

# The Place and Importance of Associations in Strengthening Trade Unions

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## Abstract

Developments in the globalization process play an important role in the power loss of trade unions. This situation reveals the problems of unionization in the current industrial relations system. At this point, associations with aspects similar to the trade unions and important non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have an important place in terms of understanding the position, the importance, and the functions of today's industrial relations system where different ways of solutions are sought for unionism. In this context, this investigation focuses on the role, importance and functions of associations in the protection and reinforcement of the existing forces of the trade unions.

The investigation aims to evaluate the position, importance and the potential functions of the associations in development of new strategies for strengthening the trade unions, and to suggest new ideas on this direction. The topic (in the direction of the determined purpose) was evaluated under the titles of 'change and transformation in trade unionism', 'new strategies discussed and developed in the process of strengthening the trade unions', and 'the associations in development of new strategies'. According to basic findings, in the process of the re-empowerment of trade unions, associations are emerging as important NGOs in the realization of positive scenarios and

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taking precautions against negative scenarios. In conclusion; besides unionization, importance should be attached to association in every matter. In this process, associations should function in the independent status, in the dependent status, and in the core status.

**Key Words:** Trade Unions; Associations; Organizations; New Strategies; New Functions;

## 1. Introduction

Trade unionism constitutes an important area of controversy in the contemporary industrial relations system. It is possible to see this situation in the social, political and economic functions of the trade unions, mainly due to the decrease in member numbers, which has become a continuous crisis process due to the social, political and economic changes experienced during the globalization process. The basic dynamics of this crisis, experienced in different dimensions based on the social, political and economic structures of the countries, are consisted of globalization and international competition, neo-liberal policies, new technologies, changing management understanding and ideological developments. On the other hand, in the face of this change and transformation, trade unions have developed, applied and worked on different strategies such as social movement unionism, service unionism, national and international trade unionism, orientation to groups with different characteristics and utilization of new communication possibilities. However, the ongoing crisis shows that the strategies developed and implemented against change and transformation are not applied, insufficiently applied, not enough, or that the unions are not in this power. In this context, this work aims to reveal the place and importance of associations, the ties they can establish with trade unions, the functions they can undertake to overcome the crises in trade unionism, and to develop and implement new strategies. Hence the topic of this investigation was evaluated under the titles of 'new strategies that are discussed against change and transformation', 'institutional ties that associations, unions and trade unions can work with in the realization of new strategies', and 'basic functions that associations can undertake in this process'.

## **2. Change and Transformation in the Trade Unions**

There are significant differences between the philosophy, behaviour, economic and social views of the trade unions operating at the beginning of the twentieth century; and the structure, quality and worldviews of trade unions operating at the end of the century. Especially economic policies following the 1950s and 1970s have an important place in experiencing these differences (Ekin, 1994: 85-95). Especially in the 1950-1970 Europe, the goodness of the economic data and the recognition of the new social rights have strengthened the trade unions in the political and economic sense in society and made them an important side in the society. However, this situation was reversed by the economic recessions and crises that began to take place in the 1970s, and the difficult times for the unions started. The slowdown in economic growth along with the oil crisis in this period and the fact that unemployment and inflation became major problems forced unions to fall into a position where they could not advocate many rightful demands and they constantly lost power (Altıparmak, 2001: 78-79).

At this point, it is crucial to define the globalization process used to indicate the change and transformation that took place in this and the next period, and to reveal the change and transformation experienced in unionism. The rapid and continuous economic growth that followed the Second World War, the neoliberal policies following the oil crisis, the end of the cold war period, the pursuit of economic integration of the Eastern Block countries, the elimination of obstacles to accelerate international trade, the pursuit of international economic integration by countries, The rapid economic growth in Southeast Asian countries, the determination of policies to integrate with China's international economy, the developments in communication technologies, international banking systems and capital movements, the socio-cultural life effects of liberalization to increase the consumption demand and international human movements; the globalization process, which involves multiple and mutual relations (Alper, 2015: 41-42), such as the tendency of political liberalization and democratization; regarded as a driving force for economists and businesses to maintain world-wide prosperity while these same factors are regarded as worsening of the existing conditions for trade unionists and social policymakers. In fact, unionists consider these developments as the greatest attacks on trade unions throughout the union history. This worsening, which was mainly due to the decrease in the number of members (Tokol,

2015: 137-140), widened the unionization in a broader sense and brought about negative developments not seen until that time. In this context, the change and transformation that took place in the unionization process during the post-1980 period when compared to the pre-1980 period, in other words during the globalization process, can be summarized as follows: change and transformation from the high number of members to the low number of members, from the financially strong unionism to the financially weak unionism, from the doctrine / revolutionary unionism to opportunist / plain unionism, from right seeker / struggler unionism to reconciler / collaborative unionism, from national / sectoral unionism to local / business unionism and from wage unionism to service unionism (Table 1).

**Table 1:** The Changes and the Transformations in Unionism after 1980 period

High number of members	Low number of members
Financially strong	Financially weak
Doctriner / revolutionist	Opportunist / plain
Right seeker / struggler	Reconciler / collaborative
National / Sectoral	Local / business - workplace
Wage oriented	Service oriented

**Source:** Mahiroğulları, (2016: 70).

One of the most important factors in the emergence of this change and transformation in trade unionism is the decreasing trade union density due to member loss. This situation, which has a decisive influence on the acquisition and use of two important rights such as collective bargaining and strike, has an important influence in shaping post-1980 trade unionism. When countries are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, the less visible declines in countries with relatively high social welfare have reached visible dimensions in industrialized countries (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Trade Union Density in Selected OECD Countries after 1980

