

Significance of Model Forest Stakeholders in the Management of Sustainable Forest Resources: The Case of Yalova Model Forest, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Success of model forests, which are organized to support sustainable management of forests in collaboration with environmental, social, and economic forces on forest-based large territories, depends on the development of civil society index dimensions defined as “stakeholder participation,” “organizational structure,” “environment,” “values,” and “impact.” In this study, which was carried out within the scope of Yalova Model Forest, situation analysis strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis was used as a method. Literature and official documents, expert opinions on “stakeholder engagement,” and data obtained through a 30-question survey were used as material. In this study, “historical development,” “legal regulations,” “activities” of Yalova Model Forest and weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, threats of civil society index and strategies pertaining to them were determined. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis was conducted by forming four separate focus groups for four dimensions of the Yalova Model Forest civil society index. According to the results of this study, the stakeholder participation dimension was concluded to be exceedingly inadequate. This is evidenced by advocate stakeholders’ insufficient participation rates in activities, absence of adverse stakeholders in this reconciliation platform, and the fact that 99% of dormant–indifferent stakeholders are unaware of this organization’s existence. Therefore, stakeholder participation dimension should be strengthened and the strategic plans that will be implemented should be prepared with the participation of stakeholders. Otherwise, Yalova Model Forest’s existence, as a civil society organization, will be jeopardized. However, active advocate stakeholders’ enthusiasm about resolving problems is reassuring for the future of Yalova Model Forest.

Keywords: Civil society index, model forest, situation analysis SWOT, stakeholder, sustainable forest management

Introduction

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), with their own dynamics and pluralist organization styles, essentially have an autonomous perception of management independent of the state. Nongovernmental organizations, which are founded on a voluntary basis by individuals sharing common values, goals, localities, efficacies, and interests, take on responsibilities in solving social and generational problems such as ensuring human rights, improving sanitary conditions, protecting natural resources, preventing pollution, etc., without seeking any profits. Nongovernmental organizations are organized by task-focused individuals and provide various services and humanitarian functions related to matters mentioned above (FAO, 2002; GREENPEACE, 2021; Kaynar, 2008; Özer, 2008; RATNA GLOBAL, 2021; Yıldırım, 2003). Thanks to the gradual consolidation of globalization, NGOs that serve at local, regional, and/or national levels have started to gain international strength. Thus, NGOs, which are known as “the third sector” apart from the public and private sectors, provide global assistance at both national and international levels in policy-making processes related to issues such as war, poverty, pollution, and sustainable management of natural resources (Gündüz & Kaya, 2014).

There are several national and international NGOs that organize activities intending to assist the protection of natural resources. Greenpeace, World Wildlife Foundation, World Conservation Union, European Forest Institute, The International Tropical Timber Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)-Forestry, International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, Commonwealth Forestry Association, International Institute for Environment and Development, and International Model Forest Network (IMFN) can be named as the leading ones among these NGOs. In this study, one of the main stakeholders of IMFN, one of the NGOs mentioned above, is focused on model forests. For this reason, the concept of model forest is explained in detail.

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Model forests were developed by the Government of Canada in the early 1990s and were employed in ten areas across the country. Consequently, they were introduced to the world by the Prime Minister of Canada at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. Currently, there are about 70 model forests functioning in more than 35 countries. These organizations share their activities via six regional model forest communication networks under IMFN (1—African Model Forest Network, 2—Baltic Landscape Network, 3—Canadian Model Forest Network, 4—Ibero-American Model Forest Network, 5—Mediterranean Model Forest Network, and 6—Asia Regional Model Forest Network). International Model Forest Network is the world's largest network dedicated to sustainable landscape governance too (imfn.net, 2023). In addition to the hundreds of local stakeholder groups engaged directly in model forests, this organization also works in collaboration, at a global level, with several other international organizations serving similar causes such as FAO of the United Nations, The Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration, Landscapes for People, Food, and Nature, Center for International Forestry Research, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center, Center for the Services and Promotion of Forestry and Forest Industries in Castilla and Leon, and Royal Forest Department of Thailand (Çakır & Özdemir, 2013; IMFN, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; imfn.net, 2023).

Declaration of model forest is, on a global scale, the adopted method of conserving forests, natural ecosystems, and cultural heritage for human activities (imfn.net, 2023). However multi-stakeholder management will be difficult due to different process expectations of forest stakeholders (Nijnik et al., 2010). Therefore, developing methods to deal with stakeholders' concerns and involving them in the decision-making procedure is important for model forests as for other protected areas in order to maximize sustainability and benefits to society. Therefore, the significance of identifying stakeholders' diverse interests and knowledge about model forests has been emphasized in the academic literature (Abdullah et al., 2018; Ameha et al., 2014; Brankov et al., 2019; Esfehiani et al., 2018; Ilham et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2018; Monz et al., 2016; Schaller et al., 2013).

