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On the inestimable natural and human value of the landscape

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URLA-ÇEŞME-KARABURUN PENINSULA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2014-2023: ASSET-BASED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A FOCUS ON 'SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE – RURAL LIFE AND ECONOMY' EQUILIBRIUM

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Abstract
Urla-Çeşme-Karaburun Peninsula, the nature reserve of İzmir metropolitan city, lies on the western part of the city, and has to date maintained its natural and cultural landscapes and properties, historical references as well as traditional-rural lifestyle. Characterizing typical Ege (Aegean)-Mediterranean transitional zone, the peninsula hosts remarkable/outstanding landscapes such as antique, traditional-rural and urban settlements, coastal regions, agricultural fields, forests and wetlands. However, some ecological and socio-economic challenges stemmed from fish farms, wind energy plants, highway, open cast mining, misuse of agricultural fields and coastal environments, aging and youth migration, local culture degeneration have all

raised some increasing concerns among local communities for the future of the peninsula and put pressures on both multi-functionality and characteristics of natural and cultural landscapes.
The peninsula sustainable development strategy project is the first official document that provides spatial insights into İzmir regional planning scheme, and associates this scheme with subscale planning charts. In compliance with protection and management of natural and cultural landscapes, the project introduces natural and cultural asset-based approach to form local sustainable development framework. The project phases involved setting thematic strategic objectives, conceptualizing spatial development scenario along with strategic road map and action plans, and delivering model proposals for the implementation of governance strategies and monitoring-assessment system. Making use of 'regional through local' values and their underlying economic and natural resources, asset-based approach will attain the climate of socio-economic welfare, creativity and entrepreneurship alike.
In conclusion, this paper outlined the peninsula sustainable development strategy project alongside the author's point of view with a focus on 'sustainable landscape – rural life and economy' equilibrium.

Keywords: Urla-Çeşme-Karaburun Peninsula; sustainable development strategy; asset-based local development; integrated landscape management; İzmir

Introduction: Asset-based Local Development

'Sustainable landscape' phenomenon is nowadays much more referred as incorporating wellbeing of natural and cultural landscapes with socio-economic development. Besides ecological and physical appraisal of urban/rural/natural environments, landscape structure and functions have been examined within the context of the entire natural and cultural dynamics of any region to emphasize a consistent 'asset-based local development'. A vast number of natural and cultural factors particularly challenged widely the sustainability of Mediterranean coastal landscapes as well as traditional-rural lifestyle, and socio-economic instability has by this means conditioned the emergence of natural and cultural asset-based local development. Toscana Region (Italy) has thereby demonstrated its commitment to this sort of development with its excellence in physical, ecological and socio-economic structures.
Asset-based approach is a way of taking up any subject with its positivist, creative and inclusive aspects only (Fuller et al., 2002). And its primary objectives, as an indispensable part of the economic development process, are to achieve high added value products and services from all kinds of regional resources and to transform them into local benefits taking into account the protection and development of natural and cultural landscapes and their properties. To this end, asset-based economic development is expected to bring high margin of profit to locals, furthermore much less vulnerability to local assets through using these resources in more sustainable, creative and innovative ways (ARC, 2004). Rather than short-sighted and problem-specific approaches, it underpins long-term local development managing all necessary resources and instruments in a corporate way. Since the asset-based local development is fundamentally geared to claim landscape-based socio-cultural and economic prosperity, some scholarly works featuring 'integrated landscape management' such as Brownsey and Rayner, 2009; Ens et al., 2012; Estrada-Carmona et al., 2014; Höchtl et al., 2007; Southern et al., 2011; Terkenli, T.S., 2001 have permeated into this common and prospective field.
With these all in mind, early era of Turkish Republic is to be conceived as an exemplary example of asset-based development as its socio-economic track was then grounded on its own limited yet unique natural and cultural resources by means of blocking access of external resources and investments to the country.

Urla-Çeşme-Karaburun Peninsula

Urla-Çeşme-Karaburun Peninsula (171 000 ha in size), the nature reserve of İzmir metropolitan city, lies on the western part of the city with its 5 distinctive counties -Urla, Çeşme, Seferihisar, Karaburun, Güzelbahçe- (Fig. 1) and 43 rural communities, and has to date maintained its natural and cultural landscapes, historical references as well as traditional-rural lifestyle.

