


Book Review

From Tradition to Cittaslow TARAKLI

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From Tradition to Cittaslow
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Explaining the role and importance of space in today's people's search for happiness in a different and sincere way than the usual academic language, "From Tradition to Cittaslow Taraklı" is a book prepared by Nevnihal Erdoğan (architect, academician) and Hikmet Temel Akarsu (architect, writer) and published by Verita Publications in 2018. Although the book stands out as a kind of monograph of the Taraklı district; it also has the qualifications of being an academic textbook, a

tourism guide and an inventory work within the scope of general culture.

The book consists of 15 chapters in which the authors' explanations about their approach and goals about the subject are emphasized, information about Taraklı district is given, the concept of Cittaslow is explained, field studies conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Nevnihal Erdoğan are presented, the interview of Şahin Akı (Taraklı Municipality Deputy

Director of Planning and Urbanization) and the opinions of the municipality's public relations unit staff are considered:

1. Today's People are in Search
2. Why Taraklı?
3. The Fate of Taraklı
4. Taraklı's Fortune is Turning
5. A Brand-New Vision
6. What is Cittaslow?
7. The First Thing That Comes to Mind
When it Comes to Cultural Artifacts
and Historical Values
8. Taraklı is decomposing
9. And The Investor is in Taraklı
10. Taraklı: Exclusive Destination
11. Is Everything Perfect?
12. Conclusion & What Follows
13. Taraklı with its Architectural Features
14. Şahin Akı Interview
15. Opinions of Taraklı Municipality
Public Relations Unit

Taraklı is a settlement which was built in accordance with the traditional Turkish house type dating back to the 16th century -but mostly consisting of buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries- and Muslims and non-Muslims have lived together. It consists of four neighborhoods, containing examples of civil architecture that have been declared and protected besides its natural beauties which were also mentioned by Evliya Çelebi described as a "cute town" by mentioning its mountains, forests and streams. The settlement, which constitutes a strategic point on the army's campaign routes, was affiliated with the Izmit Sanjak during the Ottoman Period, and became a district of Kocaeli until 1954 during the Republican Period. Taraklı, which was also visited by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1928, remained within the borders of Sakarya province (that was established in 1954) and became a district of Sakarya in 1988. As a result of internal migration due to its location which is outside of the main transportation artery and its proximity to major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, especially the young population of the district has decreased, its economic activity has weakened; but on the other hand, it has been left

alone with its natural beauties. Thus, the district has begun to be an answer to people's search for natural -or in other words, "unspoiled"- spaces which are the most preferred destination features in the 2000's. It was even a candidate for the European Destinations of Distinction (EDEN) project and received an award in 2013 on the theme of "Accessible Tourism". Standing out with nature tourism with its plateaus and vegetation; health tourism with its healing water and hot springs; and festivals and local events that include organic food production and catering, Taraklı attracts attention especially from surrounding provinces such as Istanbul, Izmit, Bursa, Eskişehir and Ankara.

It is known that people's interest in recreation areas, undiscovered places and natural environments where they can breathe has increased nowadays as a result of their need to take a break from their busy lifestyle and have a holiday, even for a short time, such as weekend activities. However, on the other hand, it is an issue that requires some precautions to keep the destinations that stand out with their natural beauties and rich cultural histories intact. The concept of "Cittaslow", in another words "Slow City" becomes a solution approach at this point which has come to the fore with its targets for the protection of architectural heritage, local cultural characteristics, authentic activities and productions, and various technical and municipal measures and practices such as air-water-soil quality and waste management.

The authors considering the monotonous and fast-paced lifestyle as a threat to human happiness, also touch upon the problems of today's living spaces and base the book's starting point on human psychology; they aim to question the "correct" perception and use of spaces in people's search for happiness, and adopt an understanding that embraces traditional architectural values with a humanist approach. This approach, which reveals the claim and success of the book, conquers the reader with its writing language and content. The authors who bring together the concepts of tradition and Cittaslow in the example of Taraklı; created awareness through themes such

as new life models, happy life, aesthetics, calmness and alternative thinking in small settlements. The Cittaslow approach, which has been accepted by the innovative and forward-thinking local government of Taraklı district, has added a permanent identity value to the district as a model of development and improvement. Stating that being included in Cittaslow cities is a right step in this regard, the authors emphasize that this initiative offers a new perspective to Cittaslow studies as a good conservation method, will encourage similar settlements, and may be a suitable choice in some settlements based on tradition.

