

## **A Planning Studio Experience in Landscape Architecture Education: Gökçeada Example**

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**Abstract:** The European Landscape Convention describes landscape planning as strong future actions for the development, improvement and creation of landscapes. In parallel to this, it also highlights the necessity to train landscape-related experts and to provide planning education in various educational institutions while stressing the importance of the sustainable planning of landscapes under various headings. Landscape architecture departments, which gave their first graduates in our country in 1973, have since had a landscape planning infrastructure. This infrastructure constitutes an important place in the landscape architecture education process. Almost all landscape architecture departments in Turkey have landscape planning division. Landscape planning is also considered to be a necessary process for the protection and sustainable use of landscapes on a local, regional, territorial, and even global scale. Gökçeada, the largest island in Turkey, is one of the settlements which need sustainable land use decisions with its different natural and cultural landscape features. The island, which is in the process of declaring an organic agricultural center through the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and related provincial agencies while also trying to meet high tourism demands, is under the influence of different sectors in terms of future land use decisions. Thus, Gökçeada was selected as a field of study for the Project V (Planning Studio) course which was carried out during the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year by the Department of Landscape Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture and Design of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. In the operation of the studio, students experienced a planning process with all the steps, starting with the description of the subject and problem. In this study, as a result of the functioning of the Gökçeada landscape planning studio mentioned above as well as its gains and limitations for students and their research, spatial decisions for the future of the island have been put forward. In addition, the operational problems of landscape planning studios and their solutions have been expressed through the Gökçeada studio.

**Keywords:** *Landscape Planning Studio, Island Landscape, Gökçeada, Çanakkale*

### **Introduction**

Landscape planning in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) is defined as strong prudential actions on development, improvement, and creation of landscapes (Official Gazette, 2003). Ahern (2002) mentions that landscape planning aims to protect rare, scarce, and unique resources with controlled usage, prevent potential threats and pre-identify areas suitable for development (Kaptan Ayhan and Hepcan, 2009).

With landscape planning, ecological principles are included in spatial planning. What makes the landscape plan different from other physical plans is that this plan is the result of an ecologically based planning (Ortaçesme, 2007; Cetinkaya & Uzun, 2014). The ELC, which Turkey signed in 2000, states that the landscape should be put into practice for all country policies on various scales. Besides, each country that signed this agreement is committed to creating and implementing landscape policies for the protection, management, and planning of the landscape. Further, the ELC considers the awareness of civil society, the public and private sectors under the heading "Special Measures" on the value of landscaping and the effects of changes in landscapes. The subheading "Training and Education" under the same title includes articles about the training of landscape-related experts, the creation of multidisciplinary education programs, and the provision of courses covering the preservation,

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development, management, and planning of landscapes in universities and other educational institutions (Official Gazette, 2003).

The Landscape Architecture Education in Turkey began in 1968 on a departmental basis and gave its first graduates in 1973. Since then, there has been a landscape planning infrastructure in landscape architecture departments; however, it has not reached the expected/desired level (Uzun *et al.* 2019). Although there has not been an agreement on the practice of landscape planning education (course time, number of semesters, class content, *etc.*) in the departments, landscape planning studios and related courses hold an extremely important place in the education of students.

In this study, the Project V (Planning Studio) course, conducted in the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year in the Department of Landscape Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture and Design of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, has been evaluated. Thus, it is aimed to discuss the achievements and limitations of the planning studio operation in landscape architecture education for the students. Within the scope of this course, 31 students were shared between 2 faculty members responsible for the course. The content of this study was based on the plans and reports of two different groups selected from Group A (consisting of 15 students).

As the study area, Gökçeada district of Çanakkale Province, which is an important settlement in terms of its historical, ethnic, agricultural and touristic aspects and contains different landscaping and field use samples, was selected.

This decision was made in relation to the fact that students would come across many different forms of land use and that the island has special examples of urban, rural and coastal landscapes. In addition, the study area faced unplanned and uncontrolled tourism movements, especially in recent years. Therefore, it is obvious that Gökçeada's future should be constructed with approaches based on sustainable use of resources.

## **Material and Method**

The main material of the study consists of the Gökçeada district and the reports and maps put forward by the students during the studio process. Written and visual information and documents related to the field were used in the preparation of these reports and plans. In addition, information was obtained through oral interviews with various institutions. All of these are other research materials.