Figure 1. Urla-Çeşme-Karaburun Peninsula (depicted on Google Earth)

Characterizing typical Ege-Mediterranean transitional zone, the peninsula is home to remarkable/outstanding landscapes such as antique, traditional-rural and urban settlements, coastal regions, agricultural fields, forests and wetlands (Fig. 2). It is İzmir's most prominent tourism region through its landscape variety and productivity.


Urla urban fabric


Urla county


Klazomenai antique settlement, Urla


Erythrai antique settlement, Çeşme


Karareis, Karaburun


Alaçatı, Çeşme


Çeşme Castle and environs


Orhaneli Village, Seferihisar


Kadıovacık Village, Urla

Figure 2. The peninsula is consisted of a wide variety of natural/urban/rural landscapes.

Brief Introduction of the Project

The peninsula sustainable development strategy project has been conceptualized to proceed spatial aspect of İzmir Regional Planning in the context of the peninsula region, and subsequently to act as a mechanism in between regional plan and sub-regional planning charts. Primary objective of the project is to develop asset-based local development strategy in compliance with the provision of natural and cultural landscapes sustainability.
The project is basically divided into 3 consecutive phases as follows;
- 1st stage: existing data analysis; thematic and natural-cultural asset inventory, geographical data
The region's physical properties, and inventory and analysis of natural and cultural landscapes have been identified over 5 major themes or streamlines namely 'agriculture', 'tourism', 'environment and energy', 'urban and rural communities' and 'governance, innovation and entrepreneurship'.
- 2nd stage: description and mapping of natural-cultural assets, interactive community meetings, strategy formulation, weighting and prioritization of each project, spatial synthesis of strategies
Community workshops for each county, horizon workshop, expert panels and online Delphi questionnaire have been scheduled in an interactive way to release the region's tacit knowledge and provisions and preferences relating to existing/potential assets and to enable invited experts to extend their appraisals over projects for the future of the peninsula. These all resulted in the preparation of the asset-driven data base. Spatial analysis of assets has been realized through ArcGIS 10.2 program and Esri online GIS platform (http://bit.ly/187RjIS) and it provided direct access to all local assets across the peninsula. In expert panels, 130 asset-based development ideas were revised under 5 major themes and 10 strategic development axes.
- 3rd stage: revision of strategies, road map, governance plan, monitoring system
Each development idea has been tested with others and the sustainability of natural-cultural landscapes, and subsequently spatial interaction analysis scrutinized some key, but conflicting relations between 'wind energy plants-urban/rural communities', 'fish farms-coastal landscapes'. Future scenario of the region and the resultant action plan has been extracted from GIS spatial data system, monitoring model, road map and SEPET analysis (social, economic, politic, ecological and technological; Oktay, 2006).
Basic outputs of the project are as follows;
- describing sustainable development strategy of the region within 5 major themes that should account the sustainability of natural and cultural landscapes,
- supporting clean, environment-responsive and high value added education, health, tourism and information technology sectors,
- placing 'asset-based local entrepreneurship' ecosystem.
Promoting a suite of alternative tourism and organic/environment-friendly agricultural practices, expanding the research and innovation climate in the region with the support of local entrepreneurship, applying the use of renewable energy under more effective and rigorous environmental policies, placing more consistent management models for historic and cultural landscapes are among those major themes to be elaborated in strategic development axes. Thus asset-based approach featuring local values at both the regional and county scales, and economic and natural resources will ensure social and economic development, creativity and entrepreneurship in support of the sustainable development strategy.

Basic Findings Relating to 'Rural Landscapes – Economy' Equilibrium
Each county has been evaluated and compared with others in terms of existing and potential natural-cultural assets, and thereby some definitive differences determined through 'Kruskal Wallis' statistical kit as follows;
- Animal husbandry in Seferihisar and Karaburun Counties is more important source of income than other counties.
- Local products such as olive in economic development are much more predominant in Seferihisar.
- Vineyards and wine production in Urla, water springs and sub-watersheds in Güzelbahçe and Seferihisar, thermal waters and their associated facilities in Çeşme are the leading economic drivers.

- Contribution of renewable energy resources to the economic development was found distinctive in the counties. For instance; geothermal, wind and wave energies are the significant assets in Seferihisar, Çeşme and Urla.

Organic and environment-friendly agriculture throughout the peninsula, congress tourism in Çeşme, pathways and cycle tracks in Güzelbahçe, local brands in Karaburun, use of geothermal energy in nursery, heating and health in Seferihisar, viticulture and wine production in Urla are recorded as the leading edge economic skills in the horizon workshop.

