

# Local Community Perception towards Slow City: Gokceada Sample

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## Abstract

Slow city movement has been firstly emerged in Italy with the purpose of eliminating the homogenous structure that the globalization has created in the cities. Slow city has been turned into an international network due to a philosophy providing sustainability of the city by improving the quality of individuals' life. Turkey is also among the states which are the members of International Cittaslow Union. 11 districts have participated slow city movement starting with Seferihisar in Turkey. One of these districts is Gokceada constituting the case study. Gokceada has assumed the title of slow city by carrying out the criteria required for slow city in 2011. The aim of this study is to determine how the people's perceptions and what their expectations towards citta slow phenomenon are. It is aimed to clarify the advantages and disadvantages of being a citta slow according to the public. The study has been conducted in the center of Gokceada through interview method. As a result of the research, it has been reached a conclusion that the people have knowledge about the Cittaslow concept. In addition, they have also assessed Gokceada being a citta slow as a positive development in terms of advantages provided.

**Keywords:** slow city, Cittaslow, slow food, life quality, sustainability, Gokceada

## 1. Introduction

Due to social, cultural and economic features, the cities are affected by the social changes. The change caused by the globalization has also created a negative effect on the local features, customs and cultures of the cities. In reaction to these problems, the slow city movement has been started. The fundamental philosophy of the movement is to provide the sustainability of the city with its own values. Its most important aim is to increase the life quality of the local people in the city.

Slow city is firstly emerged in Italy and inspired by the slow food movement. The Slow Food act, which was first seen in Italy in 1986, influenced social, cultural and economic areas over time due to the fact that the act regarded slowness and sustainability as the main philosophy. The Slow City act was launched in Italy in 1999 as a reflection of the Slow Food act on the urban areas.

The Slow City is an act that focuses on the local culture, traditions and the forms of local production. This act, despite being started in Italy, has turned into an international urban network that is implemented in various parts of the world. Turkey is also a member of this network with its 11 slow cities. One of Turkey's slow cities is Gokceada, which became the subject of this research study.

The primary goal of this study is to be able to reveal how the public's perception towards slow city is. Primarily, the concept of slow city, slow city criteria and the slow city movement in Turkey will be discussed in the study. In the last part of the study, findings of the research that have been executed regarding the slow city perception of the public.

## 2. Slow City Concept

Slow city movement has been based on idea of the former mayor of Greve in Chianti, Paolo Saturnini's opinion on establishing a different development model and the evaluation of the cities themselves in order to increase the quality of life in the year 1999. Saturnini's opinion later has been adopted by mayors of Bra (Francesco Guida), Orvieto (Stefano Cimicchi) and Positano (Domenico Marrone) and the president of the Slow Food, Carlo Petrini. Cittaslow movement is the urban life application of the Slow Food movement. ([cittaslowturkiye.org/cittaslow/](http://cittaslowturkiye.org/cittaslow/)).

Slow Food movement has been established by Carlo Petrini in the year 1986 as a result of the reaction to the

opening of a McDonalds in Roma Piazza Spagna. Slow Food has become an international movement aimed at the sustainability of gastronomy and shared cultural values (Yurtseven, 2007). Slow food is not only a movement against the fast food nourishment. Petrini evaluates slow food movement as a part of the human rights (Cittaslow Bilgi Notu).

As a result and reflection of the slow food movement on the urban area, Cittaslow movement has been emerged. Cittaslow have the meaning of slow city; with the merging of the words Citta (*City* in Italian) and the word Slow (in English). Cittaslow does not mean going back and living in the past. Cittaslow is for cities to think on which areas they are important and special and to develop strategies in order to protect these attributes and with the harmony of the texture, color, music and the story of the city and to live in a speed that both inhabitants of the city and the visitors are able to enjoy the city. The essential emphasis on the word slow is the improve the quality of life (Radstrom, 2011; Cittaslow Bilgi Notu)

The essential goal of the cittaslow movement is to develop sustainable development principles in the cities and to remove negative influence of the monotony that has been arisen from the globalization (Kostulska, Holowiecka, & Kwiatkowski, 2011). However, the movement aims to provide quality living by using the technology, to provide income justice by supporting local economy and to preserve natural environment and historic values and to execute urban design and planning (Yurtseven, Kaya, & Harman, 2010; Miele, 2008).

