

Sustainable Actions of Community Entrepreneurs: Local Agenda 21 in Karaburun-İzmir

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has been considered mostly in terms of individuals who are defined as “people who specialize in taking responsibility for and making judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources in economic process”. On the other hand, more than economic actors some entrepreneurs appear as social representatives who are defined as social or community entrepreneurs. They consider the development of the community as their main personal goal and possess an innovative idea for social change. In local sustainable development concern, community entrepreneurs appear as crucial actors who act as leaders to motivate groups and individuals to voice their demands and interests, and to achieve the goals of sustainable development at the local level. In this paper the experience of community entrepreneurship in the form of collaborative actions of local authorities, local volunteers, special women groups and university members related with Local Agenda 21 (LA21) formation in İzmir-Karaburun Peninsula is being explored.

Key Words: Community Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Action, Local Agenda 21, Karaburun-Izmir.

1. INTRODUCTION

New forces like global competition, economic restructuring and environmental issues are constantly transforming communities where communities try to find out new ways for their interests to advance in such a time of rapid change. For this new environment, sustainable development appears as a necessary approach to provide the best outcomes for the environment, economy and increasingly diverse society. Development models focused on top-down approaches do not work sufficiently alone for sustainability; so the collaborative efforts of the community help to succeed in. The initiatives emerging from the very hearth of the community like training local people on special issues, fostering business connections, revitalizing urban areas and so on help the improvement of the economy and the community. To pursue community goals community entrepreneurship appears as an effective response for social and economic change by creating new opportunities and making new forms of development possible.

The aim of this paper is to explain the experience of community entrepreneurship and evaluate collaborative actions in İzmir-Karaburun Peninsula. Within this context, after giving a brief theoretical discussion on community entrepreneurship and sustainable local development, the experience of collaborative actions of İzmir-Karaburun community that have been held with the leadership of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) platform are explained. The efforts of this civil initiative which has been actively functioning for seven years include socio-economic and spatial development problems in view of environmental issues.

2. COMMUNITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Conventionally, entrepreneurship has been considered mostly in terms of individuals who start new ventures, in other words, who undertake a commercial enterprise often at personal financial risk. On the other side, going beyond the business founding, an entrepreneur is defined as someone, who specializes in taking responsibility for and making judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources in economic

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process. From this point of view, it is certainly entrepreneurial to seize profit opportunities that others cannot, to develop strategies, to create value through “carrying out new combinations” leading to innovation [1], to assemble resources and to take initiatives for personal success and survival.

Apart from the traditional entrepreneurship approach that seeks personal profit as the main objective, communitarian approach can be modified to pursue community goals, thereby creating new opportunities and making new forms of development possible. In this approach, wealth can be evaluated in terms of the benefits accruing to the broader community rather than as personal profit [2, 3].

This communitarian approach moves entrepreneurship beyond the narrow market-oriented forms of neoliberalism into a new era connected with social integration. Regarding these, entrepreneurship exposes the paradox between individual and collective action. On one side, individual entrepreneurs have been characterized as highly individualistic and highly independent possessing personal qualities of imagination and foresight, on the other side, as community entrepreneurs, they have wider social goals, such as the development of the entire community. These two approaches differ in terms of beneficiaries of the activities where community enterprises aim to create social values rather than personal wealth [4].

The term community entrepreneur combines two important concepts: entrepreneurship- the spirit of enterprise, and civic virtue- the spirit of community. By combining community goals and conventional business practices, community entrepreneurs are able to organize effective and viable business structures. They help communities to collaborate so as to develop and organize their economic assets and to build productive, resilient relationships across the public, private and civil sectors. They are beyond philanthropy as they are distinguished from third sector organizations by their income generation to finance their social goals [5]. They forge the ties that bind economy and community for their mutual benefit. For Henton et al. [6], there are three keys to success: recognizing opportunities, building consensus to capitalize on those opportunities and building momentum. For being successful, community should establish goals and work together on a set of initiatives.