### Study Area: Gökçeada District

Gökçeada district of Çanakkale province is in the northeast of the Aegean Sea (Figure 1). The area is 289km<sup>2</sup> and the shore length is 95 km. (Gökçeada Kentsel Tasarım Rehberi, 2016). The population of the island was 8769 in 2017, and 9440 according to the data of 2019 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020). There are 9 villages in the district. Tepeköy, Dereköy, Kaleköy, Bademli and Zeytinli villages are ancient Greek villages. Eşelek, Şirinköy, Uğurlu and Yeni Bademli are state-owned settlement villages. In terms of historical development, it is estimated that the first settlement on the island was between 3000 and 2000 B.C. (Kahraman, 2006). The Pelasgians (Achaeans) were the first tribe to settle on Gökçeada (Özbek, 2008), and the island had been dominated by many different realms (Rome, Latin, Venice and Genoese and finally Ottoman) throughout its history (Gökçeada Urban Design Guide, 2016). Lastly, on September 22, 1923, the island joined the territory of the Republic of Turkey under the Treaty of Lausanne (Çapa, 2017). A great part of the Greek population, which was dominant until 1946, emigrated to Greece after 1960. The previous name of the island, Imbros, was changed to Gökçeada on this date. The Greeks who have left with migration keep their bonds with Gökçeada and visit the island on various special and religious days. Some of them resettled in the island after their retirement (South Marmara Development Agency, 2012).

The service sector and agricultural activities in Gökçeada are the two most important branches of the economic structure. Avcı (2008) indicates that olive and grains are the most significant agricultural products of the island. The Imbros sheep, which is unique to the island, also has an important role in animal production (Konyalı *et al.*, 2004). Beekeeping activities are also developing due to organic agricultural projects (Şahin, 2015). Avcı (2008) says that viticulture is decreasing compared to the periods when the Greek population was dense. In addition, efforts to declare Gökçeada as an organic farming island continues with the cooperation and support of central and local administrations and related institutions. The fact that the natural landscape is not polluted with any industrial activities

makes the agricultural activities in Gökçeada unique and important. However, the fact that the area is an island also causes it to be more ecologically fragile.



**Figure 1.** Gökçeada's Geographic Location (ESRI, 2016, Cengiz et al., 2009)

In addition to its agricultural potential, Gökçeada also has a rich cultural landscape with important traces of Aegean islands' settlement culture and traditional living habits. Additionally, due to the limited access to the mainland (although significant improvement has been achieved compared to past years), the people living on the island have learned to meet their own needs and turned this into a way of life. Today, this culture, which is part of the past and was born of limitations, is an important cultural value of the island. In addition, this cultural value is a rural development tool of the island (island-specific products in national markets) in terms of gastronomy. Gökçeada was joined International Slow City Network (Cittaslow) in 2011 with a project that began with this movement. The island remains the first and only island in the world to achieve this status (Özdemir and Kaptan Ayhan, 2019).

With its natural and cultural values, especially in recent years, the island faces an increasing tourism demand. The relative increase in transportation opportunities, advertisements through written and visual press and social media has made the island an important destination. However, these economy-focused tourism activities, which are far from any planning, pose a threat to Gökçeada.

Considering all these assessments, this course is looking for an answer to the following question: "On which areas and sectors should the future of Gökçeada be built?"

The method of this study is based on the operation of the planning studio, which is carried out in the fall semester of the 2016-2017 academic year. Within the framework of the studio, the current state of the natural and cultural landscapes of Gökçeada was analyzed and planning studies based on sustainable use were revealed in line with this analysis. Within the scope of the course, firstly, data for

the natural and cultural landscape of Gökçeada were obtained for analysis studies. Then, for the purpose of on-site survey and observation, a technical trip to Gökçeada was held between 13-14 October 2016 with 2 faculty members, 2 research assistants, and 31 students. During the technical trip, a meeting with the Mayor of Gökçeada took place in addition to field survey, and information about the current state of the island, its problems and future projects planned by the authorities was obtained. In addition, the students conducted interviews with local people, obtaining various information about the island, both from the past and present.

After the data collection phase, the students analyzed land-use suitability in Gökçeada. AutoCAD and Photoshop software were used in these analyses. Consequently, the students came up with suggestions about which sector and identity could help Gökçeada reach a sustainable future. The limited use of geographic information systems software is mentioned in the "Results and Discussion" section.

