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**Identifying Tangible and Intangible Cultural Relationships
in a Rapidly Changing Region of Turkey**

Aylin Alisan Yetkin,¹ Bartin University, ayetkin@bartin.edu.tr

Terry Clements,² Virginia Tech

Abstract

The agricultural landscapes and lifestyles of the Lazi and Hemshin people in Findikli, Turkey are rapidly evolving as agricultural production changes from hazelnuts for regional markets to tea for global distribution. Historically, intangible community social relationships and cultural practices as well as tangible land uses and built structures reflected the activities and functions of each group's family-based farming. Wide-scale tea production is erasing the region's cultural and physical heritage, often before local residents are even aware of the physical losses and cultural implications. This study was conducted to discover and document connections between the communities' social and cultural relationships, land uses and agricultural practices. Multiple community-based research methods were used to collect data from local residents as well as those with family or community connections to the area. Collectively, the methods extracted indications of the values the Lazi and Hemshin hold concerning their tangible and intangible heritage elements. Coincidentally, the research process also coalesced awareness of the threats and incremental changes to their communities' social and cultural practices.

Keywords

Landscape Change, Tangible and Intangible Heritage, Cultural Landscape, Community-based Research Methods

¹ Corresponding author's email: ayetkin@bartin.edu.tr

² Contact information for Terry Clemens: Facebook: Virginia Tech Landscape Architecture; LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/terry-clements-35a4ab8/ Academia.edu: vt.academia.edu/TerryClements; Researchgate: www.researchgate.net/profile/Terry_Clements

Identifying Tangible and Intangible Cultural Relationships in a Rapidly Changing Region of Turkey

Introduction

Cultural landscapes represent community heritage as they are composed of natural elements associated with people's activities, and cultural components, which reflect people's identities and beliefs. (Rossler, 2003) Preserving cultural landscapes enables tangible and intangible heritage to be sustained. However, landscapes constantly change, and based on the cause of change, tangible and intangible heritage are lost, transformed or developed, "Landscapes cannot be 'frozen' (Philipps, 2005) because of the dynamic character of the landscapes. Landscape change is considered a problem when it occurs rapidly and causes loss of heritage elements (Yahner and Nadenicek, 1997). Fagerholm and Käyhkö (2009) state that local scale intangible values are often lost or missing due to new development. Han (2012) points out that rapid landscape change due to urbanization and globalization erases tangible and intangible elements and their significance from the landscape.

In Findikli, contemporary agricultural practices are erasing tangible heritage, including physical built elements, field land-use and practices, and intangible heritage, including personal and group relationships with one and another and with landscapes. For example, the agricultural landscapes and lifestyles of the Lazi and Hemshin people in Findikli, Turkey are rapidly evolving as agricultural production changes from hazelnuts for regional markets to tea for global distribution. This study was conducted to discover and document connections among the communities' social and cultural relationships, land uses and agricultural practices in between December 2016 and June 2017. This paper presents cultural heritage and associated values from the perspective of local community members who are experiencing rapid change and/or loss of culturally and socially significant landscapes and landscape elements. This study was triggered by local concerns as centuries-old physical landscape and land use characteristics were disappearing.

Multiple community-based research methods were used to collect data from local residents as well as those with family or community connections to the area. Community workshops, individual and group interviews, and surveys gathered information on the social and cultural relationships, as well as the locations of past and present agricultural activities, land uses and built structures. Analysis of family and community photographs and aerial imagery, as well as community produced land use and cognitive maps helped place these in spatial relationship to the landscape. Collectively, the methods extracted indications of the values the Lazi and Hemshin hold concerning their tangible and intangible heritage elements. Coincidentally, the research process also coalesced Lazi and Hemshin awareness of the threats and incremental changes to their communities' social and cultural practices.

Methods to discover and document tangible and intangible heritage

Findikli was selected as a case study area because its landscapes are undergoing rapid change, and this is being experienced by a living population. Findikli is located in the northeastern corner of Turkey on the Black Sea (See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

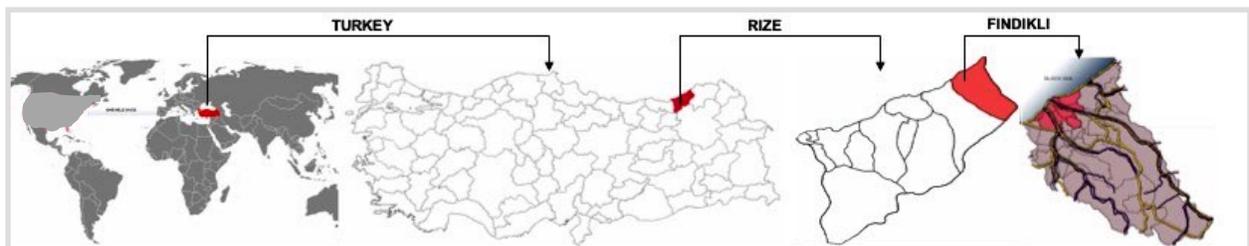


Figure 1. Findikli³ is located in the northeastern corner of Turkey on the Black Sea.