The term "model forest" is defined in two distinctive scopes. The first one of these defines the term as "a geographic area that represents all uses and values of the forest," whereas the second one defines it as "an approach that supports the sustainability of landscapes and natural resources on forest-based large terrains." Based on these definitions, it can be said that the goal of a model forest is "to enable a rapport between the social, environmental, and economic needs of local communities inhabiting bordered territories and the sustainable management of forest resources on these territories" (IMFN, 2021a, 2021b). For this reason, as civil society organizations, model forests functioning in geographical territories of certain size bring together various stakeholder groups with differing perspectives and conflicting interests (Elbakidze et al., 2010, 2012; Hvenegaarda et al., 2015). The leading ones among these stakeholder groups can be listed as industrialists utilizing land for purposes such as forestry, agriculture and mining, governments (central, municipal, provincial, federal), other NGOs, schools (from elementary schools to universities), researchers, private forest owners and associations, governmental organizations (governmental organization utilizing land for purposes such as forestry and agriculture and mining), inhabitants of forests and their surroundings, local entrepreneurs marketing forest products, and ordinary citizens. Evidently, it is not easy for these stakeholder groups to form a common vision with regard to the sustainable management of forest resources (Bekiroğlu, 2015; Bekiroğlu

et al., 2016; Brankov et al., 2022; Özdemir, 2011, 2013; Özdemir et al., 2014). Fundamentally, the issue of creating common policies, strategy, and vision that is relevant to an established objective is binding on all NGOs. In CIVICUS 2010, it is outlined that the success of NGOs with regard to this issue depends on increasing the number of stakeholders, strengthening of solidarity between stakeholders, preparing and implementing extensive, and effective action plans; it is also noted that these organizations need to improve on the five dimensions (structure, environment, values, impact, and citizen/stakeholder participation) of what is known as the civil society index (also known as the civil society diamond) in order to become effective and resilient NGOs (İçduygu et al., 2011).

The motivation of this study is to examine the Yalova Model Forest (YMF) Association,¹ which has been founded with an objective to contribute to the sustainable management of forest resources at local and global levels, through situation analysis and to determine the propositions put forward by stakeholder groups in order to strengthen YMF according to five dimensions of the civil society index indicated in CIVICUS 2010 (structure, environment, values, impact, and citizen/stakeholder participation) as well as to emphasize the importance of stakeholders for the sustainability of YMF.

Material and Methods

Study Area

The study area is YMF, the first model forest of Turkey (Figure 1). The total area of YMF, which has been founded as an association in 2010, is 79,185.00 ha. Fifty-nine percent of this area (46,613.00 ha) consists of forests, 30% of it is agricultural land, and 11% of it is allocated for other uses. As per the above-mentioned data, YMF is recognized as a large-scale forest (YMF, 2011, 2015).

Forty-six percent (36,201 ha) of YMF are broadleaf deciduous forests, 11% (8,518 ha) are coniferous forests, and 2% (1,894 ha) are in mixed broadleaf-coniferous forests. Eighty-five% of these forests are natural, and 15% are plantation. The leading tree species commonly found in YMF are beech (*Fagus orientalis*), larch (*Pinus nigra*), common oak (*Quercus robur*), sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), and Hungarian oak (*Quercus frainetto*). Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), plane (*Platanus orientalis*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa*), large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*), English yew (*Taxus baccata*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), and common plum (*Prunus domestica*) are found in small quantities. Additionally, various types of shrubs, bushes, and herbaceous plants are also found. Besides wood products, forest products such as Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), oregano (*Thymus serpyllum*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Mexican abelia (*Abelia floribunda*), strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), common polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*), rose hip (*Rosa canina*), Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*), dewberry (*Rubus caesius*), and terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*) are also obtained from YMF (Anonymous, 2006, 2008; YMF, 2011, 2015). Additionally, wildlife such as bear (*Ursus arctos*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa scrofa*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), squirrel (*Sciurus anomalus*), jackal (*Canis aureus*), badger (*Meles meles*), hedgehog (*Erinaceus concolor*), rabbit (*Lepus europaeus*), lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), tortoise (*Testuda graeka*), snake (*Ophiomorus*), turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), quail (*Coturnix coturnix*),

¹ From here onwards, Yalova Model Forest (YMF) will be used to refer to Yalova Model Forest Association.