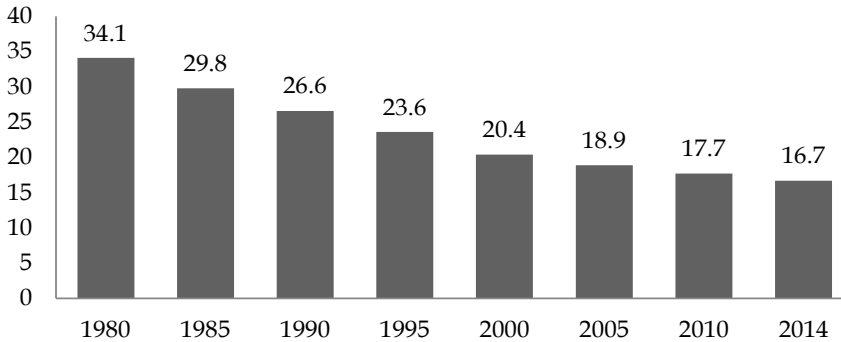
Countries	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013	2014
Australia	48.5	45.5	39.6	32.5	25.7	22.3	18.4	17.0	15.5
Austria	55.8	52.1	47.6	41.9	37.4	33.9	29	27.8	----
Belgium	51.3	49.7	51.1	52.8	56.2	53.7	53.8	55.0	55.1
Canada	34.0	35.3	34.0	33.7	28.2	27.7	27.2	27.1	26.4
Chile	----	----	17.2	14.7	12.6	13.3	15.0	15.0	15.5
Denmark	78.6	77.5	74.6	75.9	73.9	70.7	67.0	66.8	----
Finland	69.4	69.1	72.5	80.4	75.0	70.6	68.6	69.0	----
France	18.3	13.6	9.8	8.7	8.0	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7
Germany	34.9	34.7	31.2	29.2	24.6	21.7	18.6	18.1	----
Italy	49.6	42.5	38.8	38.1	34.8	33.8	36.0	37.3	----
Spain	13.5	12.6	13.5	16.8	16.6	14.6	17.3	16.9	----
Japan	31.1	28.8	25.4	24.0	21.5	18.6	18.4	17.8	17.6
Netherlands	34.8	27.7	24.6	25.9	22.9	20.6	18.6	17.8	----
Norway	58.3	57.5	58.5	57.3	54.4	54.9	53.7	52.1	----
Portugal	54.8	44.6	28.0	25.4	21.6	21.6	19.8	18.9	----
Spain	13.5	12.6	13.5	16.8	16.6	14.6	17.3	16.9	----
Swedish	78.0	81.3	80.0	83.1	79.1	76.5	68.2	67.7	67.3
Swiss	27.5	24.8	22.5	22.7	20.2	19.3	17.1	16.2	15.7
Britain	51.7	46.0	39.7	34.4	30.2	28.6	26.6	25.8	25.1
USA	22.1	17.4	15.5	14.3	12.8	12.0	11.4	10.8	10.7
Turkey	39.5	36.1	35.2	32.0	28.2	16.8	8.9	7.0	----

**Source:** OECD, 2014

According to Table 2; countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where welfare level can be high, show a slight decrease in trade union density. However, in industrialized countries such as USA, Germany, England and France, this decrease seems to have reached important levels. In fact, this situation reflects the changes in the post-1980 economic policies and the fact that these changes are reflected in industrial relations and that this reflection varies based on the country. For example, while Thatcher and Reagan's liberal policies led to significant changes in industrial relations and collective bargaining practices with new regulatory regimes that were declining in terms of trade unionism, institutionalized relations in Federal Germany were not significantly affected by these policy changes.

Countries such as Sweden and Austria have maintained large-scale corporatist structures (Koray, 1994: 72-73). This change is clearer when compared to OECD countries in terms of the general average (Graph 1).

**Graph 1:** OECD Average in Trade Union Density after 1980 (%)



**Source:** OECD, 2014

As can be seen in Graph 1, the average OECD trade union density, which was 34.1% at the beginning of the 1980s, declined steadily in the following years to 16.7% in 2014. According to this, it is possible to talk about a drop of more than 50% in trade union density rates from the beginning of the 1980s to the present day. This situation should be considered as the main factor of change and transformation in unionism because this decline in trade union density has affected all the social, political and economic functions of trade unions in the negative direction. In this context, the changes that are shaped on the basis of economic policies that started to change especially in the 1970s have brought the question of "will there be a future for the unions?" along with their importance for the unions. With this respect, it is accepted that even if different segments were discussing different future scenarios for the unions, the unions entered a new turn and struggle for existence with the developments that occurred in the following years (Koray, 1994: 71).

### **3. Reasons for the Changes and the Transformations Experienced in Unionism**

The developments experienced especially after the 1980s are of great importance for the formation of some trade union characteristics. This situation, which can be expressed in many different forms, can be examined under five different headings, mainly globalization and international competition, neo-liberal policies, new technologies, changing management approach, ideological development.

#### **3.1. Globalization and International Competition**

The economic pause, which began in the mid-1970s, ended the golden age especially in Europe and in the USA. Additionally, the technological superiority of the developed capitalist countries until that day was threatened by newly industrializing countries like Japan and this situation increased the competition in foreign markets significantly. Likewise, the developed economies also entered into a period of depression (Koray, 1994: 72) due to increased external dependency, satisfaction in domestic markets, stagnation in foreign markets and competition of newly industrialized countries offering cheap prices. Moreover, the international capital control of the Multinational Corporations (MNC) which gained importance in this period and grew rapidly, played a major role in shaping the competition. In particular, companies operating in this context entered to countries where the raw material and labour were cheap while at the same time there is no or very little social protection. With the influence of technological developments, these countries controlled the rapid capital circulation and thus became the main determinant of globalization and international competition.

#### **3.2. Neo-Liberal Policies**

The post-1980 economic policies generally took place in the form of returning to liberalism. This period, also referred to as neo-liberalism, comes from the return of the state's intervention in the economy and the hence return of the prosperity policies. This system, which contains major changes for the trade unions and the collective bargaining process, has gained significance in order to regain foreign competitiveness while also bearing a solution for basic economic problems (Koray, 1994: 72). This is the main determinant of new problems in terms of trade unionism. In particular, the policies implemented in this context have widened the

narrowed and unsecured forms of working with the public sector privatizations which are of great importance in terms of unionization. This has brought about different problems.