³ Alisan, 2013 as cited in Alisan Yetkin, *Community-based Mixed Method Research*, 6.



Figure 2. Overview of downtown Findikli, looking from the Black Sea up the river valley, 2017.
Used with permission of Erkan Aksu ⁴

Community-based methods were used to obtain more information about the community and its affiliations and were conducted by one of the authors who has familial ties to the local Lazi community. Additional data were collected through regional archival reviews, site visits, and field observation (See Fig.3).

⁴ Alisan Yetkin, *Community-based Mixed Method Research*, 58.

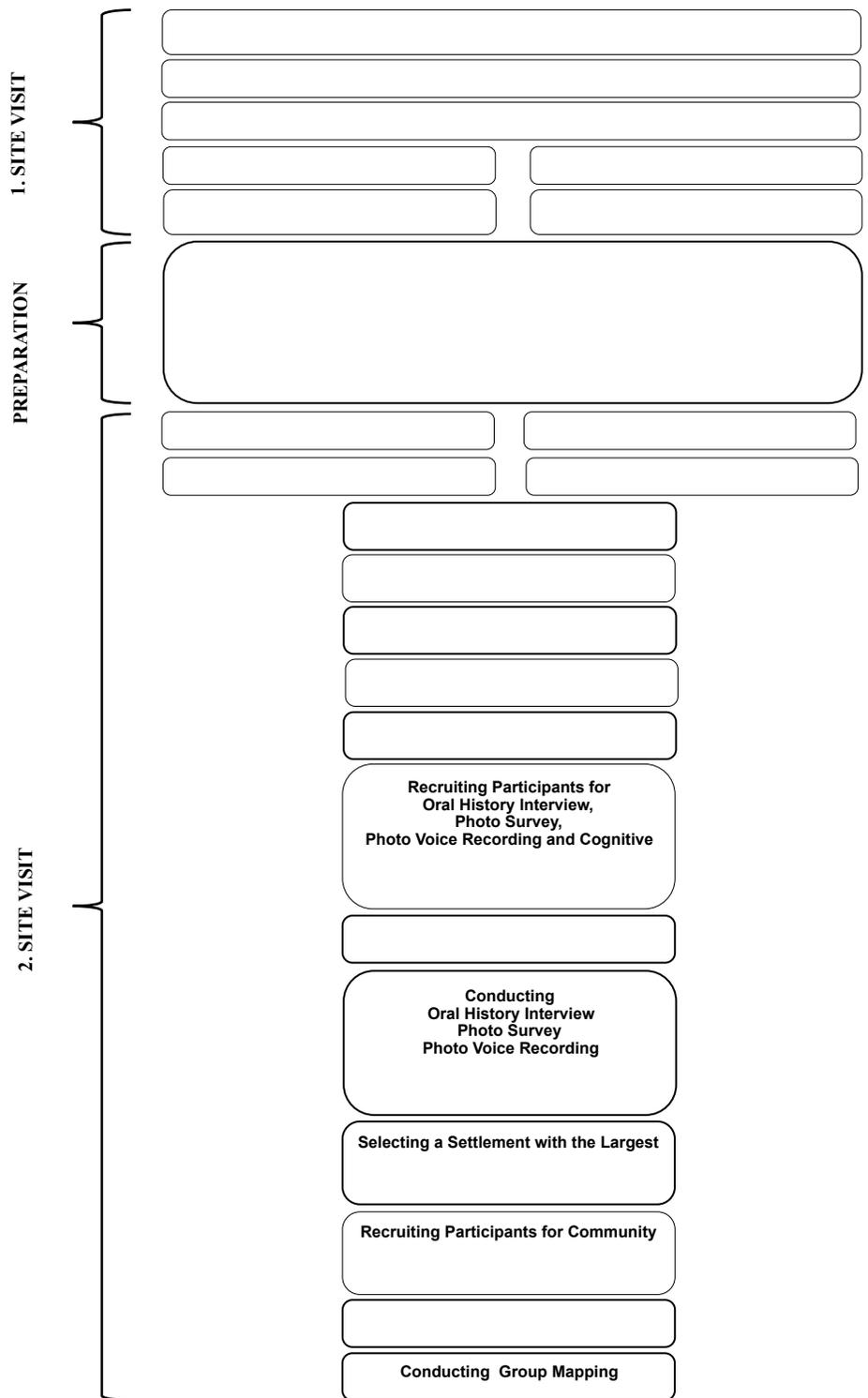


Figure 3. Flow chart of site visits and conducted research methods⁵ illustrates the range of community-based methods employed as well as preparation time for their use.

