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## Urban Consciousness among Inhabitants of a City in Turkey: Bursa as a case

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### Abstract

Urban consciousness as a concept related to understanding and adapting to the conditions and norms of living in a city has become an important aspect of life quality studies. In the content of this study, a statistical survey has been applied to 2000 inhabitants in Bursa, a city of Turkey with its historical, industrial, natural and social qualities. The survey is based on four criteria: awareness, belonging to, responsibility and transformation to analyze the “urban consciousness” of the inhabitants. This study with theoretical frame and survey results is hoped to be an applicable and developable model for various urban researches.

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*Keywords:* Urban life; urban consciousness; life quality; Bursa

### 1. Introduction

Cities are living spaces that provide a good life standard, employment opportunities and services for communication, transportation, health and education with a sound infrastructure and a free and independent life. To be able to provide such opportunities and services requires the building of the cities in an integrated way in the social, economic and administrative sense. Unforeseen changes in any of these fields bring about a rapid change process in the cities as well. Particularly rapid urbanization seen in the intense migration processes resulting from industrialization has caused some problems. As pointed out in the report of convention of urbanization (2009),

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unplanned housing and squatting in spatial context; traffic density, noise pollution, transportation problems in administrative context and employment problems in economic context might be the cause of some social problems like alienation, insensitivity, and identity crisis. When considered from this point of view, the most basic way, so that the cities may provide a habitable environment for its inhabitants, is to handle physical, administrative, economic and social domains as a whole (Ujang, 2010). Thus, the term life quality concerning the formation of healthy and sustainable cities is presented in the universal literature. Many international organizations have put the identification of the relationship and indicators between this term and cities on their agenda. This concept has been the subject of many interdisciplinary studies. Life quality is a term that develops and gains currency in conjunction with the development of modern life and modernization of the societies. Research indicates that material wealth related to the developing technology and the increase of the level of income has not been the only indicator of life quality. The spatial, social and even political factors are effective in life quality of the individuals (Pacione, 2003). When considered in this context planning, transformation and service policies regarding the cities and the decisions made related to these matters directly affect life quality. It is of vital importance to determine how different segments of society perceive their city, their current needs and expectations of the future in the policies formed and services provided in order to make cities more livable and inhabitable. Creating awareness towards the values of the city inhabited, sense of belonging, development of responsibility and sensitivity for the values of the city have become important study fields for the local administration, academicians, and non-governmental organizations. When considered in this context, it is clear that the increase in the urban consciousness has a very important role in providing the urban life quality. As mobility increases around the world, the concept of urban consciousness has become a highly controversial topic. While the homogeneous structure of the society in pre-industry periods has been dissolving, and rather heterogeneous, cities have appeared, people from different cultures have come and started living together. This situation increased the importance of urban consciousness. Turkey has been a part of this process. Particularly after the 1960s, as industrialization gained importance, domestic migration increased considerably. Together with moving from an economy based on agriculture to an economy based on the industry in the second half of the 20th century, Turkish cities have become multi-cultural. As a reflection of this process, quite some works of research have been conducted on urban consciousness in Turkey in recent years. Urban consciousness study conducted in Bursa, the fourth major city of Turkey from industry and population aspect, will be presented within the scope of the study. Bursa is an important example of urban consciousness because it has been through a process from agriculture to industrialization and that a rapid domestic migration took place as a result of this fact.

## **2. Urban life quality and urban consciousness relationship**

According to World Health Organization (WHO), life quality is individuals' way of perceiving and assessing their situations in life within the context of cultural structure and values system they belong to. The fore mentioned assessment is shaped with regards to the expectations, aims, life standards and anxieties of the individuals towards life. Again according to the definition of World Health Organization, life quality is a complex and broad term that shapes up in relation to many factors such as physical health, psychological state, level of freedom, social relations of the individuals and their interaction with the main elements of the society they live in (WHO, QOL Group, 1995).

“Urban Life Quality”, in its narrow sense, is being raised above the predetermined levels in the areas of “city” from the social, economic and spatial aspects in providing opportunities such as urban infrastructure, communication, transportation, housing etc. In its broad sense, the term “urban life quality” includes social, cultural and political factors and processes as well. The possibility for the individuals in society to benefit from the opportunities and facilities provided by the city equally and fairly, is related to participating in the educational, artistic, cultural and political activities and processes (Geray, 1998). It will be possible only with the rise in the level of awareness and increase of the sensitivity for the individuals to be able to actively participate in all these processes and to play an active role in the “decision making” stage. At this point, it is meaningful that the concept of urban consciousness has recently become prominent and been discussed in administrative studies and academic literature. In this regard, many urban consciousness studies in different scales have been carried out.

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