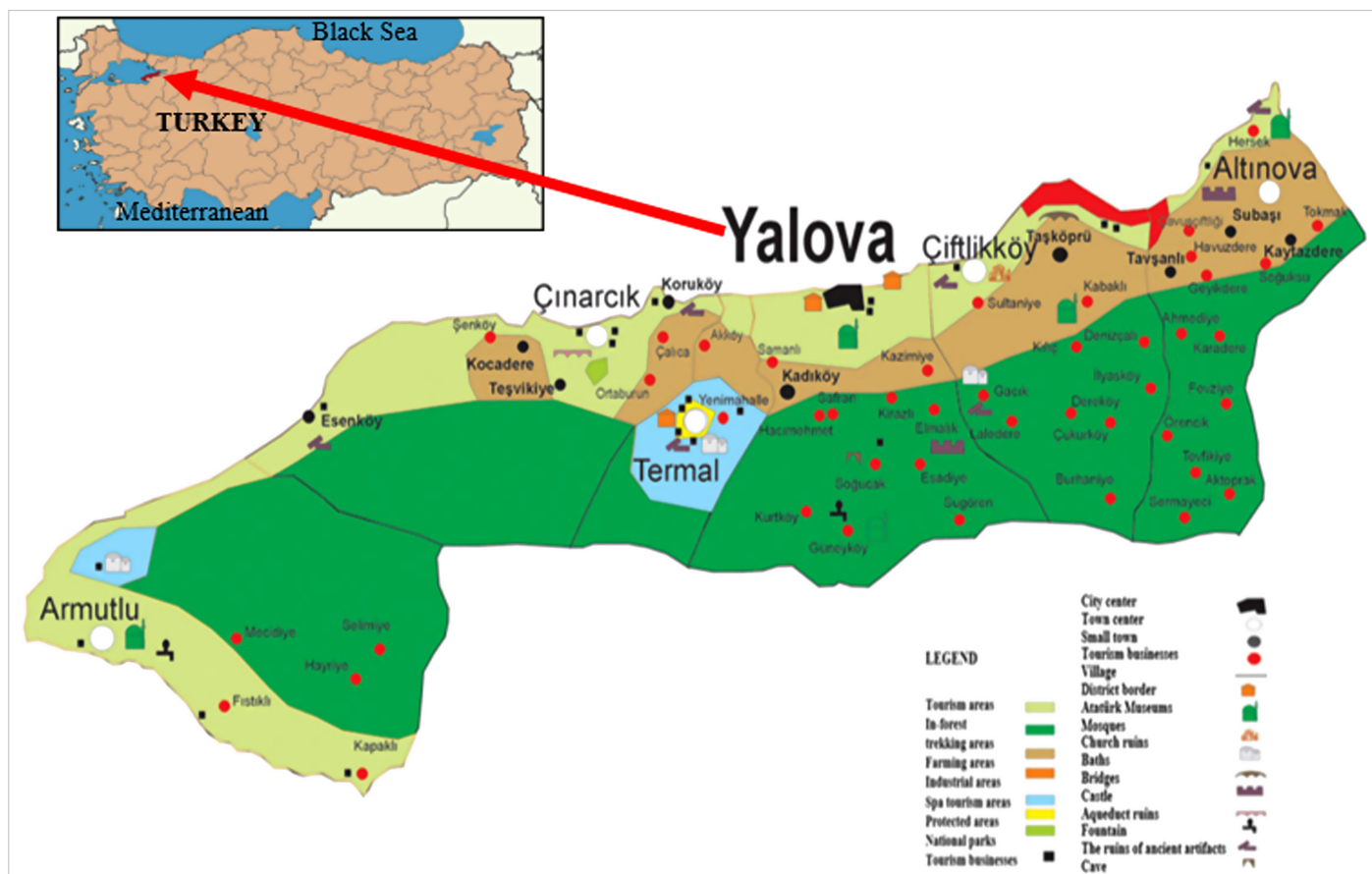


Figure 1.
 Geographical Location of Yalova Model Forest.

blackbird (*Turdus merula*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Eurasian coot (*Fulica atra*), Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), chukar partridge (*Alectoris chukar*), woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), buzzard (*Buteo buteo*), and Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) also inhabit the YMF (YMF, 2015).

In the year 2010, Yalova province had an overall population of 203,741 (101,662 males, 102,079 females) sharing the same area as YMF. In 2016, Yalova's population reached 241,665 (120,605 males, 121,060 females). As per data obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), average population growth in Yalova province has been at a rate of 2.56% in the period between 2010 and 2016. Based on this population growth rate, Yalova is among Turkey's top ten provinces experiencing most rapid population growth. However, internal migration plays an essential role in Yalova's population growth; thus, as urban population increases, rural population decreases. Furthermore, there are 40 forest villages in Yalova province which are closely involved with forest resources and are in the scope of rural development. Population living in these villages make up 10% of the province's overall population, paralleling the ratio in most of Turkey (TUIK, 2017).

Experimental Design

Data Acquisition and Analysis Method of the Study

Material used in this research study consists of the relevant literature, field observation, expert opinions, institutional documents, media news, data obtained through a 30-question survey, and results of S:

strengths, W: weaknesses, O: opportunities, T: threats (SWOT) analyses acquired from four distinctive focus groups.

The method of this research study is situation analysis which is commonly used in incident-process evaluation. The incident/process discussed within situation analysis is examined in five stages: (1) historical development, (2) legal regulations, (3) activities, (4) stakeholder/citizen participation, and (5) SWOT analysis. These stages are explained as follows:

- At the first three stages, by means of literature review, expert opinions and field observations, historical development, relevant regulations, and activities related to the incident/process taken as research subject are summarized in the form of a report.
- At the stakeholder/citizen participation (fourth) stage, interest/stakeholder groups that influence the incident/process taken as research subject and are influenced by it are assessed. During this assessment, first and foremost, stakeholder groups can be categorized as per certain specifications, such as their supportive or adverse attitude toward the established objective. Subsequently, stakeholders can be categorized in four groups: (i) advocate stakeholders (actively supportive ones), (ii) adversary stakeholders (actively curtailing ones), (iii) dormant stakeholders (passively supportive or averse ones), and (iv) indifferent stakeholders (uninterested ones). Additionally, at this stage, influences of stakeholder groups, their networks, their past and present positions as well as their future potential are also questioned (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). As a result, positions and interests of

stakeholder groups as well as their relationships between each other are clearly outlined.

- At the SWOT analysis (fifth) stage, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the incident/process taken as research subject are determined. Consequently, internal and external factors that have and/or might have a positive or negative influence on reaching established objectives are determined (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Namugenya et al., 2019).