Community entrepreneurship can create social and economic change in communities where some difficulties like the lack of labor skills, business and financial sources as well as the lack of appropriate institutional environment exist to start businesses. In such environments more than business creation based on human capital, locally referent networks of social relations defined as social capital create solutions for the common wealth of the community. This social context including social interaction, social ties, trusting relationships and value systems provide a conceptual rationale to drive new entrepreneurial ventures in employment creation at the local level [7]. Johansson and Nilsson [8] define community entrepreneurs as

catalysts and brokers who share their extensive networks with traditional entrepreneurs, helping others to pursue opportunities and create new ventures. They engage volunteers in support of their projects and use their networks efficiently to reach opportunities [2]. With this, community entrepreneurship helps to find personal and innovative ways of building support for local autonomous entrepreneurs.

For sustainable development, it is necessary to have social, economic and environmental objectives that can be reached by collaboration. Collaboration is needed because it is not enough to protect the environment by individual efforts. On the other side, at the core of unemployment and social problems; it generally lays the under-utilized potentials of the remarkable talents and skills based on deep cultural knowledge of the community and the lack of education and training. Community entrepreneurship provides a rationale to derive new entrepreneurial ventures in several sectors like environmental protection, development of local economies, solving socio-cultural problems and training of local people using its local, national and international networks. Thus, utilizing the potentials of the community, community entrepreneurship is seen as a possible answer to both the initial lack of individual entrepreneurial skills and further development of the community [9].

Community entrepreneurship appears in communities under different organizations. In Turkey, some of the partners of LA21 Program of UNDP act as community entrepreneurs. In these cases, the projects and actions of LA21 aim to translate sustainable development principles and objectives into practical action at the local level by utilizing the potentials to serve for the improvement of the community. For the integration of environmental, economic and social development processes, the program generally provides a strong relationship between local government and the community. During this process, the main focus is to involve all stakeholders into different levels of sustainable planning process like economic, environmental, social etc. [10]. According to Leithman, there are at least three different organizational approaches for structuring the participation in the development of LA21s: a) "priority problem" approach; based on the definition of the most important problems and priority options in the problem areas, b) sectoral or municipal services approach; based on the sectors or municipal services of a city emphasizing participation and environmental dimension, and c) stakeholder or thematic approach; based on the identification of relevant stakeholders or themes and organizing working groups according to them [11].

LA 21 processes in Turkey were launched in late 1997 via the project entitled “Promotion and Development of LA21s in Turkey” with the support of UNDP under the coordination of IULA-EMME – International Union of Local Authorities, Section for the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Region. The LA21 Program is currently in its 4th stage with the partnership of over 60 local authorities of varying sizes and

characteristics spread all over the country, ranging from huge metropolises to small districts [12].

The coordination of LA21 process at the cities which are program partners is realized by the LA21 secretariat consisting of local partners. LA21 secretariats are acting as agents between coordination institutes and cities and playing a key role for sustaining the success of the program. Besides the secretariats, the main participatory structures are formed by local interest groups like city councils, local stakeholders, working groups, neighborhood committees, women and youth councils, and platforms for special interest groups including the children, the elderly and the disabled [12].

In Turkey, among the LA21 partners Karaburun appears as a unique case with its integrating two municipalities and building a union. These two municipalities; Karaburun and Mordoğan have come together and established the partnership for the ecological sustainability of their Peninsula.

3. CASE STUDY AREA: KARABURUN PENINSULA, TURKEY

Karaburun Peninsula which is the western frontier of Turkey is the neighbor of the Greek islands of Chios and Lesbos. Karaburun settlement locates at the northern part of the Peninsula while Mordoğan locates at the north-east (Figure 1) [13].



Figure 1. Location of Karaburun, İzmir [14].

The total population of the Karaburun Peninsula is 8040 in 2007, where the urban population of Karaburun Municipality is 2489 and Mordoğan Municipality is 2933. The rural population of 13 villages located in the Peninsula is 2618 [15]. The main income of the inhabitants depends on olive production, floriculture, artichoke planting, fishing and tourism [16]. Since Karaburun Peninsula has rugged land, it is difficult to cultivate. Although agricultural land was mainly used for grape and tobacco production previously, only a few vineyards have survived till today, while tobacco production was completely disappeared. Nearly all cultures are grown in natural ways, which make them organic by definition. Because of the characteristic of

the soil and the climate, the cultivated products, i.e. olives, artichokes, daffodil and citrus fruits are of very high quality [17]. The wildlife and fauna are also rich in the region and the Mediterranean Monk Seals (*Monachus monachus*), which are under the danger of extinction [16] appear as the most famous species. Despite the municipal centers of Karaburun and Mordoğan, the economy of 13 villages is based on small scale agricultural production, goat and sheep breeding, flower and olive cultivation, and fishing (Figure 2) [13].