### **3.3. New Technologies**

Especially the speeding up of technological developments of the countries that want to regain economic dominance, give a different direction to the globalization process. This development, which also means to reduce labour costs, dismissals, to lower wage levels, in short, decline in welfare policies, is another important factor that affects the unionization of the industrial relations system. Moreover, based on post-fordism, these developments mean new production systems, new labour force profiles, new types of work and new management policies (Koray, 1994: 72). With the effects of these developments, the representation crisis, that first appeared as the representation of current and potential members, was followed by other problems (such as the new technology-driven production processes and labour force type and management) that were felt in every area (Yorgun, 2007: 74). In this process, the fact that the developments experienced in response to the increase in demand for the skilled workforce are brought against the unskilled labour force constitutes a separate dimension of the problem. In other words, the increase in demand for workers with more intellectual labour (as a result of technological developments), and the lack of tendency of this work force to unionize in general, constitute an important aspect of change and transformation in trade unionism.

### **3.4. Changing Management Approach**

Increasing competition, productivity and flexibility pressure in today's business world have brought the management strategies that pioneer individual relationships into the agenda by pushing businesses to different management quests. Accordingly, the concept of "industrial relations" has lost importance in terms of organizational strategies of the businesses, and "human resources management" is accepted as a rising value. Therefore, the adoption of the principles of "loyalty to the business" and the "integration with the workplace" in the management systems that give less importance to "collective relations" pose a serious threat to the unions. Likewise, the adoption of the performance principle of pay and reward systems at this point has gradually reduced the role of collective



bargaining. In addition to this, the principle of establishing a direct relationship with the employees, which is mainly aimed at integrating the employees into the management, is seen as a significant effect that leaves the unions out of the system (Mahiroğulları, 2016: 76). In the same way, the progressive fragmentation of the workplace, in other words, increasingly shrinking, attaches importance to the face-to-face interview method in the solution of the employee-employer problems. Moreover, this system, which is also applied in the establishments where modern management techniques adopting the principle of participation in governance are applied, emerges as an important factor in eliminating the unions.

### **3.5. Ideological Developments**

Marxist doctrine has an important place in the formation and development of the idea of unionization. This understanding, which approaches the unionism from a doctrine perspective, and is based on the idea that the capitalist system exploits the workers, deals with the position of labour in the face of capital. Likewise, the Marxist doctrine considers the abolition of wage labour and eventually industrial relations as an aim of the power relation between labour and capital (Çetik and Akkaya, 1999: 28). In this context, the shift of the idea (especially after the 1990s) which nourishes the trade unionism in the system of industrial relations, has significantly accelerated the change and transformation experienced in trade unionism. In other words, the loss of Marxist teaching in the post-1990 period against the individualistic market economy and the disintegration of the Soviet Union have deprived the trade unionism of the existence of an important asset. In addition, the loss of power of the "trade union militancy" concept (with the weakening of Marxist ideology), which was bearing the burden of many doctrinal unionists in the past, and the increasing loss of importance of "class consciousness", have become the perpetrator of the new problems in the process of union - type organization (Mahiroğulları, 2016: 77).

## **4. New Strategies Developed and Discussed Against Change and Transformation in the Union**

### **4.1. Social Movement Unionism**

It is of great importance that the trade unions change their traditional roles depending on the developments experienced during the globalization

process. In this context, trade unions should abandon the notion that only advocates the interests of their members and struggles for these interests. They have to organize themselves in a structured way that strengthens their political effectiveness and is a part of broad-based social movements, thoughts, problems and solutions in the process of cooperation (Selamoglu, 2003: 94). One of the most important strategies expressed for the unions in reaching these aims is the Social Movement Unionism (SMU). The SMU meets a concept of trade unionism that opposes capitalist globalization, neoliberal politics, bureaucratic leadership, reformist and pragmatist trade unionism, leadership of a particular political party, and following a particular ideology. Lack of a specific organization model constitutes the most important feature of this unionism concept emerged in countries such as South Africa, Brazil, South Korea, Philipines and Argentina (all of which displaying an underdeveloped democracy with their own characteristics).

In other words, trade unions in SMU can be organized in almost every place in neighbourhood in addition to their workplaces (Tokol, 2015: 65). With this respect, SMU strategy also realizes the negative effects of social and political changes and transformations that have arisen since 1980 on trade unionism, and determines its activities according to the conditions of the day (Mahiroğulları, 2016: 83). In addition, unions in this model, apart from classical activities such as wages and collective bargaining, also deal with issues that concern the whole society. Therefore, problems such as transportation, housing, education, health, subcontracting, poverty, discrimination, unemployment and environmental pollution constitute the main problem areas of trade union struggle according to SMU. SMU, on the other hand, evaluates the strike as a social life stop; hence it is important for the organization of the society parts such as women, youth, unemployed, retirees, people with disabilities, the poor, and migrants (Tokol, 2015: 65-66).

#### **4.2. Service Unionism**

The main objective of service unionism is to provide individual and collective services in line with the expectations of union members. Especially in the developed countries, trade unions are trying to provide better quality and different supplementary services to their members in line with their understanding of service unionism in addition to their traditional activities. In this scope; working to find solutions to the problems encountered in the work and private life of the workers and

providing legal advice, providing low interest loans for social needs, activities for finance, insurance and tourism, providing private health insurance and pension services, providing low interest credit cards, , providing services, providing travel discounts, and providing savings plans services (Tokol, 2015: 57-58) are of great importance within the scope of service unionism strategy. For example, in Australia, ACTU establishes a card system to facilitate the shopping of its members; the "joint membership" program of the AFL-CIO in the US provides workers with various trade union services with annual dues independent of collective bargaining; in the UK, the TUC is providing additional pension facilities, contracting with electricity and natural gas companies to provide its members with cheap electricity and natural gas; and the "24 hour trade unionism" concept (Tokol, 2015: 57-59) applied in Sweden are important services within the scope of service unionism.

### **4.3. National And International Trade Union Mergences**

Union merges that can be formed by a combination of trade unions with few members to establish new trade unions, or joining of unions with fewer members to unions with more members, is applied as an important strategy in today's industrial relation system in which the unions get weaker day by day. The importance of this strategy is often due to the power component that depends on the number of members required to perform the basic functions of trade unions. In addition to this, the need for resources, the disappearance of some professions and the loss of importance of some business lines are other factors leading to national or international merging of trade unions. In this context, union conventions, also referred to as "super union" in some countries such as Canada, USA, Netherlands, Finland, Germany and England, have an important place in the formation of large scale effective unions. Likewise, the "clustered unions" which organize unqualified labour in Denmark and white-collar workers in Austria and Belgium, are considered within this scope (Tokol, 2015: 56).