Application of the Analysis Method for the Yalova Model Forest Case

Domestic and foreign literature concerning YMF was reviewed, field observations were conducted, expert opinions were sought, and official and institutional documents were examined, and as a result of these examinations, reports pertaining to the first three stages (history–legal regulation–activities) of the situation analysis were prepared. Subsequently, as stated in STEP (2005), stakeholder groups which are equivalent in terms of degrees of influence and importance were determined as per expert opinions. Four focus groups were formed for four dimensions of the YMF civil society index (structure, environment, values, and impact) with the participation of 55 stakeholders out of 120 who had been invited to the YMF—First Strategic Action Plan (YMF-1.SAP). In revision workshop, in order to represent these stakeholder groups, these 55 stakeholders were randomly distributed to four focus groups, each group composed of 14–15 stakeholders. In compliance with the rules, each one of the composed YMF structure, environment, values, and impact focus groups determined the S, W, O, T specifications of their respective YMF civil society index dimension and the strategies related to these specifications. Additionally, a 46-question survey (7 questions related to demographics, 19 related to perception-attitude, and 20 related to knowledge-awareness levels) was conducted in order to make an assessment à propos the fifth dimension of the YMF civil society index (stakeholder/citizen participation). The survey was conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews with randomly selected individuals of 18 years of age or older residing in the Yalova province. Sample size (n) for these surveys was calculated using the formula indicated below (Altunışık, 2005; Coşkun, et al., 2019).

$$n = \frac{Nt^2pq}{d^2(N-1) + t^2pq}$$

where N is the number of individuals in the universe (population), p is the percentage picking a choice, expressed as decimal, $q: 1 - p$, expressed as decimal, t is the t value (e.g., 1.96 for 95% CI), and d is CI, expressed as decimal. In this study, using $N=226,514$, $p=.5$, $q=(1 - p)=0.5$, $t=1.96$ (at 0.05 confidence level and ∞ degree of freedom), $d=0.05$ values, the sample size (n) was calculated as 384. For this purpose, a survey study was conducted with 400 individuals, 320 of whom were from the central districts of Yalova and 80 from its villages.

Results

A Brief History of Yalova Model Forest

Several factors with historical, political, sociocultural, and economic dimensions play a role in forest land property structures of a country. These factors caused changes and problems concerning forest ownership. Turkey is one of the countries where such problems were experienced. Prior to the Turkish Republic, everyone used to have open access to a sizeable portion of forest resources; hence, forest villagers could easily make use of forests. Later however, 99.9% of forest lands were

assigned to state ownership, and forest villagers were prohibited from making use of forests without official permits (Ayaz & Gümüş, 2016).

About 7.2 million villagers of Turkey depend on forests for their livelihood, and they make up about 10% of the country's overall population. Furthermore, these villagers whose livelihood depends completely on the forest represent the lowest income-generating segment of society. Not breaking habits of the past, forest villagers continued to make use of forest resources by illegal means in order to survive. This situation caused conflicts between those managing forest resources and forest villagers. For this reason, various measures with legal, political, and socioeconomic aspects were taken in order to ensure sustainable management of forest resources. The most significant and comprehensive one of these measures is the foundation of Directorate General for Forest and Village Relations (ORKÖY). Since its foundation in 1970 to the present, ORKÖY has enabled the implementation of a large number of projects with socioeconomic aspects that made it possible for forest villagers to earn their livelihood without damaging the forest (Daşdemir & Yılmaz, 2016; Önal & Bekiroğlu, 2011). For instance, during the period between 1975 and 2015, it enabled forest villagers to execute 594 projects with economic aspects, amounting to a total of 177,400,000 USD in value (OGM, 2017). Besides the ORKÖY projects, various permits and easement rights enabling forest villagers to legally make use of forests have also been issued. However, in Turkey, all these measures have not been able to prevent forest villagers from making use of forests inappropriately. As a result, to this day, forest villagers and other interest groups who want to take advantage of forests for different purposes (the forestry organization, miners, those engaged in livestock, those wishing to obtain, or offer recreational services, environmentalists, etc.) have not been able to reach a consensus. For this reason, Turkey decided to try out the model forest initiative, which had been developed in Canada in the early 1990s as an innovative approach to sustainable management of forest resources (Çakır & Özdemir, 2013; YMF, 2011). Action was taken in accordance with this decision, and in 2010 YMF, the first model forest of Turkey, was founded in the Yalova province. In the period between 2010 and 2014, YMF-1.SAP and in the period between 2014 and 2017, YMF – Second Strategic Action Plan (YMF-2.SAP) were prepared in order to execute the YMF activities (YMF, 2015).

Yalova Model Forest's Legislative Obligations

Model forests are one of the civil society organizations considered to be “the third sector.” Model forests can continue to exist provided that they comply with the IMFN model forest principles. At the same time, model forests are NGOs. For this reason, model forests are obliged to comply with legislation pertaining to forests, natural resources, and NGOs effective in the countries they belong to in addition to the IMFN principles. In this case, YMF is subject to the provisions of the constitution, statutes, regulations, and directives pertaining to natural resources and NGOs effectiveness in Turkey (YMF, 2011). In addition to this, existing laws cannot be described as sufficient for YMF activities. This is evidenced in the first strategic action plan which enlists “dissipating the deficiencies in legislation pertaining to YMF” within priorities under the scope of “ensuring institutional development.” The action planned in order to reach this objective was described as “advisory legislation change draft papers will be prepared for YMF.”

