to meet their targets in Turkey?” Section 7 includes our conclusions.

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