Cittaslow movement that has been originated in Italy aiming the goals mentioned above, now has 208 members in 30 countries. While Italy is being in the first place the movement has member countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, Australia and New Zealand and outside of the Europe, Australia, New Zealand, China, Korea and South Africa. Within this context, cittaslow movement can be considered as a successful network that enables little cities to benefit from this international connection. (cittaslowturkiye.org/cittaslow/; Ergüven, 2011)

### 3. Slow City Criteria

In order to ensure preservation of the traditions and customs, foods and historical identities of the cities, Cittaslow Association was established in Oriveto in the year 1999. Various criteria have been stated for the cities with the population less than 50.000 in order to enable them to take action in accordance with the cittaslow philosophy (Baldemir, Kaya, & Şahin, 2014). Aforementioned criteria are based on the principle of “festina lente” principle which is one of the essential ideas of the renaissance period. Festina lente means that becoming aware while living fast and being able to slowing it down and fastening up when it is necessary in order to establish a balance in between (Sungur, 2013).

Said criteria can be summed under relevant project titles and slow city identity, awareness, hospitality, preservation of the local production, facilities and technologies for the urban life quality, infrastructure and environment. In accordance with the subject of this study, criteria shall not be evaluated in detail but in general.

Within the context of the environmental policies; in order to become a cittaslow; cities shall attach importance to recycling and reuse technics and relevant responsibilities and shall also adopt policies in order to preserve the texture of the city and the environment (Bilgi, 2013). Within the environmental policies, preservation of the soil, water and air quality, waste management, prohibition on usage of the products with the modified genetics, issuing regulations in order to noise and light pollution. If we evaluate the criteria articles, then we are safe to say that cittaslow movement is based on the preservation of the environment and ensuring sustainability. Also, the following can be considered as a key factor; if the environment is healthy, then people are living in this environment has increased life quality.

Within the context of infrastructure policies; in order to preserve the urban texture, planning regarding the preservation of the cultural and historical values shall be executed and the city shall be designed appropriate for the disabled and old people and projects regarding degenerating urban areas shall be executed (cittaslowturkiye.org/uyelik). In this criteria, preservation of the city with regards to sustainability and the restoration is underlined. However, the importance of disabled and old people has been called into attention.

Within the context of development of technologies for the urban quality, bio architecture has been considered important and promotion of homeworking electronically and establishing connection network based on internet between municipalities and citizens. Within the context of preservation of the local products; development of the organic farming, continuing local and traditional production methods and determining the local products and providing support for its commercialization is foreseen (Sungur, 2013). Essential point on this subject is to remind cittaslow is not only against the technology but also supports it.

Within the context of the hospitality; preparing studies regarding the tourist information and the qualified

hospitality, making access to services and information regarding activities that have been put into calendar easier and prepare slow route of the city. In order to fulfill the awareness criteria, before starting the cittaslow process, local officials shall submit the necessary information to the local public and to create programs regarding slow city and slow food operations.

When we evaluate these criteria in general; It is not possible to not to agree Knox and Mayer's (2006) opinions regarding local economy, social and cultural differences are essential components with regards to importance slow food and slow city movement regarding the resources and environmental quality.

In order to being a member to Association, cities are required to develop programs and projects in accordance with these criteria. After the evaluation of the projects that cities have been executed, cities that are graded 70 points and above can be members of the Association ([cittaslowturkiye.org/uyelik](http://cittaslowturkiye.org/uyelik)). After completing the membership process, cities shall be required to renew their certificates about their continuation of the urban life quality and the preservation of the values that the cities own in every four years (Tosun, 2013). This requirement is essential in order to provide sustainability and the development.

#### **4. Cittaslow Movement in Turkey**

There are eleven districts that have been granted the title of cittaslow. First slow city of Turkey was Seferihisar in the year 2009 and the Cittaslow Local Network was established in Turkey. Then, Akyaka (Muğla), Taraklı (Sakarya), Yenipazar (Aydın), Yalvaç (Isparta), Vize (Kırklareli), Perşembe (Ordu), Halfeti (Şanlıurfa), Gökçeada (Çanakkale), Şavşat (Artvin), Uzundere (Erzurum) joined the cittaslow network. ([cittaslowturkiye.org](http://cittaslowturkiye.org))

All required coordination activities regarding cittaslow are being executed by the Seferihisar Municipality. Seferihisar is a member of the "Cittaslow Executive Board. Major of the Seferihisar also executes the Vice President duty of the International Coordination Committee (Sırım, 2012). Göynük (Bolu) is an applicant district and under the evaluation.