International Model Forest Network is an organization that aims to achieve sustainable management of natural resources worldwide through model forests. The mission of this organization is to support sustainable management of natural resources with a landscape-based and participatory approach that reflects upon environmental and socioeconomic problems with regard to local needs and global

concerns. Even though flexibility at the local regard level is allowed to a certain degree, IMFN set the principles and attributes of model forests as partnership, landscape, commitment to sustainability, governance, program of activities, and knowledge-sharing, capacity building, and networking in order to ensure unity of action at a global level (IMFN, 2017).

Yalova Model Forest's Field of Activity

Forests that make up 59% of the YMF area are significant primarily in terms of wood production and for recreational activities (picnicking, camping, trekking, jogging, biking, paragliding, wildlife observation, and photography), eco-tourism and production of forest products besides wood. Wood production from YMF is carried out in accordance with the arranged forest management plans. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the production of products besides wood (beekeeping, mushrooms, medical and fragrant herbs, chestnut, linden, laurel and flowers, etc.) (YMF, 2015). Yalova Model Forest has three general objectives: (1) protection of the forest ecosystem, (2) sustainable management of wood and forest products besides wood, and (3) sustainable utilization of ecosystem services. Priorities of YMF-1.SAP, which has been prepared within the scope of these general objectives, were established as: (a) protecting forests, (b) improving forests, (c) making use of forests, and (d) ensuring institutional development and communication with IMFN. Pertaining to these priorities, 28 objectives and 62 activities were planned (IMFN, 2017). A budget of 1,805,500 USD was designated for this plan period, and this budget was distributed among YMF-1.SAP priorities, respectively: 21% (a), 63% (b), 8% (c), and 8% (d). Looking at these ratios, it is observed that the highest share from this budget (84%) was reserved for priorities related to protecting and improving forests. During this plan period, execution of eight activities was planned: (1) production of biomass and sustainable wood, (2) mushroom production, (3) production of medical and fragrant herbs, (4) rural tourism, (5) protection of the environment, (6) honey production, (7) wild fruit production, and (8) climate change and renewable energy production (YMF, 2011). When these YMF-1.SAP activities are examined, only two of them (5 and 8) appear to be related to protecting and improving forests. Furthermore, YMF started to experience problems concerning administration, stakeholder participation, and YMF-1.SAP activities as of the second year following its foundation. For this reason, YMF-1.SAP Revision Workshop was organized on October 15, 2013. Following this workshop, YMF-2.SAP was prepared in order to be implemented in the period between 2014 and 2017 (YMF, 2015).

Priorities of YMF-2.SAP were established as: (1) protection of forests and reduction of environmental effects, (2) improvement of wood products, (3) improvement of forest products besides wood, (4) improvement of forest-based tourism, and (5) ensuring institutional development. Twenty-six objectives and 102 activities were determined in order to achieve these five priorities. A budget of 301,900 USD was designated for YMF-2.SAP, and this budget was distributed among five priorities, respectively, in the following ratios: 35%, 10%, 39%, 13%, and 3%. As can be seen, the highest shares of the mentioned budget were reserved for forest products besides wood (39%) and protection of forests and reduction of environmental effects (35%) (Özdemir et al., 2018; YMF, 2015).

It is observed that YMF-1.SAP and YMF-2.SAP differ from each other in terms of priorities, activities, and budgets. These differences are plausible, as 65%–70% of YMF-1.SAP activities were never executed.

Stakeholders of Yalova Model Forest

As per YMF-1.SAP, there are nine stakeholder groups:

1. Elected officials (Ministers, Members of the Parliament, Mayors, Members of the Provincial Assembly, Members of the Municipal Council, Village Muhtars²),
2. Government agencies (Ministry of Forestry and Water Management, General Directorate of Forestry, Bursa Regional Directorate of Forestry, Governor of Yalova, East Marmara Development Agency, Yalova Directorate of Forest Administration, Yalova Municipal Authority, State Institutions and Organizations, Municipal Authorities of Districts and Towns, Offices of Village Muhtars),
3. Professional organizations (professional chambers, manufacturers' guilds, unions, cooperatives),
4. Educational institutions (University of Yalova, elementary and middle schools, Directorate of Public Education, private schools),
5. Medical institutions (hospitals, community health centers, dispensaries, private hospitals, and clinics),
6. NGOs (political parties, Yalova City Council, Local Agenda 21, associations, foundations),
7. Private sector (industrial organizations, artisans and merchants, investors and business managers, media organizations),
8. Public (villagers, town-dwellers, women, men, youth, workers, children, the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed), and
9. International model forest networks (IMFN, Mediterranean Model Forests Network (MMFN), and model forests that are members of these networks)

Looking at the above mentioned stakeholder groups, it becomes clear that the YMF organization encompasses the entire society (YMF, 2011, 2015). However, YMF-1.SAP was prepared without determining the active and significant ones of the stakeholder groups in question. In other words, the most significant and active stakeholder groups were not determinants in the establishment of priorities, identification of activities, and budget distribution among these activities. A similar situation is applicable to YMF-2.SAP as well. For this reason, rationality of priorities, activities, and budgets of both strategic plans is disputable.