## Results and Discussion

### Revealing the Current Situation

After deciding on the study area, the students were expected to collect data on Gökçeada's natural and cultural landscape. They, then, conducted on-site observations and inspections during the technical trip. Notes, photographs and information obtained from the mayor's office and local public interviews during this stage also helped establish the current state of the area. All the data collected from the study area are shown in Table 1. Revealing the current situation was very important to effectively continue the planning process, and the students, therefore, understood the importance of written resource diversity and personally took over the process of acquiring information and documents from institutions and organizations in person. They also experienced the necessity to allocate information as necessary/unnecessary in the process of reporting these spatial planning and plan decisions. In addition, during the technical trip, they followed the footsteps of traditional life and the traces of the Greek-Turkish culture's common features, while trying to get to know Gökçeada with all its landscape features. They submitted a "Current Situation Report" according to all information, documents and maps provided and prepared "the Current Situation maps" (Natural Landscape/ Cultural Landscape) (Figure 2-3).

**Table 1.** Current status data of the Study Area

Natural Structure	Topographic Structure
	Flora
	Fauna
	Climate
	Soil Properties
	Geology
	Hydrology
Spatial Features	Urban Infrastructure
	Urban Conservation Areas
	Rural Conservation Areas
Economic Structure	Vegetable Production
	Animal Production
	Tourism
Sociocultural Structure	Demographic Data
	Health Care
	Education Services
	Transportation Services
Historical and Administrative Structure	Traditional Living Habits
	Historical Development
	Archaeology
	Location Properties
	Historical/Traditional Villages - Settlement Villages
	Zoning Plans
	Investment-Incentive Areas