Figure 2. Villages on Karaburun Peninsula [18].

The Peninsula has been recently faced with the problem of rapid urbanization which arises by the heavily constructed summer houses. Regarding the natural and social characteristics of the Peninsula, it is quite difficult for local people to provide a sustainable future individually. It is necessary to work together to find solutions that provide the best outcomes for the environment, economy and the community. In this study, collective actions realized by the projects of LA21 Platform of Karaburun are examined. By putting these projects into practice, LA21 Platform has acted as community entrepreneurs thus motivated the community for sustainable development. The study is held via in-dept interviews with LA21 Secretariat and with local authorities and people.

3.1. The Story of LA21 Platform in Karaburun

Karaburun LA21 participated to the National Program at the end of the 2nd Stage. Before its formal participation, it was a civil initiative. In 1998, a group of people under the name of “Karaburun Civil Initiative” came together with the aim of introducing history, culture and local art of Karaburun which were not widely known enough. They started with organizing a festival called “Şeyh Bedrettin and Börklüce Mustafa” in which many activities like panels, music, poem and drama performs and folk dances were organized. Warm interests of local people created a request for improving the program in the coming years [19].

Within two years Karaburun Civil Initiative was transformed into “Karaburun Civil Initiative Platform” where different actors like; academicians, entrepreneurs, teachers, business executives, economists, technicians, researchers, writers, ethnologists, local press members, etc. came together. The aims of this platform were determined as;

1. To make researches about the history of Karaburun and explore the unknown parts, also to introduce the historical events which were placed on the region and the heroes who lived in Karaburun Peninsula.
2. To make researches about cultural values and protect them, and to encourage and support these studies.
3. To organize cultural activities for meeting the needs of local people.
4. To prepare projects for conserving the nature and protecting the environment, and in order to reach this aim to organize training activities.
5. To attract the attention of enterprises and organizations to the unsustainable implementations against the history, culture and architectural structure of Karaburun and to make local people conscious of conserving their Peninsula.
6. To establish relations with scientists and artists who live in or visit Karaburun and to organize special collaborative activities with them and support their studies.
7. To develop new projects with different partners for the development of sustainable tourism that cares about the historical, cultural and natural structure of the Peninsula.
8. To create “social consciousness” emphasizing the importance of public interest in Karaburun [19].

With the aim of active participation and consortium on the protection of the Peninsula, the Platform decided to turn into a formal organization under LA21 program and took its place in National LA21 Network. On April 27th 2002, LA21 studies were introduced to all relevant actors and Karaburun Peninsula LA21 platform was established with the participation of Karaburun, Mordoğan Municipalities and 13 villages which had faced with the same problems and shared common interests. For monitoring the studies, the general secretariat, an action committee and 9 working groups were created.

The collaboration of two municipalities; Karaburun and Mordoğan under the platform of LA21 appears as a model in Turkey [16]. The general secretary of Karaburun LA21 is a journalist but spends most of his time by the voluntary activities of LA21 and his wife works as the vice secretary and actively takes place in local training. Appropriate to the thematic approach of Leithman, the 9 workgroups of Karaburun Peninsula LA21 program are; development and urbanization, settlement and architectural history, human rights and law, women, environment, media, information and education, art and culture, and youth. Among them the

most active working groups are women and youth where the youth assembly has been awarded in 2007 by Youth for Habitat Turkey. The facilitating committee consists of 19 volunteers who contribute to the thematic workgroups. This committee is composed of academicians from several departments like city and regional planning, geography, art history, agriculture and medicine, also of people dealing with tourism, economy, ethnology, literature, education and other voluntary organizations.