Civil Society Index Dimensions of Yalova Model Forest

Yalova Model Forest's Structure Dimension

"Structure dimension" signifies the foundation, size, organization, form, and boundaries of the NGO in question. Consequently, the development of the structure dimension depends on a series of features such as the NGO's number of volunteers, event participation frequency, donations, event participation durations, stakeholder diversity, level of support provided for infrastructure and international connections, efforts made for information sharing and alliance formation, possession of sufficient financial–human–technological resources, etc. The YMF structure dimension specifications and strategies attained via SWOT analysis conducted with the participation of 15 stakeholders are given in Table 1.

Looking at Table 1, YMF can be said to remain insufficient in terms of self-governance, financial–economic–technical resources, percentage of stakeholders who make donations and participate in activities. Consequently, it is seen that strategies aiming to improve YMF's structure dimension were determined to fulfill these needs in question. Yalova Model Forest has been able to meet only 35% (three activities out of eight were realized) of its institutional objectives (YMF, 2011, 2015). For this reason, the fact that a portion of the YMF structure dimension strategies listed in Table 1 appear in YMF-2.SAP (the priority of ensuring

² Title given to official/elected neighborhood representatives in Turkey.

Table 1.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of Yalova Model Forest's Structure Dimension

Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weakness (W)
Internal factor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receiving civil support 2. Being a member of IMFN 3. Ecological and economic compatibility 4. High population of forest villagers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YMF being unrecognized and low participation rates 2. Not having a set budget 3. Existence of stakeholder conflicts
Opportunities (O)	Strategies (O-S)	Strategies (O-W)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of foreign support 2. Having good impressions 3. Existence of numerous associations related to protection of the environment 4. Being located strategically 5. Having political support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relationships between YMF and state institutions should be regulated 2. Stakeholder groups should be actively organized 3. Projects aiming to raise awareness regarding sustainable forestry should be developed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YMF administrators should be selected among nonprofit-seeking individuals 2. Volunteers should be appointed to inform stakeholders 3. YMF budget should receive institutional support
Threats (T)	Strategies (T-S)	Strategies (T-W)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecological system is under threat 2. Conflicts between the State and YMF 3. Lack of public support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project unit should be improved 2. A unit dedicated to organizing forest-based activities should be formed 	<p>Focus groups should be created with the goal of increasing public support</p>
<p>Note: IMFN = International Model Forest Network; YMF = Yalova Model Forest.</p>		

institutional development and communications with the model forest network) can be looked at as a positive development (YMF, 2015). However, YMF is likely to be experiencing organizational problems since other strategies were not adopted and a low share (3%) of the budget was reserved for this issue.

Yalova Model Forest's Environment Dimension

"Environment dimension" demonstrates how facilitating or hampering the external environment might be with regard to the activities that the NGO is trying to accomplish. In this context, the external environment of an NGO can be defined as the attitude of actors from the public and private sectors toward this NGO as well as political, constitutional, social,

economic, cultural, and legal factors. Results of the YMF Environment Dimension SWOT analysis conducted with the participation of 15 stakeholders are provided in Table 2.

Majority of the YMF environment dimension features and strategies listed in Table 2 are included under the priority of "ensuring institutional development and communications with the model forest network" in YMF-2.SAP (YMF, 2015). This means that the relationship between YMF and the environment in which it exists will be improved during the YMF-2.SAP period. However, unless the institutional development of YMF is improved, YMF environment dimension is unlikely to be enhanced at the desired level.

Table 2.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of Yalova Model Forest's Environment Dimension

Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weakness (W)
Internal factor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Receiving support from the state 2. Being admitted to IMFN 3. Collaboration with the public, universities, and other NGOs 3. Having favorable conditions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YMF not being sufficiently recognized 2. Lack of legislation 3. Ineffectual relations with external stakeholders 4. Not having a set budget
Opportunities (O)	Strategies (O-S)	Strategies (O-W)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being recognized by other NGOs 2. Abundance of forest resources 3. Projects aiming economic development of the region's population 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Efforts to expand organizational spectrum should be resumed 2. Mechanisms aiming to preserve the organization's sustainability should be developed 3. Mechanisms that will regulate the affairs between the state and the public should be included among YMF by laws 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizations that will form public opinion favoring the protection of forests should be arranged. 2. YMF should be restructured in order to strengthen the organization
Threats (T)	Strategies (T-S)	Strategies (T-W)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of consideration for reconciliation 2. Execution of activities that cause deforestation 3. Politicians having a negative effect on YMF's perception of stakeholder parity 	<p>Greater public outreach should be ensured by organizing activities that will increase interest</p>	<p>Legislative infrastructure facilitating participation and activities should be formed</p>
<p>Note: IMFN = International Model Forest Network; NGO, nongovernmental organization; YMF = Yalova Model Forest.</p>		

Yalova Model Forest's Value Dimension

"Values dimension" of the NGO is related to the adopted, implemented, and encouraged values and principles. The main values that YMF is interested in are protection of forests and the environment, enhancement of forests, making use of them, and achieving institutional development. Additionally, when the fact that model forests act as platforms for reconciliation between stakeholders with diverse interests is taken into consideration, universal civil society values such as democracy, transparency, tolerance, non-violence, gender equality, and poverty alleviation should also be included. Results of the YMF value dimension SWOT analysis conducted with the participation of 15 stakeholders are given in Table 3.