#### **5. Research**

The aim of this research study is to investigate how the people who live in Gokceada consider the concept of slow city in terms of the sustainability of the city, how much the local people participate in the processes, what the benefits and the disadvantages of being a slow city are.

##### *5.1 Method*

Interview method was used in this research study. During the preparation of the questions for this research study, the research studies by Ozgen (2012) and Cosar (2013) were used. The present research study was carried out in the city center of Gokceada between 21/02/2016 and 22/02/2016. The interviews were lasted 20 to 40 minutes and the local people made assistance to the researcher.

##### *5.2 Results*

This research study was carried out on the basis of questions about four main topics. These topics are as follows:

- 1) Demographic characteristics of the local people
- 2) Evaluations of the local people about their lifestyles
- 3) Evaluations of the local people about the concept of slow city
- 4) Effects of Gokceada as a slow city on life quality

##### *5.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Local People*

13 people who were interviewed were from different groups of occupations, 9 of them being males, and 4 of them being females. When it comes to educational status, 5 of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 4 of them were high school graduates, and 3 of them were elementary school graduates. The age range of the participants was between 21 and 85. Durations of residence in Gokceada were between 2 and 85. 7 of the participants were born in different places, and they came to Gokceada for occupational or educational reasons. 4 of the participants were born in different counties of Canakkale, and only 2 participants were born in Gokceada. The group of participants was heterogeneous in terms of the demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Profile of the local people

Item Number	Age	Educational Status	Occupation	Years of Residence
1	52	High School	Civil Servant	52
2	68	Elementary School	Retired	30
3	50	High School	Tradesman	24
4	52	Bachelor's Degree	Tradesman (Soap Manufacturing)	30
5	85	Elementary School	Retired	85
6	45	High School	Tourism Professional	30
7	37	High School	Tradesman (Olive Oil Sales)	8
8	42	Associate Degree	Accountant	30
9	23	Bachelor's Degree	Waiter	17
10	43	Elementary School	Waiter	23
11	34	Bachelor's Degree	Archaeologist	16
12	38	Bachelor's Degree	Attorney	33
13	21	Bachelor's Degree	Student	2

### 5.2.2 Evaluations of the Local People about Their Lifestyles

The participants were asked how they spent their daily life in Gokceada. 6 of the participants said that they went to seaside in order to walk around. 2 of the participants said that they read a book, and 5 of the participants said that they spent time chatting with their friends.

The participants were asked how they would spend their daily life provided that they lived outside Gokceada. 2 of the participants said that living in Gokceada was special, and they would be unhappy if they lived in another city. 1 participant stated that s/he wanted to live away from people and chaos. The participants aged between 20 and 40 pointed out that they would be more socialized.

The participants were asked what living in Gokceada meant to them. 8 participants said that it meant peace to them. In addition, they mentioned calmness, health and happiness. 2 participants said that it meant privilege to them, and 1 participant said that it meant life itself. 2 participants in the age group of 20 said that it just meant obligation, and nothing else.

When the participants were asked where and how they got their food, 10 participants said that they grew their own food, and 3 participants said that they bought food at a supermarket. When the participants were asked how they traveled, 8 participants said that they walked, 5 participants said that they drove a car, or rode a motorbike.

### 5.2.3 Evaluations about the Slow City

In this part, the participants were firstly asked if they knew that Gokceada was a slow city. 10 participants pointed out that they knew about the concept of slow city. The remaining 3 participants said that they did not know what the concept of slow city was. Therefore, the questions about the evaluations of slow city were asked to those 10 participants. These 10 participants were firstly asked how they defined the concept of slow city. 1 participant defined it as "a place where one can stay quiet that is free of human chaos and traffic jam". 1 participant defined it as "transferring the existing culture of the society to the future generations". 3 participants defined it as calmness and naturalness, 1 participant defined it as a happy city, and 1 participant defined it as a properly sustainable city. 1 participant defined it as a snail which is the symbol of a slow city, and 1 participant defined the concept of slow city same as regular development.