In Karaburun, there are several problems like the pollution of fishing farms in the sea, destruction of olive trees by excavation for marbling, threat of monk seals by overuse of coasts, illegal constructions, migration of young people to İzmir, destruction of local economy and transformation of agricultural fields of local products into secondary housing that have triggered the collective action of local people. To create “an ecological Peninsula”, it is necessary to build partnerships and collaborate with local government and community. Community leaders in Karaburun believe that community should act rather independent from the central government by mobilizing their resources and skills that are underutilized. With this aim, they have worked together with experts and local leaders and created national and international projects for a better future. The projects have been structured to combine social goals and good practices using the legal structure of LA21. Emerging as a collective entrepreneur LA21 have decided to struggle with environmental and socio-economic problems of Karaburun for a sustainable future.

3.2. Sustainable Actions of LA21 Platform as Community Entrepreneurs

Sustainable actions of LA21 platform can be defined under different projects being held by different workgroups for developing solutions to socio-economic and environmental problems of Karaburun Peninsula since 2003. Four projects are selected as cases reflecting different collaborations for different issues. These projects are “Karaburun Women with Winpeace: Karaburun Agro-Tourism Project”, “Model Proposals and Training for Decreasing Unemployment in Karaburun”, “Improvement of Daffodil Floriculture with a Sustainable Agriculture Approach and Its Contribution to Rural Development in Aegean Region” and “Mediterranean Monk Seal Monitoring Project in Karaburun”.

The first project “Karaburun Women with Winpeace: Karaburun Agro-Tourism Project” is a socio-economic development project started in 2003. With the financial support of European Commission, Greek Winpeace (Women’s Initiative for Peace) Platform together with Karaburun LA21 platform developed a project dealing with agro-tourism. Besides Greek Winpeace Platform and Karaburun LA21 platform, the stakeholders of this project were the Governor of İzmir and academicians and students from the Department of Architecture of Institute for High Technology of İzmir. The aim of this project was to bring Turkish and Greek women together in order to enhance peace on both sides of the Aegean

Sea and to improve the skills of Turkish and Greek women into a social and economic power [20] Karaburun Peninsula was selected for the implementation of the project as it was the best place with being the frontier city and having virgin coasts and land that was suitable for ecological agriculture.

Sarpıncık, Parlak and Küçükbahçe were selected as the pilot villages of the project, as they were conserving Aegean traditions and folklore, and had women workforce with underutilized potential to participate in the socio-economic activities. During the project, the women were trained about gender awareness and empowerment, agro-tourism, hygiene, human relations, basic information on law and finance, services for tourism and accommodation, and production and preservation of local products (such as jam, honey, pickles, handicrafts, etc.). For the production and marketing local products for national and international tourism, Karaburun Women Agro-Tourism Cooperative was established [21]. With the establishment of the Cooperative, women learned about the importance of packaging, labeling and marketing the marmalades and a number of other home made products (Figure 3). Governor of İzmir also supported the Cooperative and allocated a cooperative building in Karaburun [20].

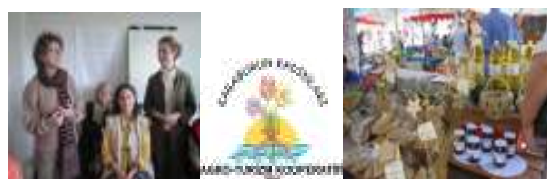


Figure 3. Training of women, the emblem and the local products of the Cooperative [20].

Besides the economic actions, women tried to contribute to the social and cultural activities as well. The members of the cooperative visited the sister cooperative in Lesbos-Greece and shared their ideas. They also contacted to academicians of Institute for High Technology of İzmir for the renovation of old houses in order to integrate them to tourism and use them as cooperative pensioning. A group of 36 architecture students, leading by professors, worked for 9 days in the three participating villages and drew the plans for the renovations [21].