On the other hand, international trade union cooperation constitutes an important aspect of union merging. Especially the belief that the social crisis caused by globalization cannot be overcome through national policies, and the belief that the globalizing world requires globalizing unions, make the unions' activities on this direction more and more important. At this point, the activities of the World Business Federation

(WBF) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) are of great importance (Kağnıcıoğlu, 2010: 294). Likewise, on the basis of such activities, there are reasons such as the acceleration of capital flows due to the increase of international competition and the difficulty of labour to keep pace with this change and transformation process.

#### **4.4. Extension to Groups with Different Characteristics**

In addition to the numerical increase in the number of women, young people, unemployed, unregistered workers, pensions, immigrants and non-standard workers, the multiplicity and diversity of problems specific to such groups emphasize the importance of the strategy of unions to move towards groups with different characteristics. Furthermore, the greater significance of unionization in such segments, which are also expressed as disadvantaged groups in social life, constitutes an important point for unions. Accordingly, the strategy of going to groups with different characteristics is mainly moving towards the disadvantaged groups. In addition, this strategy aims solving the increasingly deepening representation crisis generated as a result of solving attempts for the problems of groups with different characteristics through classical approaches by the traditional uniform unions. At this point, while the trade unions are implementing strategies to move towards groups with different characteristics, their focus on group-specific issues and their implementation of solutions in this direction are of great importance in expanding the member base and spreading unionism. For example, in terms of women; addressing issues such as low participation rates in the workforce, high levels of family responsibilities, inadequate training, negative quality of work, exposure to social prejudice, and the male dominated structure of societies; for young people; issues such as low dependence on work and workplaces, unemployment, adverse working conditions, quick job changes, more individualized movements compared to adults, low participation rates to workforce, majority of them being at the service sector and having less experience (Tokol, 2015: 59-61), should be addressed and focused on the unionization of such groups that is of great importance in the union organizing process. In this context, the "ghent system" in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and partly in Belgium; SMU activities in Brazil, South Korea, and South Africa; efforts to migrants, retirees, non-standard workers in countries like Italy, France, England and Germany; activities of the Belgian General Federation of Labour (BGFL) for

migrant workers and retirees; the activities of the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU) for migrant workers; and the activities of the German Metal Workers' Union (GMWU) for non-standard workers (Tokol, 2015: 63-64) are of great importance.

#### **4.5. Exploiting the Recent Communication Opportunities**

The technological developments of recent years have demonstrated the influence on almost all the political, social and economic fields. These developments, which affect the working life from the production systems to the types of work, from the working period to the management systems, and thus the industrial relations systems, have brought about the need for the remodelling of the unionization process. In this context, developments especially in the field of communication; the functions such as organizing on the internet, creating electronic mail, creating web pages, providing information to officials or members, classifying, storing, analyzing and transmitting are of great importance. Likewise, the unions, who are intensively working to use unionization, to strengthen the national and international arena and to use the technology to provide solidarity with these activities, are also aiming to increase international communication with networks, to provide international information flow and to be effective and strong with common solidarity in actions (Kağnıcıoğlu, 2010: 294-295).

### **5. Associations in Realization of the New Strategies**

#### **5.1. Associations in the Context of Right**

Having held its 31st meeting on June 17, 1948, the ILO assessed and re-emphasized the freedom of expression and association published in the Philadelphia Declaration at its general conference as a necessary condition for continuous progress. In addition, the ILO stated that based on Article I, Part 2 of the International Labour Convention, No. 87 on Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organize, employees and employers will be able to set up organizations they want without prior permission, without discrimination. In Turkey, the rights and freedom to establish an association (society) were regulated in different constitutions and laws day by day from the constitutional years and the rights and freedoms of forming a union developed based on these regulations (Gülmez, 1998: 292). The current practice is based on Article 33 of the 1982

Constitution "freedom of association" and Article 51 "the right to form a trade union". In this context, the right to form an association guaranteed by national and international regulations is often accompanied by the right to form trade unions and is an important aspect of the organizational process. This importance is due to the fact that the associations have existed prior to unionisations, in other words due to associations' important missions during the process of unionization rights and the development of the unionization. In this respect, the right to association has carried and is carrying the ability to replace the unions in society especially in the period in which there is no or very weak unionization. In addition, associations are of great importance in terms of the formation and dissemination of unionization with respect to the position they have in regard to the birth and development of other democratic rights and the mission they are charged with.

## **5.2. Associations in the Context of Organization**

The first half of the 19th century, especially before 1840, is known as a period when wild capitalism was largely experienced, the working class was exploited and working in very adverse conditions, the working relations were individual, the democratic structures and rights were not yet developed, the unions were not legally recognized though struggle continued, and organizations (especially those based on class) were forbidden. Because of this situation, it has taken a long time for continuous, harmonious and well-organized unions to be born and developed. In other words, in almost every country, workers who lacked the sense of solidarity of unity encountered significant difficulties in establishing and maintaining unions (Talas, 1983: 180). However, "tradünyons" (artisans' associations, workers' associations, associations, etc.) which can be considered as the first workers' organizations of the industrial society in this period, started to spread gradually (Yazıcı, ? : 36). On the other hand, in this period, in a capitalist economy with traditional means, the union is characterized by a "kind of association" (Dicle, 1980: 28), which was established by workers in order to preserve and improve the living conditions of its members although it was far from matching today's union concept. In other words, the first unions featured an intention not to intervene in the economic and social life, but to fill the space left by the state (Talas, 1983: 181-182). In this period, besides association-based national initiatives, some international organization initiatives were also encountered. In this context, the call

issued by the Lyonian workers to the British workers on May 27, 1832 is regarded as the first example of international solidarity initiatives. This movement was followed in 1834 by the "Young Europe" movement which took place under the leadership of Mazzini. The "Association of Siblings Democrats" founded in London in 1846, the "Democratic Association" in Belgium where K. Marx served as the vice president, the "International Association" founded in 1856 by representatives of the French, British, Polish and German workers' movement, stand out as important examples in this sense (Işıklı, 2003: 113-114). Likewise, in later periods in Turkey it is possible to find worker organization initiatives with similar characteristics in the sense of first appearance. In this context, Amelepver Society, which was mostly a charitable organization and was supposed to be the first worker organization for a long time, is one of them. In the same way, the Italian Operaia Association and the Greek Omonia Association are considered within this scope. The first real workers' organizations that formed on the class conscious base were the Ottoman Amale Association (Karakışla, 2011: 38-39), secretly established in 1894 by labourers working in Istanbul Tophane factories, and several associations following this society (Talas,?: 241). According to these information, it is seen that association type organizations were at the forefront when there was no or very weak trade unions, that the first unions had some kind of association characteristic and that in the following periods, the associations had important missions in the process of unionization and development.