⁵ Alisan Yetkin, *Community-based Mixed Method Research*, 60.

Data was collected during two site visits. The first visit was used to locate and collect archival and governmental documents, and to conduct on-site field observations of the landscape and landscape elements. The second site visit was dominated by implementation of community-based methods and additional field observations (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018). Each method is described as follows:

- **Archival research** was important to gather past and present maps and landscape images of Findikli to compare its past and present landscapes.
- **Field Observations** were conducted to produce field notes regarding daily life in Findikli and to record the researcher's interpretations of the landscape using text, photographs and drawings.
- **Community Visits** were made to access community members in Findikli and to obtain unpublished and limited availability works produced by different governmental and non-governmental groups, volunteer studies that had already been conducted in the area, and academic research studies (Alisan-Yetkin and Clements, 2018).
- **Community-based methods** such as oral history interviews and group mapping were important to reveal the meanings of the past and present landscapes of Findikli from the communities' and community members' points of view. "Community-based methods can reveal information about landscape elements and events that were already lost physically, but are still living in people's memories. They create opportunities to draw out information on lost traditional activities, traditional tools, and landscape structures" (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018).

Table 1 presents additional collection methods used alongside the community-based methods, and presents the tangible and intangible features in both factual and perceptual data collected by these methods.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS	FACTUAL INFORMATION		PERCEPTUAL INFORMATION	
	Tangible	Intangible	Tangible	Intangible
ARCHIVAL RESEARCH	<p>Land-use (agricultural use, residential use, rural and urban settlements)</p> <p>Physical Landscape Elements (list of vernacular buildings - houses, bridges, corn mills)</p>	<p>Demographics (ethnic groups, average age of the population, socio-economic status of the community)</p> <p>Social Landscape Elements (past traditional agricultural practices and daily life, traditional communication techniques, solidarity works)</p>	-	-
VISITS	<p>Land-use</p> <p>Spatial Organization (Location of dwelling units, circulation network and agricultural fields)</p>	<p>Social Landscape Values (Local stories, poems and field notes, historic records of the region)</p>	-	-
FIELD OBSERVATION (by the researchers)	<p>Physical Landscape Elements and Values (photographs and drawings of buildings, circulation pattern, nature)</p> <p>Spatial Organization (Photographs and drawings of dwelling units, circulation network and agricultural fields)</p>	<p>Social Landscape Elements and Values (Photographs and drawings of daily life activities, agricultural practices, community gathering and communication)</p>	<p>Physical Landscape Values (What researchers observed that the community value tangible heritage)</p>	<p>Social Landscape Elements and Values (What researchers observed that the community value intangible heritage)</p>
COMMUNITY-BASED METHODS (discussion, survey, oral history interview, photo survey, photo-voice recording, mapping)	<p>Land-use</p> <p>Physical Landscape Elements and Values</p> <p>Physical Landscape Change (what was in the past what is there now, what is lost, what is gained in tangible heritage)</p> <p>Demographics</p> <p>Spatial Organization</p>	<p>Social Landscape Elements and Values</p> <p>Social Landscape Change (what was in the past what is there now, what is lost, what is gained in intangible heritage)</p>	<p>Land-use</p> <p>Physical Landscape Elements and Values</p> <p>Physical Landscape Change</p> <p>Demographics</p> <p>Spatial Organization</p>	<p>Social Landscape Elements and Values</p> <p>Social Landscape Change</p>

Table 1. Data Collection Methods and Information Types Collected

Findings about tangible and intangible heritage in Findikli

Over time, family and community-based farming practices develop to create regionally specific land-uses and physical landscape characteristics. These practices also are often the basis of family and community-shared cultural practices and rituals, and frame the development and strength of their social relationships.