**Figure 2.** (Cultural/Natural) Current Situation Maps (Group 1: Ceran Sönmez, Gülbeste Ertekin)

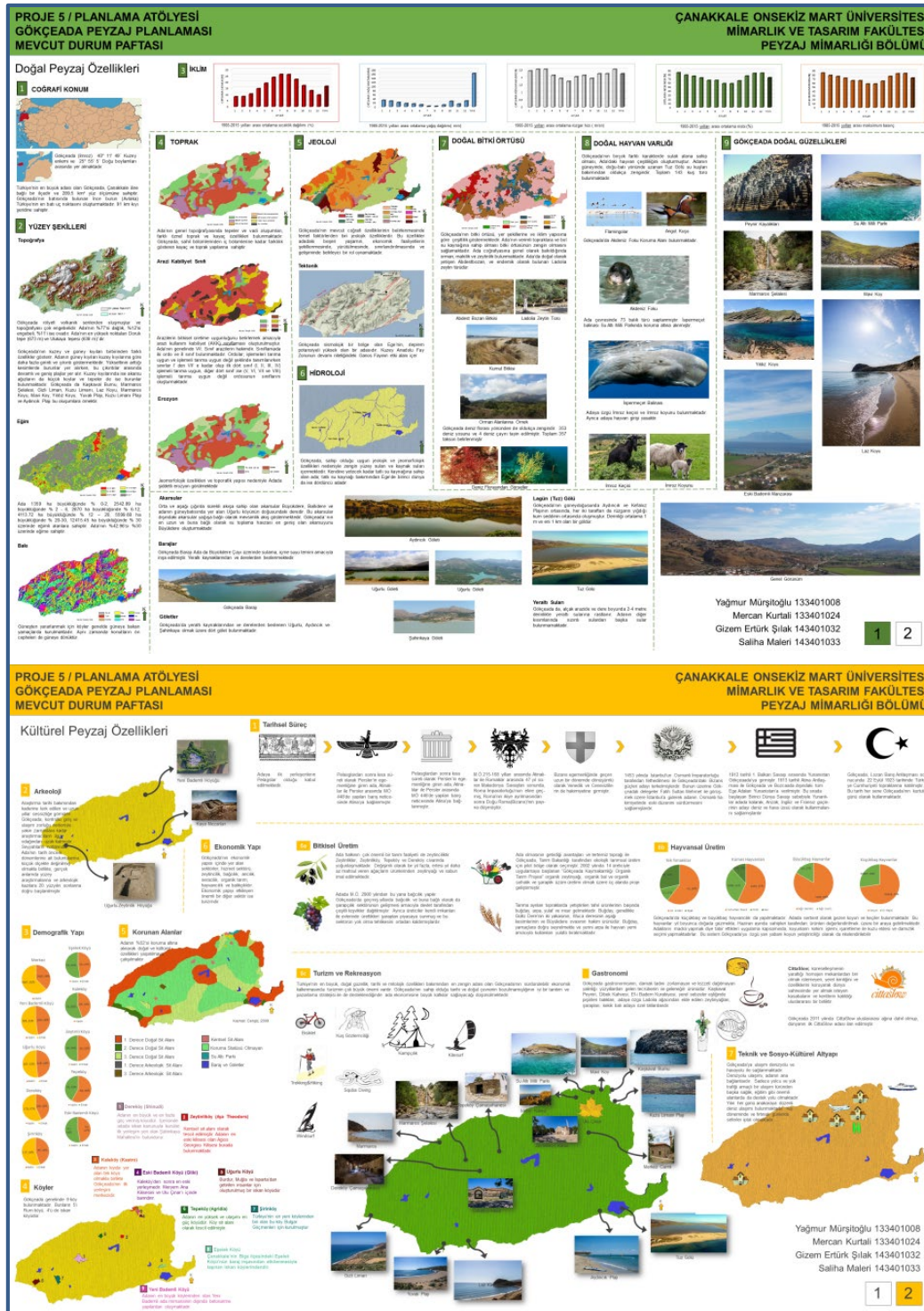


Figure3. (Cultural/Natural) Current Situation Maps (Group 2: Yağmur Mürşitoğlu, Mercan Kurtali, Gizem Ertürk Şılak, Saliha Maleri)

### Land Use Suitability Analysis

The students overlaid thematic maps according to the data obtained and spatialized at the previous stage. Then, they carried out suitability analyses for Gökçeada's current and future land use. As a result, they attempted to determine the optimal areas for forests, agriculture/pasture and tourism/recreation uses (Figure 4-5). In addition, they developed several recommendations for these identified uses.