### **5.3. Union-Association in the Context of Organization**

The right to union and the right to association are forms of freedom of association and are considered collective freedoms. The right to union is recognized as a view of the right to association. In addition, union rights and the right to form associations are mixed in some countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg while in countries like England, America and France, these rights are separated (Esener and Gümrukçüoğlu, 2014: 30). From this point of view, Turkey is among the second group countries because it regulates the right to organize trade unions and associations independently in the Constitution. On the other hand, in some constitutional and international documents while there are no special regulations on political party and trade union freedoms, but these freedoms are protected under the umbrella of freedom of association. In other words, freedom of association meets a broad definition, including

freedom of association and political party. Similarly, these organizations are subject to the law of associations when there are no special provisions regarding trade union and political parties (Sezer, 2008: 1). In this context, for example, in Article 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the right to union is regulated within the right to form associations. This feature of the union right, which consists of the protection of professional benefits and the achievement of better working conditions, has made the union more necessary to establish than establishing an association. On the other hand, the fact that the trade unions have the functions of collective bargaining agreements and strikes (Esener and Gümrükçüoğlu, 2014: 30-31) that associations do not have, is the most important feature differentiating the unions from the associations. On the other hand, associations' natures to be established based on professional, religious, artistic, cultural, sportive and scientific basis, to support the ability of a group of people to respond to the aims they share together, and the ability to navigate to a variety of purposes other than earning work, are their abilities to operate on a much wider field. In this context, associations as a collective freedom subject play an important role in the formation of a community that allows communication between people and a social relationship (Kaboğlu, 1989: 60). Likewise, trade unions are very similar in terms of their legal qualities of being legal entities to share profits, and in terms of having characteristics such as the protection and development of the common professional interests of their members. In fact this situation has led to the definition of unions as "a kind of association that protects the rights and interests of the workers who are members" (Esener and Gümrükçüoğlu, 2014: 54). It is also explained by the fact that the right of the union is an extension of the right of the association and that it is an individual freedom based on the community (Narmanlıoğlu, 2013: 12).

According to this, the aspects of the associations such as having a broad meaning including trade union rights, bearing very close aspects to trade union organizations in legal sense, and assuming different missions as the most effective organizations when the unions are absent or weak, brings the need for reactivating the associations in today's industrial relation system with organization problems. In other words, associations can take on important missions in solving the problem of unionism, which is constantly weakened under the influence of different reasons in the process of globalization. This is based on the assumption that unions will reinforce,



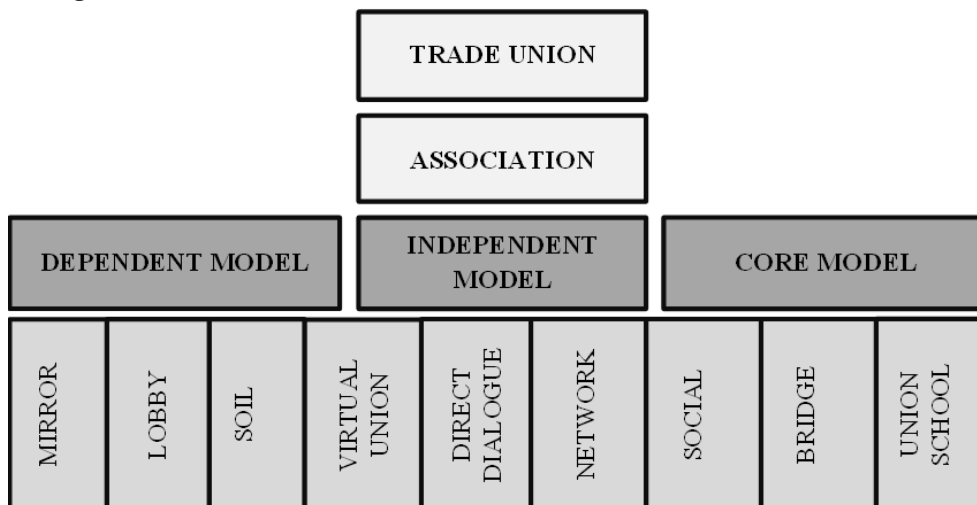
contrary to the predictions that trade unions will disappear or have no effect. Again, this foresight is based on the assumption that the associations (with respect to development of new strategies and the implementation of developed strategies) can become such institutions that fill the trade union gaps, eliminate the shortcomings and deficiencies of the unions or contribute positively to the organizational process by undertaking different social, political and economic missions in this process.