In terms of project subjects and their relevant importance, Seferihisar is in pair with Güzelbahçe and relatively close to Urla whereas Karaburun and Çeşme are far from each other and the others. These findings were found highly significant in order to cluster and put the projects into place (Fig. 3).

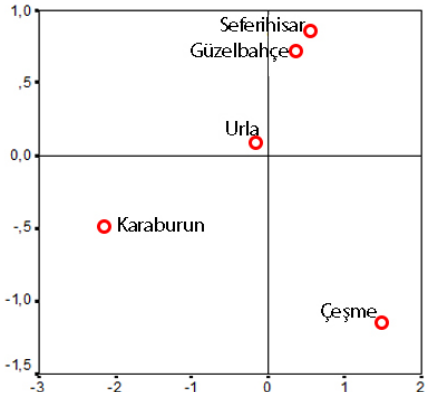

Figure 3. Relevance of asset-based project subjects with the counties (Velibeyoğlu et al., 2014)

Misappropriate use and pollution of water resources, lacking in use of national funds, and unsustainable agricultural practices, fish farms, wind energy plants, unemployment in youths, aging and degeneration of local values/characteristics were being highlighted as negative factors in SEPET analysis.

Basic outcomes of the workshops, panels and subgroup works have been collated to determine the most agreed subjects below as per each streamline.

Agriculture: ecological viticulture and wine production, boutique processing of local agricultural products including sheep farming, setting logistic locations for fishery and olive.

Environment and energy: protection and management of natural and cultural landscapes, planning solid waste storage areas, biosphere reserve area, integrated use of geothermal energy, renewable energy science parks.

Governance, innovation and entrepreneurship: expanding thematic markets, geothermal energy use in nurseries, registration and marketing of homemade products.

Achieving pre-determined strategic objectives, natural and cultural assets have been tested in terms of (their) mutual suitability and (potential) impacts on the region. So the spatial impact analyses between 'fish farms-coastal landscapes', 'wind energy-urban/rural settlements', 'agriculture-rural communities' were applied to indicate the extent of negative effects on the region. To grapple with these challenges, environment-friendly investments in tourism, agriculture, energy and infrastructure must prioritize high value added products. Particularly competitive edge in sustainable agriculture and tourism implications across Aegean Region leads the region to highlight some strategically significant investments and products such as wine production and tourism, mastic production.

Conclusion

The peninsula already possesses a significant economic potential for İzmir metropolitan city due to its geographic location, landscape diversity and functions, its viable socio-economic network with İzmir and international networks and, versatile human resources.

Asset-based local development is imperative to maintain 'sustainable (rural) landscape-traditional lifestyle-economic stability' relation, and this needs some basic institutional regulations such as;

- Each subject inclusive of agriculture, traditional life should be combined with creativity and innovation to boost 'the local asset-based entrepreneurship' ecosystem and resultant regional economic sustainability. Any institutional structure such as İzmir Peninsula Research and Application Center should be established to take up the region-specific issues and to launch the regional capacity building programs.
- The peninsula and its counties should participate into some (inter)national networks or organizations to have excellence in some strategic themes such as agriculture, tourism, education, energy and environment. Such collaborations will provide the exchange of knowledge and expertise among associate institutions. In this way, ongoing relations with EuroVelo Mediterranean Cycle Network,

Mediterranean Model Forest Network, World Biosphere Reserve Network, Citta Slow Network, European Healthy Cities Network should be consolidated.
In conclusion, multi-faceted challenges of the region should be addressed explicitly through long term decisions and public participation/consultation processes. The project evidences that socio-economic development relying on sustainability of natural and cultural landscapes and properties will be ensured by well-organized road map and implication of its projects thoroughly. As the project describes particularly in section 'strategic road map/future scenario', the whole process surely calls for an effective mechanism of close collaboration, exchange of knowledge and governance among related (inter)national institutions, stake holders, statutory bodies, municipalities and the state at the regional scale and beyond.

Note: In conjunction with the İzmir Regional Planning process, the Peninsula Sustainable Development Strategy Project has been prepared by İzmir Development Agency (İZKA) along with İzmir Institute of Technology, Ege University and Dokuz Eylül University.

The project team was consisted of the following institutions and fellows;

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