



PROCEEDINGS PAPER

Travelling in the eastern Mediterranean with landscape character assessment

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Paper Abstract

Following its application in Northern Europe, Landscape Character Assessment has also been implemented in Euro-Mediterranean countries as a tool for classifying, describing and assessing landscapes. Many landscape classifications employed in the Euro-Mediterranean area are similar in philosophy and application to the ones developed in Northern Europe. However, many aspects of landform, climate, land-use and ecology, as well as socio-economic context are distinctive of Mediterranean landscapes. The paper discusses the conceptual and methodological issues faced during landscape mapping and characterisation in four East-Mediterranean countries (within the MEDSCAPES project): Cyprus, Greece, Jordan and Lebanon. The major hurdles to overcome during the first phase of methodology development include variation in availability, quality, scale and coverage of spatial datasets between countries and also terminology semantics around landscapes. For example, the concept of landscape - a well-defined term in Greek and English - did not exist in Arabic. Another issue is the use of relative terms like 'high mountains,' 'uplands' 'lowlands' or 'hills'. Such terms, which are regularly used in landscape description, were perceived slightly differently in the four participating countries. In addition differences exist in nomenclature and classification systems used by each country for the dominant landscape-forming factors i.e. geology, soils and land use- but also in the cultural processes shaping the landscapes - compared both to each other and to the Northern-European norms. This paper argues for the development of consistent, regionally adapted, relevant and standardised methodologies if the results and application of LCA in the eastern Mediterranean region are to be transferable and comparable between countries.

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