On the other hand, an application that can be implemented on the basis of a union-association relationship is gaining importance and discussion in the system of today's industrial relations is based on successful initiatives that unions have realized not only with associations but also with other non-governmental organizations. In this context, for example, two major trade union confederations in Belgium (ACV / CSC-ABVV / FGTB) and their affiliated organizations have worked together with a number of civil society groups such as Oxfam Solidarité. In the same way, two important confederations in the Netherlands (CNV-FNV) and Germany's DGB and its affiliated metal workers union, carried out the Clean Apparel Campaign supported by IG-Metall. Similar examples are also found in countries like France, Ireland, Italy and England. Among the civil society organizations that are cooperating, activities carried out with organizations operating in the fields of environment, children and immigrants are at the forefront (ETUC, 2010: 32-34). In Turkey, the issue of working with trade unions with non-governmental organizations carries some differences. These differences are seen as non-governmental organizations shaped by working groups who do not reject unions fundamentally but who do not like the position of existing unions and prefer to work independently from unions. In particular, the Subcontractor Workers' Associations (SWAs), which have been increasing for the last 15 years and have been established since 2008 by subcontracted workers who have reached approximately 1.5 million in both private and public institutions today, have a decisive influence in this process. According to this, term president of Ordu OWSA (Ordu Workers Solidarity Association) which has an important place in the increase and spread of associations explains the emergence of SWAs as follows: "... *The Ordu OWSA rejects the notion of a workers' association as an alternative to unionism. Today it is the current trade union system which leaves us in the obligation of association. We also know that the home of the worker is a trade union, we are working to change the trade union system that does not take us home. Until now, we have always found a solution through our association,*

*whether it is individual events that our members are experiencing or social problems...* " (Yorgun, 2007). As it is understood from the explanation, the associations operating in this scope are not considered as an alternative to the trade union. In addition, the emergence of such an organization is explained by the dissatisfied existing structures and activities of the trade unions. TAŞIS-DER (Subcontractor Workers' Associations), KASIC (Solidarity and Solidarity Association of Public Company Employees) and other associations established and operating in this scope; mentioned similar reasons in their statutes and determined the work areas and activities in this direction.

Accordingly, the importance of NGOs in European countries and in the process of organizing in Turkey is becoming increasingly important. This role of the NGOs is of great importance in the current industrial relations system, in which the trade union crisis deepens, in the process of filling up the gaps and re-empowering workers' organizations. Examples of successful initiatives in this context show that new models can be defended. Such modalities, which can be considered more in the context of union-association relations, will provide important clues in overcoming the trade union crisis, filling in trade union gaps and overcoming shortcomings and deficiencies in the unionization process. In this context, associations and other NGOs can operate in dependent, independent and core models together with the unions in the process of organization (Figure 1). According to this structure, which can also be summarized as DER-SEN model, the dependent model is based on the principle that associations work together with the unions, while the independent model is based on completely independent works. The core model, on the other hand, is based on the principle of establishing and operating associations to transform into unions in later periods.

**Figure 1:** Association Focused Unionization: DER-SEN Model



**Source:** The scheme was created by author considering the functions that the associations showed in the organizational process

In today's business world which is particularly concentrated in non-standard and informal working relationships, the union-association relationship that can be realized within the stated scope will nurture the union organizing from the base, in other words, "strengthen from root to tip" by carrying the unions to the sectors most in need. In addition to this, associations that are dependent, independent or core model can fulfil functions such as mirror, lobby, soil, virtual union, direct dialogue, social network, bridge and union school are of great importance in overcoming the trade union crisis and strengthening the organization.

#### 5.4. Institutional Structures Associations Can Form with Unions

##### 5.4.1. Dependent Model

Associations in depended model should work with unions completely and act on this basis. In this model, associations operating under trade unionism should strive to increase unionization at all levels by representing trade unions at the workplace, business and enterprise level. The associations that will be active in this mission should be established by the unions or they can establish themselves and later join the unions. The associations in this role, which operate at different workplace, business, and enterprise levels connected with trade union, will spread the

unionization on the one hand and will differentiate and facilitate the functional aspects of the unions on the other hand. In this context, for example, a hospital should have separate associations for cleaning workers, separate for security workers, and separate associations for nurses. This established organization should have the interests of the group represented by the sole purpose. Likewise, the union that is operating dependent on the association should be able to direct the association when it is in place, and to upload the missions to associations at the point of realization of policies and strategies. In other words, the associations in the dependent model should work only on behalf of the union where they are dependent, or even in the role of "Trojan Horse" in the work sector, workplace or business of that union. Moreover, this model, which can be effective in breaking the prejudices and negative attitudes towards the trade union, is also of great importance in terms of organizational culture development.

#### **5.4.2. Independent Model**

According to independent models, associations should be established in almost every field and should be able to operate completely independently from the union. In particular, associations that have a significant place in the civilization of social structure and in the glorification of civil rights should show the same role in the unionization process. Associations that can address not only the working life but the society at large should also be effective in fulfilling SMU and similar strategies with this mission. This is because the problems in working life are not only related to the working class but also the problems that are closely related to the society in its entirety. For example, problems such as poverty, unemployment, immigration, income distribution injustice, and discrimination directly or indirectly cover a large part of the population. Efforts by the associations that will be active in the mentioned issues will ensure that union culture is formed and developed on the basis of knowing and using civil rights, that the living problems are not merely worker-specific and that unions do not work only for workers' interests but that their main purpose is social welfare. Again with this role of associations, trade unions will be more easily adopted by society, or at least social awareness will emerge. Associations operating in this context will be more active in terms of rights and problems of disadvantaged groups such as social assistance and solidarity, human rights, elderly, women, youth, children, immigrants, and disability.

### **5.4.3. Core Model**

In the core model, associations should be established and operated in line with the vision that they can be transformed into a union in the future. According to this, an association established and operated in a certain period as an association should be transformed into a union after it has provided sufficient conditions for unionization and after reaching a certain level of power. In other words, the associations in the core model should be the "seed and shoot" role of the union tree. Particularly during the initial establishment, trade unions will minimize the problems they have experienced with core model associations. For example, in the process of unionization, in terms of aims such as having more knowledge about unionism, better introducing themselves as the unions, breaking up some prejudices developed about the organization process, establishing suitable grounds for strong unions, forming and acquiring the organizing consciousness, transferring the unions out of their classical functions, and establishing their own unions and the union leaders, are of great importance.