When the participants were asked what the main problems were in Gokceada, the answers were about transportation, healthcare, unplanned urbanization and underdevelopment of fishing. The people who participated in this research study stated that it was an important problem that the island only had water transportation. In addition to these, the participants emphasized that the passive airport must be activated. The participants also drew attention to the importance of the transportation problem in terms of emergency healthcare.

When the participants were asked what were done in Gokceada after it became a slow city, 1 participant said that

infrastructure work was focused on. This participant, who had been living there for 24 years and who was a tradesman, said that some enterprises were established for organic production, and advertising activities were emphasized for the organic honey. 2 participants said that the slow city concept was only of a name plate, and there were no significant activities being conducted in the city. 1 participant mentioned the increase in the number of houses, and 5 participants stated that there were no remarkable activities being conducted in the city.

The participants were also asked what should be done in the slow city of Gokceada according to them. The civil servant participant, who had been living in Gokceada since s/he was born, emphasized that activities must be done for organic agriculture and organic tourism. S/he also stated that healthcare campuses and sanatorium hospitals could be built because of the fresh air in Gokceada. 2 participants emphasized the olive cultivation and said that goat raising must be prohibited in olive groves. Most of the participants pointed out that awareness about tourism must be improved, and social reinforcement areas (parks, cinemas) must be built. 1 participant said that “culture and values of the society must be preserved, and differences must be emphasized”.

When the participants were asked what problems appeared after Gokceada became a slow city, 6 participants said that there were not any problems that appeared after Gokceada became a slow city. 1 participant said that noise pollution emerged and the natural beauty was spoiled. 1 participant said that building increased, 1 participant said that the number of tourists increased, and 1 participant said that s/he had no idea.

#### 5.2.4 Effects of Gokceada as a Slow City on Life Quality

In this part, the people who participated in this research study were firstly asked how they evaluated Gokceada being a slow city in terms of life quality. Only 2 participants said that they viewed it as negative while most of them, 7 participants, said that they viewed it as positive. 1 participant said that he had no ideas.

The point that was viewed as the most important problem by the negative-viewing participants was the population increase. These participants stated that building increased due to this population increase.

The statement of one of the positive-viewing participants is as follows: “Work has been done about the coalfields in terms of environment. The number of foreign tourists and the number of domestic tourists of high segment increased. An ambulance helicopter was obtained for the emergency cases. Natural spring water has been transported to the city and it is now used as spring water.”

1 positive-viewing participant said that sensitivity about using the natural sources increased. S/he pointed out that the local people reacted to the project plan about the harbour wastes, and it was prevented.

The benefits which were considered in common by the positive-viewing participants were the increase in trades and the improvement in tourism. In addition, it was stated that local production was supported, and that agriculture and stockbreeding increased.

When the media preferences of the participants were evaluated, it was seen that 4 participants read the local and national newspapers. 6 participants were seen to follow the national newspapers. All of the participants were found to watch television and use the Internet every day. Only two participants were found to listen to radio.

## 6. Conclusion

Gokceada obtained the title of slow city in year 2011. This research study was carried out in order to determine how the people of Gokceada perceived the slow city. When the results which were obtained from this research study were examined, it was found that it was important to most of the participants to live in Gokceada. Living in Gokceada makes them happy so they generally described Gokceada as a place that gave peace to them. In addition, the participants were seen to have lifestyles that were conforming to the criteria of the slow city in terms of production and transportation. Most of the participants were found to be able to define the concept of slow city as specific to the philosophy of the act. We evaluated the findings of the research for using technology, all participants use mass media and internet.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that most of the participants viewed the concept of slow city as positive. They were found to think that the slow city act was beneficial to their life quality. On the other hand, they were seen to emphasize what to be done in order to get more benefits from the slow city act both for the city and the local people. They evaluated two main problems as health and transportation from outside Gokceada. The two problems should be solved with local governors and local people for sustainable citta slow of Gokceada. The local governors should participation of local people in period of making decisions so, the decisions can be implanted easily.

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