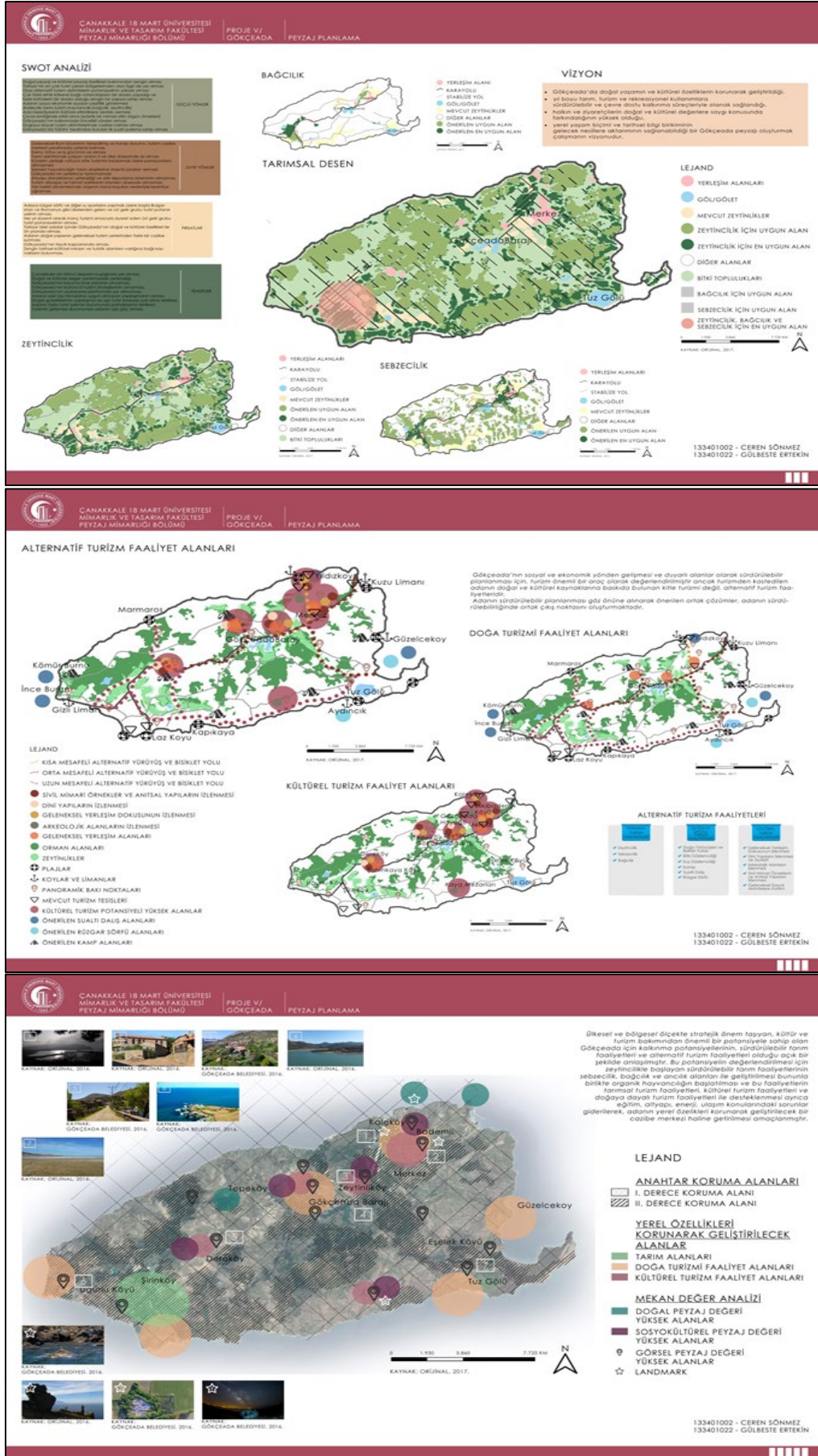


Figure 4. Land use Suitability Maps (Group 1)





both groups recommended for the island are organic agriculture and tourism according to the island's ecology and cultural texture. The plan decisions created for this is generally as follows:

1. Agricultural activities are particularly important on islands. The fact that access to the mainland is not always possible is forcing the island people to meet their own nutritional needs. Therefore, agricultural production is an indispensable life culture for the island. That is why it is necessary to continue the traditional and modern agricultural methods by combining them. In addition; the efforts to declare Bozcaada and Gökçeada as "organic agriculture island" with the cooperation of both central and local administrations and related institutions are extremely important for rural development. The continuity of agricultural activities is an issue that should be emphasized in terms of not allowing the whole economic structure of the island to depend on tourism activities and preventing misuse of agricultural land.

2. Olive cultivation has an important potential which should be considered in terms of island agriculture. A variety of olive named *Ladolia* is especially important, since it grows only in Gökçeada in Turkey and has a unique smell and taste properties.

3. Viticulture and winemaking is a very old culture of Gökçeada. According to Avcı (2008), the discovery of carbonized grape seeds from the 2900s BC indicates that viticulture activities have been carried out on the island since ancient times. The production of homemade wine, a tradition from past, must be supported by complying the process with the laws and regulations.

4. In terms of animal production, Imbros Sheep is especially important. This species, which is cultivated on the island in conditions that can be considered "wild" (Konyalı *at al*, 2004), is under protection as a genetic resource. Studies focused on Imroz sheep production should be increased. In addition, Gökçeada has the potential to develop in terms of beekeeping activities.

5. The continuity of agricultural activities in Gökçeada should be ensured by the cooperation of the state and relevant institutions and organizations. Furthermore, the quality of island agriculture will improve, and the market share of the products will increase by providing related training to farmers.

6. Tourism is a sector that both groups of students recommend for Gökçeada's future. However, the inability to achieve economic satisfaction from agricultural activities leads local people to tourism. The island is suitable for coastal tourism for only 2-3 months due to its climatic properties. The lack of planning to spread tourism throughout the year causes intense visitor pressure in this period. This situation results in insufficient accommodation capacity. For this reason, the public ignores the necessity of protection decisions and approaches positively to various zoning decisions made especially for marginal lands. Awareness of the local people towards the protection of the island's natural and cultural values should be increased through various educational activities. With various educational studies, local awareness on the protection of the island's natural and cultural values should be increased.

7. Tourism activities to be carried out in Gökçeada should be planned carefully to prevent a mass tourism effect. Tourism construction should prioritize protection and should be conducted in harmony with the traditional architectural texture and the living culture of the island.