The main outcome of this project emerges as the increment of the social status of the rural women in their communities by strengthening them economically, broadening their vision and giving them the opportunity to get in touch with other cultures. It is experienced from this project that, if women are encouraged and empowered by training, they can participate more easily in a collective work and widen their networks to reach opportunities [2]. With this project, the Greek and Turkish women have shared their experience and their friendship and achieved social and economic

empowerment [20]. This cooperation has also contributed to the income of both sides with the package tours organized to the villages of both sides in certain days. Consequently, for sustainable development, community entrepreneurs working for Karaburun LA21 and Karaburun Women Agro-tourism Cooperative have caused new entrepreneurial ventures in the development of local economies by using their international networks. Although the project was completed in three years, its effects on capacity building and agro-tourism activities between two countries have still go on.

The second project “Model Proposals and Training for Decreasing the Unemployment in Karaburun” was submitted to European Commission and accepted in 2004. It was a one year, multi-participant project where the project partners were Karaburun LA21, Karaburun Municipality and Karaburun Women Agro-Tourism Cooperative [22]. The aim of the project was to train local people about environment, agro-eco-tourism, organic agriculture, agricultural production of special local products such as artichoke, grape, olive, citrus, daffodil etc., cooperative system, greenhouse system, marketing and handicrafts. LA21 building in Karaburun was used as the project coordination office. At the beginning of the project, for the selection of the trainees, a questionnaire was applied to the inhabitants and their level of interest was determined. The selected 62 trainees were trained for 3 months by the experts from Aegean University Department of Geography and Directorate of Culture and Tourism of İzmir Province. After the training, 24 people were employed in 4 greenhouses which were built by the support of Karaburun Municipality (Figure 4) [21]. The project was completed in 2005.

The main outcome of this project is to get over the unemployment problem by local capacity building and utilizing remarkable talents and skills. Local people were trained about growing special organic products and their marketing. Leadership of Karaburun LA21 and the supports of Karaburun Municipality and Karaburun Women Agro-Tourism Cooperative are seen as possible answers to overcome the initial lack of individual entrepreneurial skills and further to contribute the development of the community. They recognized local unemployment as a social problem and used entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make the social change. They helped to go local towards creating self-reliant communities in a global age.

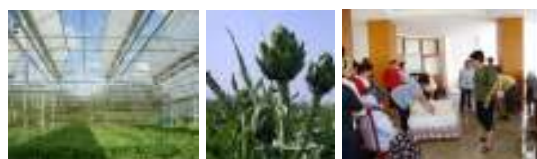


Figure 4. Karaburun greenhouse, artichoke plantation and trainees [20, 21].

The third project named “Improvement of Daffodil Floriculture with a Sustainable Agriculture Approach and Its Contribution to Rural Development in Aegean Region” was accepted among 200 projects and supported by REC (Regional Environmental Center) grants program. The project partners were Karaburun LA21, Mordoğan Municipality and Mordoğan Social Solidarity, Education and Culture Foundation. It was a one year project started at 2005 and completed in 2006 with a budget of 25 000 € [23]. The aim of the project was to improve the daffodil (narcissus) floriculture with a sustainable agricultural approach and to contribute to rural and socio-cultural development of Mordoğan community [24]. The problem was the death of the daffodil bulbs with a disease which caused serious economic and ecological damage in the region. The objectives were to prevent the disease in the daffodil bulbs, to improve daffodil production in quantity, quality and efficiency, to contribute to local economy by developing income and employment and thus to prevent the daffodil fields which were faced with the problem of transformation into built areas.

During the project, a meeting was held in Karaburun LA21 office among project leaders, consultants, participants, local farmers and local authorities. LA21 volunteers decided to apply a questionnaire to citizens, to select the trainees interested in the issue. 22 trainees were selected and trained by experts from Aegean University, Faculty of Agriculture about daffodil bulb and growing techniques. Besides, brochures and course notes were published and an education film was produced by REC. The trainees implemented the techniques of applying insecticides, warm watering and drying of bulbs for their own fields and realized the plantation with the help of a planting machine specially designed with the support of the project. 46 000 bulbs were planted in the fields of 2400 m² and were irrigated by dropping techniques (Figure 5) [23]. The first harvest of the daffodils was realized in December 2005. The success was about 60% in the first year [21].

With the support of the project the citizens gained ecological awareness and learned different agricultural implementation techniques required for sustainability. Besides, disease prevention methods were developed, mistakes were determined and experiences were shared [25]. Volunteers in LA21 platform want to continue these activities and disseminate the experience to all over the Peninsula with new projects and new partners that will forge the ties among economy and community.