Where incremental changes to agricultural practices occur over a longer timeframe, family and community groups may incorporate physical landscape changes into their conceptions of place as well as adjust cultural and social practices with minimal disruption. However, when rapid changes to agricultural production and practices occur, as has happened in Findikli, the landscape characteristics and associated social activities familiar to contemporary residents can be erased within a single generation. Such quick disruptions to social patterns once framed by seasonal agricultural practices can cause loss of social unity and cohesion, as well as loss of cultural traditions associated with regional, ethnic and/or family identity.

However, newly developed cultural heritage interpretations such as recreation of traditional molasses ceremonies to recall past activities and places for older residents and to educate younger generations, can help mitigate the loss. These practices that were once normal and necessary in everyday lives can be relived and shared rather than lost or forgotten. Conserving the physical land use characteristics of former agricultural practices enables authentic representations of the land use and place to be recognized as well as the social structures associated with those characteristics.

Findikli has undergone massive landscape and social change as agriculture has moved from family-based hazelnut and corn farming, for local and regional use, to large-scale tea production for national and international markets. This study was spurred by local concerns that centuries-old physical landscape and land use characteristics were being lost. Locals are just beginning to recognize value in the farming and household structures once common in the region. Until 2017, few researchers have studied the settlements of Findikli, the relationships between landscape and

land-use practices and local ethnic groups, or how these have either developed or changed over time. For a researcher with familial ties to the local Lazi community, this offered a unique opportunity to reveal and document the region's cultural landscape heritage before much of it is lost to national policies that continue to encourage large-scale agricultural production. Because the rate of landscape change has been so rapid, few local residents have reflected upon either the tangible changes, or impacts upon the intangible changes on such things as their landscape perceptions and social relationships.

Methodology

Because the cultural landscape heritage of Findikli is closely tied to the local family and community farming practices and their associated social networks, researchers needed to develop an inclusive community-based research method to reveal the region's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

- **The Discussion method** was used to introduce the documentation study to community members. Participants were recruited to the study during discussions with community groups and members.
- **Paper-based Surveys** were designed to gather information about Findikli's physical and social landscapes and reveal more of the community fabric.
- **Oral History Interviews** collected in-depth information regarding perceptions of physical and social landscape changes and landscape values. Stories, memories, and experiences were extracted by asking questions about the past and, later, comparing past and present.
- **The Photo-Survey method** collected factual and perceptual information on landscape changes and values from participants as they viewed photo albums of images of the area collected earlier from archives and local residents. Photo surveys revealed varying interpretations of the same pictures by individuals or groups.
- **Photo-Voice Recordings** captured perceptual information revealing how individual participants valued landscapes and landscape elements they chosen to talk about. It was

important to understand how individuals described what they saw and the relation between the actual photo and the participant's interpretation of the photo.

- **Mapping Activities** captured both the physical location and presence (past and/or current) of structures and activities, as well as cognitive information on how participants remembered their landscapes, places and activities.

Analysis

After the data were collected, researchers analyzed it for verification of physical landscape and land use changes, while also noting the significance of particular built structures used for farming and agricultural processes. For example, old (1959, 1969, 1989) and contemporary (2017) aerial photos were used to compare the past and present physical and social landscapes of Findikli. Results from these comparisons verified the community's perception of physical land-use change, while also revealing the extent of actual change. The research also revealed significant changes to the region's social framework and the region's social life association with the landscape. Review of past and present land-use patterns reflected land related activities in 1959, 1969, 1989 and 2017. For instance, the presence of large corn fields in the 1959 aerial photo revealed extensive corn-related activities in the past social landscape of Findikli. On the other hand, the 2017 aerial photo presents an expanse of tea fields and related works in the present physical landscape of Findikli. Information gathered from the various interviews and activities with community residents revealed the types of social activities associated with each of the crop types.

Past agricultural practices and associated settlement patterns reinforced distinctions between different types of farmers from the two ethnic groups. Historically, the Lazi were associated with hazelnuts and corn, and the Hemshin with animal husbandry. Each had separate physical locations for their settlements; the Lazi on the lower valley slopes and waterfronts, and the Hemshin nearer the mountain peaks. These distinctions are not as strong today. For example, traditional activities were formed independently due to the differences in the geographic setting of each ethnic group. "Lazi and Hemshin cultures used to have separate traditional ways of life,

but they experienced a sense of place attachment to their lands in the same way. Both groups used to work in the fields communally, had a sustainable level of production, and were self-sufficient.” (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018) Ersoy (2007) stated that Hemshin and Lazi people used to experience life in a different way according to the characteristics of settlements in the recent past.⁶ (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018) At the beginning of tea production -circa 1950-, people grew tea in small-size farm lands located near their houses. These tea fields were vegetable garden size. Later, as people earned much more money for their tea, they transformed their hazelnut, corn and vegetable plots into tea fields. Consequently, mass tea production since 1980’s caused Lazi and Hemshin cultures to merge as both groups started to experience tea production at large scale. (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018)