Looking at Table 3, it is seen that the internal and external factors of YMF value dimension were determined in relation to sustainable forest management (protection, enhancement, and making use of forests) and universal civil society values (transparency, tolerance, non-violence, etc.). However, strategies appear to be pertaining solely to sustainable forest management. Nevertheless, priorities of protection of forests and reduction of environmental factors, improvement of wood products, improvement of forest products besides wood, and enhancement of forest-based tourism were included in the YMF-2.SAP budget. Having said that, the absence of universal civil society values such as democracy, non-violence, and affirmative action to achieve gender parity remains a considerable deficiency.

Table 3.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of Yalova Model Forest's Value Dimension

Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weakness (W)
Internal factor	1. Paying attention to tolerance and stakeholder parity 2. Adopting the perception of sustainable environment	1. Inability to achieve shareholder diversity 2. External stakeholders not having a positive impression of YMF
Opportunities (O)	Strategies (O-S)	Strategies (O-W)
1. Adopting the sustainable management of forests perception 2. Implementing sustainable forest resources management 3. Opportunities to execute poverty alleviation activities	1. Activities contributing to income generation should be organized 2. Focus groups should work in line with their propositions 3. Behaviors opposing violence should be adopted	Stakeholder groups should be organized periodically within the scope of volunteerism
Threats (T)	Strategies (T-S)	Strategies (T-W)
1. Lack of an understanding of transparency–equality 2. Inability to avert individuals who are after personal gain 3. Unwillingness of stakeholders to become members	1. Stakeholders should organize social media communications and periodic term visits and meetings monthly 2. An understanding of democracy and equality should be embedded	1. Activities aiming to demonstrate the safety of the model forest should be held 2. Number of volunteers should be increased and stakeholder parity should be attained
<i>Note: YMF = Yalova Model Forest.</i>		

Table 4.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of Yalova Model Forest's Impact Dimension

Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weakness (W)
Internal factor	1. Implementation of targeted projects with public support 2. Collaboration between other NGOs, private sectors and universities	1. Inability to influence public policy 2. Unwillingness regarding accountability 3. Prioritizing for-profit projects 4. Ineffectiveness in meeting stakeholder needs
Opportunities (O)	Strategies (O-S)	Strategies (O-W)
1. Being the very first active NGO in this field 2. The issue of uplifting rural populations and forest villagers being paid considerable attention in the country's development plans	1. Projects that might influence large masses of people should be developed in collaboration with public institutions, NGOs and the private sector 2. Activity partnership should be proposed to IMFN and MMFN 3. Study groups should be organized while implementing projects	1. Efforts should be made to reach out to individuals, institutions and organizations willing to work on a volunteer basis 2. Prioritized projects should be implemented 3. Decisions should be made with a participatory approach
Threats (T)	Strategies (T-S)	Strategies (T-W)
Existence of stakeholders who are being excluded by the YMF administration	1. Action should be taken in a well-organized manner on issues pertaining to nature conservation 2. Public support should be attained in order to increase effectiveness and reputability of YMF	Asserting the need for YMF within the scope of sustainable forest management
<i>Note: IMFN = International Model Forest Network; MMFN = Mediterranean Model Forests Network; NGO = nongovernmental organization; YMF = Yalova Model Forest.</i>		

Yalova Model Forest's Impact Dimension

The impact of an NGO is the impact it makes on the lives of individual supporting it and the overall society. While assessing this impact, activity and success rates of civil society in fulfilling its duties are taken into consideration. For this reason, overall impact of civil society is determined by looking at its contribution to influencing public policy, ensuring the accountability of public and private sectors, finding solutions for social problems and strengthening citizens. When YMF Impact Dimension SWOT analysis (Table 4) is examined in this respect, it is understood that the established strategies are associated with empowering and increasing effectiveness of YMF by reaching out to a vast majority of public.

If YMF impact dimension features (receiving public support, being the first and only organization in its field, collaboration with other public and private institutions and organizations, and contribution to rural development) were to be included in YMF-2.SAP, YMF could have contributed to sustainable management of forest resources by influencing public policy. However, when YMF-2.SAP priorities were examined, it was detected that the strategies listed in Table 4 were not included. Thus, YMF will be unlikely to play an effective and significant role in sustainable management of forest resources.

Yalova Model Forest's Stakeholder/Citizen Participation Dimension

Stakeholder/citizen participation dimension demonstrates the power and effectiveness of NGOs. For this reason, stakeholder/citizen participation dimension of NGOs should be evaluated in detail. This evaluation is done by looking at active or passive status of stakeholders/citizens in supporting the NGOs' objectives. For instance, while those actively supporting the NGOs' objectives (advocates) and active obstructors (adversaries) are included in these two groups, those who are yet to take action are referred to as "dormants." Remaining parties that are not included in any one of these three groups are described as the "indifferent ones." Therefore, NGOs wishing to have an expansive and powerful impact make efforts to include the dormant and indifferent ones by raising their awareness (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000). However, this process requires rather meticulous and long-term labor. In Turkey, overall participation in NGOs is known to be quite low.

In order to evaluate its stakeholder/citizen participation dimension, YMF stakeholder groups were first examined in line with the above-mentioned descriptions. At the end of this examination, YMF stakeholders were classified into four groups. In this classification, those actively supporting the main objective of "contributing to sustainable management of forests" and taking action were taken as "advocate stakeholders," whereas those actively taking action to obstruct this objective were taken as "adversary stakeholders," and those who belong to one of these two stakeholder groups but are yet to take action were defined as "dormant stakeholders." The ones remaining outside these three stakeholder groups were taken as "indifferent stakeholders." In order to assess YMF in this context, initially YMF-1.SAP and YMF-2.SAP were examined, afterward stakeholder participation in YMF-1.SAP Revision Workshop was evaluated, and finally, outcomes of the survey that was conducted with ordinary citizens were taken into consideration.

