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Doctoral Dissertation  
Doctoral Program in Architectural and Landscape Heritage (32<sup>th</sup> Cycle)

# **Assessing Cultural Values of Landscapes: From Knowledge to Action for Historic Rural Landscapes in Turkey**

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# Abstract

Landscape comprises wide range of components and network of relations among them. Nature and culture are the main components among which tangible and intangible relations are constructed in time. While each component gives a prominent feature to landscape, it is the system of relations in multiple scale and landscape processes that give the landscape its character. For this reason, the importance of widened and broader notions is focused within the content of this thesis study. Thus, comprehensive approaches are proposed in order to identify, assess and provide conservation strategies and actions.

Historic rural landscapes are taken as case study since they are strong representatives for having network of relations among social, cultural, historical, economic, ecological and political aspects. They have the traces of past and comprise the inherited knowledge of how previous societies shaped their landscape through generations. However, historic rural landscapes encounter severe forces today in Turkey and around the world. They lead to change in economic and ecological life, and also in socio-cultural lifecycle and environment itself preventing the ongoing transfer of landscape knowledge among generations.

In this regard, thesis aims to identify, analyze, evaluate and conserve landscape characteristics in general and try to specify them for historic rural landscapes by using the landscape approach. For this, multilayered research is conducted covering conceptual, theoretical, methodological, historical and onsite investigations on historical-cultural territorial systems and socio-cultural, historic, economic, ecological, political and land use characteristics of the selected historic rural landscapes.

A method is proposed to identify and assess rural areas comprehensively. In this method, firstly, heritage values in wider context are defined. For this, natural, historical, physical, economic, socio-cultural, subjective and perceptive aspects are analyzed. In addition to that, value judgements by local inhabitants and diverse stakeholders through interviews and future visions of local, national and international bodies through designations, conservation, protection and planning decisions are assessed. Considering landscape as a process, past, current and future dynamics are determined. As a result, the character of historic rural landscape is defined. After that, evaluations and assessments are done. By doing so, different and diverse rural relations changing in diverse historical, geographical, natural, social and cultural contexts are observed and different heritage aspects are determined. Departing from this, site-specific procedures for the

identification, assessment, conservation, management and planning are proposed. In the end, landscape strategies and actions are developed for the conservation and empowerment for the selected cases.

**Keywords:** historical-cultural values, landscape approach, landscape conservation, historic rural landscapes, Turkey