8. In coastal tourism activities, the human impact is felt most intensely. The balance between protection and usage must be contained in coastal planning.

9. The sustainable future of Gökçeada will be possible through the planning of agricultural and tourism activities together and in relation to each other. Starting from here, agricultural tourism has been given a wide coverage for planning. Maintaining the stages of agricultural activities, spanning the whole year (pruning, harvesting, etc.) in parallel with tourism, and making Gökçeada a destination for individuals adopting this tourism concept were suggested.

10. The understanding of sea-sun-sand oriented tourism in the past is now replaced with a highly aware thinking structure that respects nature, culture and traditional life and would like to experience it. The Slow City status is an important approach, especially for foreign and local tourists who embrace this type of tourism. The Slow City approach, which includes many criteria, such as the protection of the original rural and urban character and the survival of traditional handicrafts, is an opportunity to carefully evaluate Gökçeada's sustainability. At this point, previous studies aiming to raise the awareness level of the local people regarding the concept of a slow city – such as giving nutrition and taste training in primary schools with the collaboration of Slow Food Gökçeada Convivium and the Department of Gastronomy in the Gökçeada School of Applied Sciences of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University; determining traditional professions and related handicrafts in

relation to Traditional Professions: A Study of Oral History in Gökçeada in 2006 conducted through the support of the same cooperation; the introduction of an oral history documenting work on Gökçeada Cuisine and its publication as a book entitled "Slow Food and Gökçeada: A Managerial Approach"; and the publication of another book entitled "Slow Movement" in 2010 and its distribution to the local public (Özdemir & Kaptan Ayhan, 2019) – should be repeated. It would also be an important step for the local authorities to own the title of Slow City and focus on projects towards the criteria that must be met in order to preserve this title.

In accordance with the planning studio which is the subject of this study, student groups examined the existing natural and cultural landscape values through an example area and brought various plan proposals focused on the sustainability of Gökçeada's cultural identity. However, another purpose of this study is to reveal the achievements and limitations of planning studios in landscape architecture education. In the context of this project and the Gökçeada planning studio example, student gains and problems encountered can be sorted as follows, according to Uzun *et al.* (2019):

### Planning Studio Achievements

The students, who experienced the whole process of landscape planning from the beginning, grasp the evaluation of many different disciplines via planning. With this studio, the students experienced the necessity of multidisciplinary work in order to achieve the resulting product while planning in an area with both natural and cultural resources, such as Gökçeada.

They gained experience in achieving results by performing the exact process described theoretically in the landscape planning course. They also gained experience on the importance of teamwork and how they could turn individual differences into an advantage. In this course, the students were free for choosing their groups. The number of students in the groups changed between 2 and 5 times. At this point, the students learned task sharing, fulfilling their responsibilities promptly and developing an awareness of taking joint action.

They clearly experienced the importance of the concept of geographic information systems and using the software. The use of GIS software provides great convenience in planning efforts within today's technology. However, the students experienced several difficulties during the data processing and planning due to their GIS usage limitations. In addition, the lack of Photoshop software and similar programs used for overlays as well as the program's lack of details needed to achieve the desired result also increased their awareness and desire to learn about GIS software.

They also gained experience in the data collection phase during the planning project. They understood the importance of digital data along with which information and documents they needed to access and from which institutions they could obtain information and documents. They experienced the necessity of a systematic data collection process while working in an area such as Gökçeada where access to the island was relatively limited.

In terms of sustainability, they learned about the necessity and importance of defining and classifying landscapes and they gain the ability to carry out these basic steps. Gökçeada, the largest one among a few islands of Turkey, contains many different landscapes. With this study, they understood the importance of identifying and classifying landscapes, thus ensuring sustainable use, with the example of Gökçeada. In addition, they carried out very basic studies on the identification and classification of landscapes. As a result, their awareness about the importance of the determination of landscape characters on the local, regional and national scale increased and they gained experience in the preparation process of landscape atlases.

With the contribution of all other courses associated with the planning studio, the students who completed this studio gained the competence to recognize and analyze different landscapes and to plan these landscapes without ignoring the social needs and characteristics, with a perspective on sustainability. The obvious effect of the Greek culture in Gökçeada is still perceived in many parts of life. There are also settlement villages on the island built for individuals from different regions of Turkey. This has created a wide variety for the island's living culture. As a consequence of this study, the students stepped up to gain the planning ability to satisfy different spatial desires and habits of different cultures. While finding solutions for different sectors (agriculture, tourism, etc.), they also gained the ability to produce plans that would correlate with the ecological basis.