Taraklı district which became a member of the International Cittaslow Network in 2011, has developed and changed with creative ideas adhering to its traditions, with the cooperation of the local government and the people, and thus has inspired other districts of similar scale. At this point, the authors argue that these transformations are not easy to accomplish; they state that it is a process that will take place as a result of careful consideration of the reason, method and result, as well as the right effort. They associate the success of Taraklı, which they see as an exemplary model of development and improvement with the awareness of users and the proper use of public resources. Thus, with the right investments, the traditional texture and natural wealth of Taraklı are intact; unlike big cities, cultural and architectural heritage is protected without a sociological collapse and rent fight, as the authors mentioned.

Stating that the awareness of the protection of architectural heritage in Taraklı dates back to the periods before the membership of Cittaslow, the authors revealed that the district was handled by academicians of ITU in 1975, cultural assets started to be registered in 1985, the zoning plan for conservation came into force in 1992 and the work in the district continued by establishing relations with the Ministry of Culture in 2005. In line with these developments, restoration projects were prepared with the renovation workshops established in Taraklı, some buildings were put into service as boutique hotels, the district's

Çekül Foundation and City Union memberships were acquired and thus Taraklı was discovered by more people. Becoming a tourism center for various nature sports and local delicacies along with its natural beauties, Taraklı also gained interest within advertisements and movies by becoming popular in the cinema and television community as the authors stated. Besides being a certain place in tourism as a thermal center currently, paving the way for new investments in the district has been the factor that has increased the confidence of the public and emphasized the importance of the efforts made so far. It is revealed that pedestrianization works were carried out with the membership of Cittaslow, air quality was improved by eliminating noise and visual pollution, the restored shops were selectively rented to tradesmen, and initiatives related to the promotion of the district were prioritized; in other words, it is expressed that efforts for development continue.

In the book with nostalgic archive photographs of Taraklı district; it is seen that a total of twenty-seven registered buildings, including nineteen houses-mansions, four mosques, one primary school building, one military building, one bath and one inn, were examined in three neighborhoods with their locations including plan, section and appearance drawings and photographs within the scope of the academic studies under the direction of Prof. Nevnihal Erdoğan whom has studied for many years with her students and with illustrations of Z. Türkiz Özbursalı. These qualified architectural examples are important in terms of political, social and cultural analysis and are a valuable inventory study of Taraklı:

13. Taraklı with its Architectural Features
 - 13.1. Hacı Murat District
 - 13.1.1. Selahattin Kozcağız House
 - 13.1.2. Hacı Murat Mosque
 - 13.1.3. Alaaddin Öncü House
 - 13.1.4. İsmail Hakkı Akay House
 - 13.1.5. Hacı Murat Primary School
 - 13.1.6. Meriç Özen House

13.2.Ulucami District

- 13.2.1. Reyhan Tepe House
- 13.2.2. Hanımeli Mansion
- 13.2.3. Hacı Rıfatlar Mansion
- 13.2.4. Rushdie
- 13.2.5. Kadılar Mansion
- 13.2.6. Çiçek Hanım Mansion
- 13.2.7. İzzet Erdoğan House
- 13.2.8. Fatma İşsever House
- 13.2.9. Abdi İbrahim Mansion
- 13.2.10.Lantern House
- 13.2.11.Yunus Pasha Mosque
- 13.2.12.Çakırlar Mansion
- 13.2.13.Çakıroğlu Mansion
- 13.2.14.Hisar House
- 13.2.15.Hisar Mosque
- 13.2.16.Hacı Atıf Khan
- 13.2.17.Old Bath
- 13.2.18.Hamam Street Building
no: 31

13.3.Yusuf Bey District

- 13.3.1. Sadık Özen House
- 13.3.2. Yusuf Bey Mosque
- 13.3.3. Bedia Özyıldız House

References

Erdogan, N., Akarsu, H.T., (2018). *From Tradition to Cittaslow* TARAKLI, Verita Publications, Istanbul

Revealing the importance of preserving architectural heritage and the unspoiled natural environment this book put forth the story of Taraklı, which has inspired many settlements, local governments and users. With the emphasis that built environments are not only an architectural formation, but also a cultural whole with their users and even local administrators, a stance is taken in the book against the phenomena of uniformization, monotony and rapid consumption, which are the outcomes of modern life. An awareness has been created which invites designers, architects, students and academicians to think within this point of view. It has been pointed out that it may well be an alternative to the impositions of standard function, design and form. The book, by filling a gap in the field, reveals the necessity of spreading the Cittaslow approach as a development and conservation model.