

Sustainable Tourism and Heritage in Sigacık/Seferihisar

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Abstract—The rapid development of culture tourism has drawn attention to conserving cultural values especially by developing countries that would like to benefit from the economic contribution this type of tourism attracts. Tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes for historical settlements and their residents. The accommodation-purposed rehabilitation and revitalization project in “Sigacık Old City Zone” are to be discussed with spatial, economic, social and organizational dimensions. It is aimed to evaluate the relationship between the development of tourism and sustainable heritage conservation.

Keywords—Sigacık, urban conservation, sustainable tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

THERE is a gradual increase in the number of people moving away from mass tourism and demanding unique and universal tourism services instead [1], [2]. In recent times, there has been a rapid increase of tourism activities aimed towards spaces carrying cultural and historical values: culture and heritage are seen as significant components of tourism [3]-[6]. The rapid development of culture tourism has drawn attention to conserving cultural values especially by developing countries that would like to benefit from the economic contribution this type of tourism attracts [7]-[9]. This case also strengthens the tendency of conserving historical spaces and cultural heritage.

It is obvious that tourism generates beneficial outcomes as much as it produces negative impacts in the conservation of traditional settlements and historical spaces [10]-[12]. Therefore, the relationship between culture and tourism has been defined with terms such as: “paradox, contradiction and conflict, dynamic, complex, conflict/cooperation dichotomy” [1]-[10], [13]-[16]. It is not always possible to actualize an ideal situation where activities concerning “heritage tourism and protection of cultural heritage” would support one another.

In other words, presenting a balance between the sustainability of cultural heritage and marketing for tourism purposes forms an important aspect of planning and managing cultural heritage sites [17]. Besides the economic aspect of conserving cultural heritage, the significance of social and

cultural aspects also bring to the fore the concept of sustainable tourism in spaces that carry historical value.

There has been a project which aimed to make into a holiday village about the 500-year-old historical Sigacık Inner Castle Settlement in Turkey’s first “slow city” Seferihisar. The accommodation-purposed rehabilitation and revitalization project in “Sigacık Old City Zone” are to be discussed with spatial, economic, social and organizational dimensions. It is aimed to evaluate the relationship between the development of tourism and sustainable heritage conservation.

II. FAÇADE AND STREET REHABILITATION PROJECT IN THE SIGACIK FORTRESS

Sigacık, an inner castle settlement, within Seferihisar, İzmir, has been an important traditional neighborhood. It stands from the ancient city of Teos at a distance of 1.5 Km and from the district of Seferihisar at a distance of 5 Km. The general impression of outer walls of the medieval castle at the seashore is observed to be pentagon and the city inside these walls has a triangle plan. There is still a center town within the fortress today (Fig. 1). The historic mosque, bath and madrasa (school) of this settlement are believed to be built in the 17th century and give us the idea that life in this town has continued for a very long time. The district’s economy is largely based on fishing and agriculture. [18].

Recently, there has started an important change in the district of Seferihisar and this led reflections on Sigacık as well. The second public housing movement that started after 1980 and became popular after 1990 has influenced Seferihisar as well as many other coastal districts of Turkey. The accomplishment of the construction of Marina nearby the medieval castle in 2003; the membership of Seferihisar to the Cittaslow movement in December 2009 and the declaration of more than 10000 hectares of land as the “Thermal Tourism” center the same year have increased the expectation for better investments of tourism in the district.

The mayor of Sigacık always brought up the issue of utilizing Sigacık Fortress for tourism since he was elected in 2009. Now Sigacık is getting popular for day trippers and attracting the interest of special groups to the region by its proximity to ancient city of Teos (Fig. 2), organic bazaar in the fortress, marina (Fig. 3), beaches, tangerine gardens, olive tree-dense natural landscape (Fig. 4) and undeniable contribution of Seferihisar as Cittaslow trademark.

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Fig. 1 Sigacik Old City Zone



Fig. 2 The Ancient Teos



Fig. 3 Teos Marina



Fig. 4 Olive trees

Initial planning on “Façade and Street Rehabilitation Project in the Sigacik Fortress” has been started in 2012 with partnership of Seferihisar Municipality and Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. This project has been concluded as of 2014. Based on the project of redevelopment of infrastructure, the streets are renewed; the maintenance, amendment and rehabilitation of all the building façades were done. Under the project some places repair, while in some places with the changes doors, windows and shutters to the intervention were.

One of the anticipated outcomes of this project is to introduce the inner castle region to tourism with its 284 buildings capable of offering 600 beds as family pensions in 2015. This outcome has already drawn attention of news media. Additionally one of the Izmir area universities took part in the project by offering training in tourism hospitality for residents of area who are going to run pensions.

III. PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Sigacik inner fortress area is one of the important areas which reflect the cultural heritage which endures for centuries. The expected wear and tears have been observed over the years in the area where there is a significant increase in tourism. It’s widely expected that projects in this region will transform the area to “Holiday Paradise”.

At this point it’s been observed that expectation of getting benefit from economic gaining stem from tourism attracts local governors’ interest to the region. In this context, starting the conservation project of traditional town texture can be seen as positive progress. However possible risks should be overseen by keeping the idea of tourism being the target in mind.

A. Spatial Threats and Risks

- Being an inner fortress settlement is one of the main specialties of Sigacik that identifies the region. Unfortunately there is no application to protect the walls which have been widely damaged during the time and are still open to erosions. It’s observed that there are many buildings on the walls and some part of walls which face to the seashore have been completely demolished. It’s also seen that there are some partially demolished walls to have sea view, thorn-down dungeons and destructed entrance gates (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Damaged walls

- Similarly, there are no attempts to make important buildings more perceivable like mosque, public bath, and madrasa and restore the boathouse (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Important historical buildings in bad condition

- Increasing touristic mobility brings up the economic and trading activities. Restaurants, cafes, pubs and such places are widely built unplanned and uncontrolled (Fig. 7). This situation is considered as a risk to the region beside the increasing traffic which must be taken under control.



Fig. 7 Irregular trading activities and car parks

- Objective of using all houses in the fortress area as touristic pensions results big problems such as improper and unauthorized alterations, amendments and renovations without considering the characteristics of inner structure of houses, number of rooms, size of covered and open spaces and size of household living there. Making outer cover-up and siding beautification will not make any sense in this regard. There is also another risk that necessities generated by increasing trade and service activities which are the result of high volume of touristic activity expectation, are not planned beforehand.
- Within the “Façade and Street Rehabilitation Project in the Sigacik Fortress” there is possible risk of diversion from authentication of traditional characteristics of houses and buildings in order to get attention of potential customers (Fig. 8). This situation might lead house owners to decorate and renovate their houses in a way which is other than traditional structure.



Fig. 8 Exaggerated façades to get attention of potential consumers

B. Threats and Risks to Natural Environment

- Once upon the fortress was on the seashore but the

original location has been changed over the years because of considerably big marina and its utility buildings and recreational park landscaping. Those aforementioned places were built on the wadding area on the sea. As a result connection of fortress with sea has been disconnected. Also natural structure has been changed because of the marina. There is another threat to natural environment that project about golf-course appears on the master plan of region.

- In case of poor management of different projects, agricultural lands including tangerine and olive gardens which are the characteristics of the district will be demolished.
- When the employees of agriculture decide to relocate in tourism sector, the income will fall behind the touristic income and eventually cause negative effects on the agricultural lands and the Cittaslow project which is based on slow food movement.

C. Social, Cultural and Management Threats and Risks

- The project of educating local people in tourism services can be toughed as positive approach. On the other hand, the local mansions and restaurants are not beyond individual enterprises which have started only after the promotion and façade and street rehabilitation project. The targeted economic income can only be reached when the whole district is organized carefully. There is no proposal for such an organization at this moment.
- The sustainability of the existing people living in this district is a primary necessity for the cultural persistence. Consequently, a detailed analysis of the requirements of these people is also necessary. The target of 600-bed capacity in a district with population of 2000 should be carefully planned considering the daily tourism activities and the capacity of the district.

IV. CONCLUSION

The revitalization of historic quarters motivated by culture tourism is widely applied throughout the world. Tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes for residents in communities where sharing and preserving their culture could be seen as conflicting goals [19]. These small settlements like Sigacik have become places that accommodate far more visitors in comparison to the period when they were built and it has been observed that the physical structure, cultural structure and environment are possibly threatened [16]-[20]. Presenting a balance between the sustainability of cultural heritage and marketing for tourism purposes forms an important aspect of planning and managing cultural heritage sites [17].

The medieval inner castle area in Sigacik is about to become a popular touristic destination by encouragement of local governors. Although there hasn't started an intensive tourism activity yet, the physical, spatial problems, the endurance of socio-cultural features and possible environmental issues should be carefully evaluated. Without a comprehensive approach, the superficial formalist applications

can only cause the destruction of traditional spatial features and the disappearance of cultural persistency. This eventually will have negative effects on tourism activities. A sustainable culture tourism has to endure the unique identity of the city as the main entry of tourism [21].

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