## **5.5. Functions the Associations Can Fulfil**

### **5.5.1. Mirror Function**

Associations that have a significant role to play (especially during the representation of non-standard employees in the working life and organizing process) should concentrate on the problems of the employees in that group and try to represent them in every area, focusing on specific groups such as subcontractors, seasonal workers and part-time workers. In this context, the mirror function of the associations will fill the representation gap of the unions experiencing the representative crisis, in other words, experiencing problems in evaluating the workers with different characteristics and resolving their problems, or it will provide important benefits to the union in this respect. Non-standardized workers with very low unionization will be more likely to be represented in every way, employer, union, or state at all levels, with the mirror function of the associations. For example, from 2008 onwards, increasingly active subcontractor workers' associations (SWAs) have focused primarily on subcontracted employees and their problems, and have maintained activities such as becoming their spokesmen at every stage of the solution, helping them establish their unions, maintaining activities on unionism, rights they possess, and things that can be done. In addition, subcontractors

have tried to represent workers at all levels and have focused on their activities in this direction. In particular, activities of associations such as Ordu İDD, GKŞİ (Giresun Association of Cooperation and Solidarity for Public Employees), KASİP (Association of Public Company Personnel Assistance and Solidarity) and KASİÇ (Solidarity Association of Public Company Employees) are very important. When these associations become example to other non-standard working groups, the mirror function of the associations will assume an important mission in the unionization process.

### **5.5.2. Lobby Function**

According to the Turkish Language Institution, the concept of lobbying is defined as "a community of representatives of groups with common interests". In this respect, the concept of lobbying also includes groups that are trying to fulfil a specific task and realizing the goals and objectives set in this direction. Accordingly, it is of great importance that associations should conduct union lobbying in the course of empowerment of unions, and to work for the widespread unionization at all levels, in order to achieve the determined union goals and objectives. On the other hand, when associations fulfil the lobby function, they should concentrate on approaches such as providing information and documents, providing more frequent and faster information, sending notifications or petitions, organizing and running campaigns, preparing publications such as newspapers and magazines (and delivering them to the target audience), and organizing meetings. In this way, the preparation of the employee group for the membership of the trade union, in other words, the exercise or the preparation of the expectations in this direction will be realized more easily with the lobbying activities of the associations, and hence the unionism concept will become more acceptable in every sector.

### **5.5.3. Soil Function**

The soil function of associations is of great importance for the discovery and training of trade union leaders and activists who play a significant role in the organization process. Especially in the process of unionization, the problem of "union managers and leaders", which is an important problem, will be more easily infused with the soil function of the associations and significant progress will be recorded in this direction. The fact that each group of employees should choose their own leaders to break the prejudices formed in this way and to overcome the "union gang" problem

arising from some events taken place in the past is of great importance for the point of increasing union confidence. And this situation is also important in terms of organizing the unions from the base. Likewise, with the soil function, different group employees claiming that trade unions are often far from representing themselves, will be able to participate more effectively in their organizational process with their chosen leaders, to establish a union in the vision they want and to carry out their activities.

#### **5.5.4. Virtual Union Function**

In the business world, the development of institutional web systems and corporate intranets, the widespread use of e-mail, and the fact that companies use platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn actively in every field, and that such platforms are seen as new interaction channels, developments such as various social media platforms for communication and active participation, the increasing importance of time management, and the application of rapid business models (Smith and Harwood, 2011) make the reality of virtual unions clear in the unionization process. For example, according to a study covering 2004-2006 years (Selamoglu, 2008: 56-57), it has been determined that the web site design of the trade union web sites in Turkey is constructed as a first step but the contents of the web sites are not developed. In the following years, a partial progress has been made, especially under the influence of legal regulations, but this lacking part is still on the agenda as an important problem. In this context, for example, TIDs attach importance to practical applications such as instant information sharing, status reporting, interpretation, idea sharing and live broadcasting through different communication platforms and groups they formed, and their enhancement of these components in every area, is an indication that the social media aspects of trade unions are still weak. In this context, the most popular social media platforms are Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, and Whatsapp applications. For example in Twitter, there are 5606 followers of the Subcontractor Workers' Association Account, 7343 followers of the Subcontractor Workers account, and instant sharing is made through such accounts used by people in the management of the association. Similarly, on Facebook, there are 133323 members of "Public Subcontractors" account, 17686 members of "Public Subcontractor Employees Platform" and 65807 members of "Subcontractors are Merging in Social Media" account. As can be seen, social media is actively used at almost every level in terms of

institution, province and general platform. In other words, the "virtual union" function is very effective in organizing the associations. Activities such as instant information and exchange of ideas, sharing of the latest developments, comments, criticisms, quick interviews with leaders, asking questions at any moment, getting instant answers, giving location, etc. indicate that this aspect of the associations is highly developed in social media. In other words, this aspect of the associations is of great importance in strengthening the unions.

#### **5.5.5. Direct Dialogue Function**

The dialogue nature of the associations is more prominent during the transmission of non-standard worker problems to the related authorities. In other words, some associations claim that trade unions are ineffective in this process, in particular they do not get the service they expect from trade unions. They try to solve their problems by going directly to almost every level, from the local forces to the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Social Security. Visits to different levels of people or institutions such as district governorships, governorships, political party organizations and leaders, candidates for deputies, ministries, ministers in person, etc., have an important place in the direct dialogue process. In this context, for example the visits of the KASIP, ORDU İDD and TAŞ-İŞ-DER to the GNAT (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey), to ministers, to political parties, and their efforts in this direction, show the direct dialogue function of the associations. On the other hand, the direct dialogue function of the associations also plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the social dialogue mechanism. In general, the union and civil society, which are weak (against government and employers who play a dominant role in the functioning of the social dialogue mechanism), are more effective and that the representation of the other working groups (less represented or not represented at all) will be possible. Thus, the mechanism of social dialogue, which is discussed as an important method for the solution of the problems in the contemporary industrial relations system, can be realized at a more balanced and desired level. In this respect, when the direct dialogue function of associations is carried out (independent or dependent from the unions), it is more likely that the organizational process will be more effective and productive.