### Problems and Limitations Faced During Planning Studio Courses

Difficulties were faced in the supply of printed/digital map data on natural and cultural landscape elements required in planning studies. The faculty members were obligated to choose from the available data. This issue leads to repetition.

Departmental quota determined by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) is increasing with each passing year. The average number of classroom size is 70, leading to both spatial inefficiencies and a considerable increase in the number of students per each faculty member. Even the presence of 31 students during the planning studio, which is the subject of this study, led to limitations in terms of both accommodation and in-area transportation. Similarly, crowded classes make it difficult to allocate vehicles to transport students to the field.

The insufficient knowledge and experience of the students in GIS programs negatively affected the planning process, especially during the data analysis phase. The students tried to come to a solution using AutoCAD and Photoshop programs in this studio for similar reasons.

There were also problems with area selection for the planning studio. At least a two-day travel program with accommodation was needed in order to have enough time required for necessary inspections and observations in the area, local interviews and surveys with residents and related public institutions and organizations. However, the desired land trip planning could not be made due to the conflicts in the weekly curriculum of the students and faculty members, along with the economic inadequacies of the students and the university.

If daytrips are preferred, the study area repetition issue occurs. In this context, the selection of Gökçeada as a study field ensured that the students had a different experience in terms of land travel, but economic limitations were handled only through the contributions of the university and Gökçeada Municipality. Considering that the classroom sizes are more than 2 times higher today unlike the period when the project started, it was difficult to provide similar economic supports.

The students were unable to establish the connection between the design and planning scale at the expected speed and had difficulties in developing a holistic perspective and reaching conclusions. They also had a difficulty in connecting the studio with the courses they previously took to form a basis for the planning studio.

### **Conclusion**

In planning-design education, studios are the most accurate courses that shape students in the process from theory to practice. As it is also stated in various studies in departments which focus on design and planning education and in which the studio outputs and results are discussed (Dikmen, 2011, Yaşar and Düzgüneş, 2013, Alpak et al., 2018, Acar and Bekar, 2017, Ter and Derman, 2018, Erdoğan, 2018, Altanlar, 2018), it is possible for students to gain professionally necessary abilities such as developing concrete and abstract concepts, solution-oriented approaches and ecology-based solutions in these studios. Planning and design studios must have sufficient equipment, including physical facilities and technological infrastructure, in order to educate students from object design to spatial planning and to give students the ability to work as a team.

The high efficiency processing of these classes will allow the student to begin to work as a graduate with the best potential. In this context, it is necessary to ensure the urgent reduction of departmental quotas, to support departments in terms of hardware and software to ensure the necessary development in GIS, to program the term schedule to allow GIS and planning classes to support each other in class schedules, and to provide necessary facilities for at least two-day land trips which are the absolute requirements for planning studios. The legal and administrative inclusion of landscape planning in spatial planning processes (Aşur & Alphan, 2018; Yılmaz Kaya & Uzun, 2019) will encourage students to be more interested and productive in landscape planning studios. Inter-departmental studio collaborations are also important for students to learn different perspectives. A stronger connection should be established between courses and planning studios that can build support in landscape planning studios, and students should get prepared for this process. In theoretical courses, day trips or shorter field trips will help students adapt to planning processes.

This study, which aims to reveal the process of the operation of the course within the planning studio, the achievements and limitations of students in the course, and the results of students' outcomes despite restrictions, is supportive in the process of the proper construction of planning

studios, especially in the landscape architecture departments that have not yet started their educational activities.

Defining and classifying landscapes is a commitment of Turkey, as well as all countries that have signed the ELC, as stated in the agreement. In addition, integrating landscape plans with our country's spatial planning system is necessary for this process to go appropriately. Planning studies in both urban and rural areas are crucial to the sustainable future of the country. Accurate analysis of natural and cultural data will only be possible with educated individuals equipped both theoretically and in terms of land studies. For this purpose, it will be the most appropriate step to improve the quality of education in the departments of landscape architecture, to establish relevant standards, and to build consensus as much as possible for landscape planning and planning studio courses.

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