In YMF-1.SAP vs. YMF-2.SAP, all residents of Yalova province are considered as YMF stakeholders. The YMF-1.SAP Revision Workshop was held with the participation of 55 active advocate stakeholders out of the 120 who had been invited (46%). According to the survey conducted with 400 individuals who had been randomly selected among ordinary citizens residing in Yalova'a central districts and villages, only four of these individuals were aware of YMF's presence. Furthermore, these four

individuals also mentioned that they know very little about the NGO. These proclamations show that YMF's stakeholder/citizen participation dimension has remained significantly low.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, YMF, which has been founded in order to contribute to sustainable management of forest resources at a local and global level, was examined through situation analysis. As a result of this examination, YMF's historical development, legal regulations, activities, and stakeholder/citizen participation were unveiled. Furthermore, features and strategies pertaining to four civil society index dimensions of YMF (structure, environment, values, an impact) were determined in terms of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats via SWOT analysis, and the issue of whether or not these stakeholder opinions were included in the YMF strategic plans was discussed. Results obtained through this study are as follows:

- Despite being supported by various national and international institutions and organizations, primarily including ministry related to forestry, YMF faces the risk of losing its effectiveness and power. This is because YMF's structure, environment, values, and impact dimensions have not been developed at desired levels. As with other multi-stakeholder land uses (Brankov et al., 2022), there is the presence of different types of conflicts among YMF's stakeholders mostly between local people and administrations associated with use with forest and the construction of facilities. While active advocate stakeholders' participation rate in YMF activities (45%) is insufficient, adverse stakeholders have never taken place in the YMF platform. Furthermore, only 1% of dormant and indifferent stakeholders are aware of YMF's existence. Additionally, even though they are in inadequate numbers, active advocate stakeholders are highly enthusiastic about supporting YMF activities. The reluctance of its stakeholders to participate in YMF activities coincides with the "The Turkish people in general are still disconnected from the civil society movement" and "The impact and perception of civil society activities on environmental sustainability in Turkey is still limited" results of Bikmen et al. (2006). Because of these negativities, efforts to strengthen NGOs in Turkey started in the 2000s (TÜSEV, 2010). Sometimes there is no problem in accepting the contributions made by the interest groups to the model forest as the achievements of the model forest, but sometimes these contributions are considered to be specific to the model forest organizations (Rojas et al., 2020).
- Yalova Model Forest's short history, legislation, and activities were examined, and it was understood that there have been problems related to organization and legislation (specifically about association's administrative elections and implementation of the strategic plans).
- Strategic plans had been prepared without identifying active and significant stakeholder groups. Likewise, it was determined that the most significant and active stakeholder groups had not been determinants in the establishment of YMF-1.SAP and YMF-2.SAP priorities, identification of activities, and distribution of the budget among these activities. Therefore, rationality of priorities, activities, and budget allocations of the strategic plans in question is disputable.
- Active advocate stakeholders have proposals pertaining to structure, environment, values, and impact dimensions in order to keep YMF active and powerful. However, majority of these proposals were not included in YMF-1.SAP and YMF-2.SAP.
- Yalova Model Forest activities have focused on the issues of biomass and sustainable wood production, mushroom production, production of medical and fragrant herbs, rural tourism, protection of the

environment, honey production, wild fruit production, climate change, and renewable energy. Therefore, stakeholder groups can be listed as “the forestry organization,” “mining and quarry operators,” “vendors of wood and forest products besides wood,” “buyers of wood and forest products besides wood,” “forest villagers,” “operators of businesses related to recreational-nature tourism,” “those who benefit from recreational-nature tourism,” “IMFN-MMFN,” “educational and research institutions,” “environmentalist NGOs,” and “local administrators (Governor, Mayor, Muhtar).” Among these stakeholder groups, YMF should work in collaboration with the forestry organization, forest villagers, miners, vendors of wood and forest products besides wood, operators of businesses related to recreational-nature tourism, educational and research institutions, environmentalist NGOs, and local administrations while looking out for the interests of buyers of wood and forest products besides wood and those who benefit from recreational-nature tourism.

The above results coincide with the main results of the international project titled “Civil Society in Turkey: A Process of Change,” edited by Bikmen and Meydanoğlu (2006). In conclusion, if YMF wishes to be effective and successful in sustainable forest management, it should specifically strengthen its stakeholder/citizen participation dimension because the successful model forest process promotes consultative and integrated land resource management and positively influences cooperation among stakeholders interested in sustainable forest management (Elbakidze et al., 2010, 2012; Grilli et al., 2016; Hvenegaard et al., 2015; Stryamets et al., 2020; Tolunay, et al., 2014). Therefore, it should prepare its strategic plans by taking the opinions and proposals of its stakeholders into account. In particular, it should make efforts to raise advocate, dormant, and indifferent stakeholders’ awareness. Furthermore, it should not delay resolving issues related to other civil society index dimensions identified as yet to be developed at sufficient levels.

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