### **5.5.6. Network Function**

The network function of the associations means that the association-type organizations operate effectively and balanced at almost every level such as workplace, business, business branch, district, province, region, country wide or even at international level. Associations, which can be created by working groups with the same characteristics in particular, will be more effective when they focus on the groups they represent. In the same way, this function, which will feed unionization from root to tip, is also of great importance for people in the same interest group to be in constant contact with each other and to act together. In addition, network function is an important factor that will extend the unionization to the most needed sectors. At this point, it is of utmost importance that TIDs try to operate at the level of institution, industry, province, region and country (especially association, federation and platform level). For example, associations established by many subcontractor workers such as in Giresun, Ankara, Tokat, Malatya Amasya, Adana and Ordu, as well as associations established at institutional level such as Tokat State Hospital subcontractors, Malatya Turgut Ozal Medical Center employees and Çapa Medical Faculty subcontract workers, local associations such as KAŞIP (Kahramanmaraş, Mardin and Adıyaman) and KASİÇ (in Central Anatolia such as Yozgat, Çorum and Sivas), associations operating at national level such as the Platform of Public Subcontractor Employees, and even some associations such as TAŞIŞDER, are important examples in terms of realization. Network functions of associations will take on important missions in the process of establishing effective and efficient communication channels in both horizontal and vertical sense, in short, at all levels (such as communication, information and documents), especially at the point where the formation of consciousness is formed in all working groups.

### **5.5.7. Social Function**

The social aspect of associations is of great importance for changing the classical roles (such as wage-trade unionism) that have so far been tailored, and for realizing the other functions of trade unions. Moreover, when considering the increasing "human-centered" transformation of today's business world, the realization of the aim of "unity" among the employees emphasizes the need that social sides of the unions should be promoted. In addition, the strengthening of the social function of associations will be an

important tool for the livening up and achievement of the "union of service" discussed as a new strategy in today's trade unions. Again, activities that TIDs have realized in this direction are emerging as successful attempts of social functions of associations. In this context, the activities organized by the TIDs periodically (such as the Black Sea meeting, the Tokat program, the Ankara program and the Sivas meeting) are striking. In addition, these programs and meetings, colored with organized meals, sightseeings, picnics and special nights, are important examples of social activities. In this context (for example on organized nights), to make speeches, to write and read poems expressing their problems, to make live broadcasts via social media about activities or to record and broadcast videos, are some opportunities for subcontractors to take advantage of. This point is especially indicated in the statutes of the associations. For example, TİDEP has also emphasized the issue of "making and pioneering socio-cultural activities" when it stated reasons for establishment. Accordingly, it is also stated that this aim will be tried not to be realized only for the subcontracted workers, but also for all employees to be benefitable.

#### **5.5.8. Bridge Function**

This function of the associations is of great importance, especially in moving the wishes, requests and complaints of the potential union members to the upper authorities. This function, which can be realized between employees and trade unions, employers and government officials, is the developed version of the mirror function mentioned earlier. This mission, which is more representative in the mirror function, has more meanings with organic bonds in the bridge function. For example, an association in the function of a bridge must be able to file a lawsuit and follow it on behalf of the employee in order to protect and improve the rights and interests of an employee, whether a trade union member or not. At this point, within this function in which law counsellors have important roles, the most important aim of the associations should be establishing the bridge between the workers (with not much knowledge about the process) and unions, employers and the government directly or indirectly. On the other hand, the bridge function of the associations at the point where the economic, social and political functions of trade unions are realized more easily at the workplace, business and enterprise level will fulfill an important function in that the requests and wishes of all employees are

presented to the necessary places by the association boards, and the feedback is made through the same channel. In other words, associations will create a two-sided vector effect with the bridge function they try to realize.

### **5.5.9. Union School Function**

In terms of associations, perhaps the most important reason making this function the most essential during the process of organization is the employees who have not enough knowledge and ideas on issues such as unionization, individual rights, collective rights, democracy and constitutional rights. This function, which can be carried out by systematic information sharing and training by associations, will fill a significant gap in the unionization process and will help to raise conscious individuals needed in the process of re-empowerment of the unions and to make other union functions more effective. In this context, systematic, planned, continuous and practical trainings that can be carried out by different professional groups such as lawyers, trade unionists and academicians will make the unionization process more effective by generating awareness and organization consciousness among the employees. While this function is being performed, it is of special importance that experts in different subjects take part in the same process. For example, in the function of a union school where an academician, a trade unionist, and a lawyer are involved, the trade unionist should consider the practical dimension while the academician should provide general theoretical information about the working life (such as the right to strike and the collective bargaining agreement) and the lawyer should evaluate the actual legal dimensions.

## **6. Conclusion and Suggestions**

Globalization process is based on defining change and transformation in unionism. The international competition, neo-liberal policies, new technologies, changing management concept and ideological developments in this process, affect the unionization negatively. The Unionists have developed and implemented strategies to cope with this change and transformation, such as social movement unionism, service unionism, national and international trade unionism, orientation to groups with different characteristics, and utilization of new communication possibilities. However, this situation has not been at the desired level and it

has been inadequate to overcome the crisis experienced in unionism. At this stage, it is very important to question the place of associations at the point of use of democratic rights and at the point of strengthening the organizational process. In other words, in the reinforcement of trade unions, associations should undertake different missions by establishing different institutional relations with trade unions. In this process which can be summarized as the DER-SEN model, associations can take part in the dependent model in which they work together with the unions, in the independent model in which they work completely independently from the union, and in the core model in which they will be established and transformed into unions in the future. Likewise, associations that can operate in a dependent, independent and core model can assume mirror, lobby, soil, virtual union, direct dialogue, network, social function, bridge and union school functions. This role of associations in the process of empowerment of organizations has an important place in the implementation and success of new strategies, in the development of new strategies to fill the trade union vacancies, spreading of unionization, making social, political and economic functions of unions more effective and more functional in addition to eliminating hitches and deficiencies in unionization process. In this context, associations will provide representation of all sections with their mirror function especially non-standard workers. With the lobby function, the union will provide lobbying activities on all issues while ensuring that the activists and union leaders needed by the soil function are trained. They will present different solution methods with direct dialogue function (especially social dialogue and participation in management) while reflecting the developments in technology and social media with the virtual union function in the organizational process. They will overcome the classical roles of unionization with social functioning while establishing networking chains extending from the enterprise level to the international level. They will provide the creation of the desired conscious class with the union school function, while carrying out the wishes and complaints at every level, reaching the upper authorities and providing feedback will be achieved with the bridge function. In short, in view of the historical facts and union-association right, the DER-SEN model should be considered as an important way to overcome the trade union crisis in the globalization process.

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