The last project is about the protection of endemic species; the Mediterranean seals (Monachus Monachus). Mordoğan is a special region for the bio-habitat of Mediterranean seals. However, this rocky region having the caves of the seals is used actively by tourists especially in summer time. The mobility of people and vehicle traffic are so heavy that seals can not draw near the caves for the birth of their babies and many of the babies die.



Figure 5. Daffodils, bulbs, experimental field and planting machine [25].

A national non-governmental organization (NGO); SAD-AFAG (Mediterranean Seal Research Society) and a local monk seal committee have been working on the Mediterranean seals since 2000. Karaburun LA21 platform decided to intervene in this issue and developed the project with the support of SAD-AFAG [26]. The objectives of this project is to determine the protection areas of monk seals, to hinder the death of monk seals by declaring prohibited areas near the caves for the fishermen, to build a sea control system and to raise the awareness about endemic species by training of fishermen, students, citizens and local managers. With the collaboration of Mordoğan Municipality, SAD-AFAG settled different technical equipments like monitors, video-cameras, multiplexers, infrared light sources into the cave named ‘Ayıbalığı’ in Mordoğan so as to monitor the monk seals (Figure 6). This project still goes on by the help of local monk seal committee. They try to protect the rocky region, coasts and caves by making demonstrations against fishing, swimming, canoeing, and diving in the neighboring areas especially in the reproduction season of Mediterranean seals between July and September. Karaburun LA21, local monk seal committee and SAD-AFAG engage volunteers in support of their projects and use their networks efficiently to reach opportunities for ecological and bio-habitat protection which appears as a green community entrepreneurship.



Figure 6. Mediterranean seal named “Badem” and Ayıbalığı cave in Mordoğan [26].

4. CONCLUSION

Sustainable development requires solving social, economic and ecological problems together where individual initiatives can be limited. For this, collective actions provide better practices. Community entrepreneurship jointly create solutions to commonly perceived and experienced problems by helping people work together on specific issues and helps to mobilize underutilized resources and create wealth for the community.

Karaburun as a small community has inefficiently used human and financial resources thus can not easily build its own financial and institutional capacity. To overcome these difficulties, several civil initiatives started as voluntary efforts and these efforts transformed into a formal organization under LA21 program in Karaburun. This organizational structure which formed the basis of community entrepreneurship has developed different projects to mobilize the underutilized social, economic and environmental potentials and increase the capacity. It is considered like a community entrepreneurship as it pursues community goals, and offers new ideas for wide-scale change.

The LA21 organization established fruitful partnerships between municipalities, institutes, universities, other NGOs and international institutions for making local and international projects together. The international help from European Commission (EC) and REC (Regional Environmental Center) contributed to the actions of LA21. In order to manage the current environmental challenges effectively and develop the capacity in Karaburun; local governments, different NGO's and other stakeholders contributed through training programs as well. Training programs were designed as interactive workshops for the participants, giving them the opportunity to learn by participating dynamically in group exercises, case studies, brainstorming and free discussions. The grants obtained by Karaburun LA21 helped the citizens to organize meetings and international travels, to make some publications, to start businesses and to become conscious about sustainable action.

All of these projects and actions have increased the participation and strengthened the social bonds that contribute the social capital. Integration of different, disadvantaged groups such as women to this process has an essential impact on the increment of social capital which also enhances the quality of life positively. The improvement of quality of life based on the components like human resource, health, education, economic performance, social integration and quality of political system in Karaburun will play a major role towards sustainability thus will contribute to socio-economic development.

Karaburun LA21 uses best practice management and risk taking skills to create solutions to social and economic problems by their projects and seeks for projects that can reduce socio-economic risks and improve employment opportunities. Each project entailing vision tries to solve the local problems. This

collaboration planted the seeds of environmental protection and sustainable development seven years ago and now strives for reaching these aims by motivating local people and creating synergy for social change. Karaburun LA21 proves that they are really community entrepreneurs acting as a facilitator between the parties, actors and women to share the ownership of each initiative together in order to pave the way for long-term sustainability of Karaburun Peninsula.

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