Coupled with a national push to produce tea in this region, a national education policy to consolidate schools compelled many dispersed farm families to move closer to more developed towns to access educational facilities and other employment. Decreases in the local village populations resulted in a need for more agricultural labor. Sharecroppers, who come from outside the region, have been hired by local land owners to tend and harvest the tea. Consequently, agricultural life has started to be maintained and transformed by outsiders who are establishing new agricultural practices and associations with the landscape that are not part of the Lazi or Hemshin cultural heritage. Having abandoned traditional field work in Findikli, Lazi and Hemshin land owners and farm families have lost the place attachment that is the result of sharing time and place together. (Jackson, 1995)

Relocated families are no longer tied to daily farming rituals and responsibilities embedded in the landscape. Newer generations are being raised without a connection to traditional farming techniques and associated social practices. As a result, traditional knowledge is being lost as is a sense of familial value for the physical structures once used to farm and live in the farming settlements. Traditional practices have become more nostalgic and associated with family traditions rather than family necessity. Alisan Yetkin (2018) stated:

⁶ Recent past refers to before tea production in the 1950.

Local people –the “before tea” and “transition” generations⁷– perceive that they are losing their sense of place attachments due to new agriculture practice –tea, new outsider community and lower number of a young local population. They feel that they are losing intangible heritage, such as good communication between each other and engagement in shaping their physical environment with traditions. They are missing the good old days. Therefore, they are eager to hand down their traditions orally to the younger generation. Surprisingly, the younger generation is interested in maintaining old traditions and regenerating lost heritage in Findikli. (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018)

For example, the family’s production of molasses was once a necessary activity. Today, it has transformed into an elective social activity. The younger generation maintains molasses production as a ceremonial, nostalgic event (See Fig. 4).

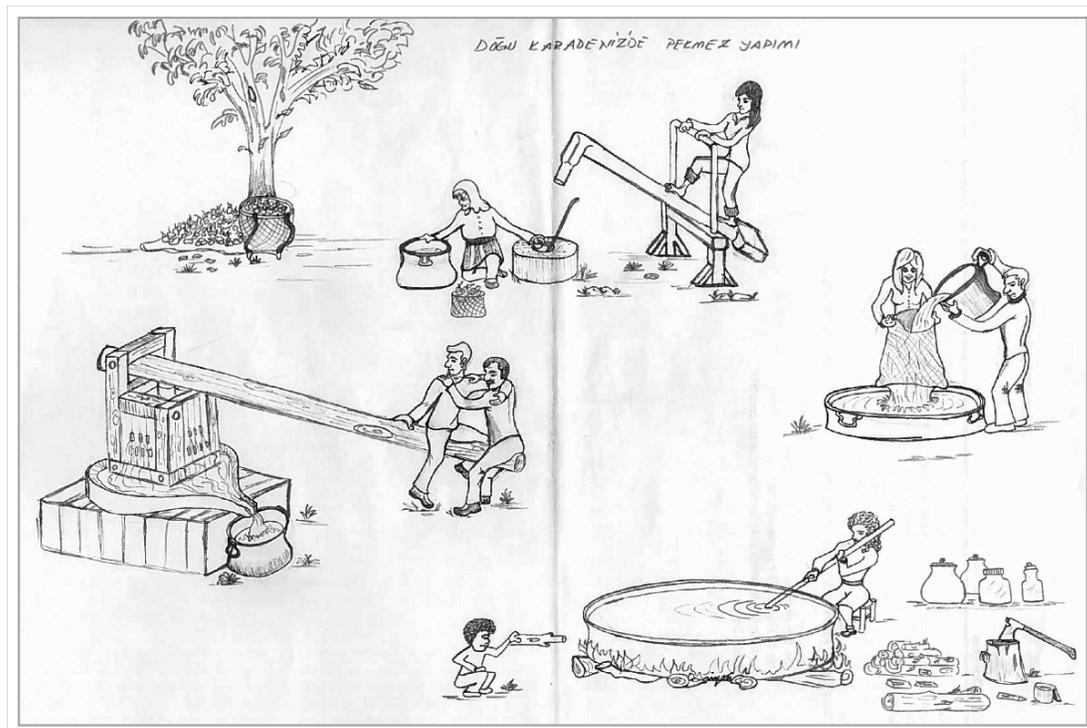


Figure 4. Traditional molasses production ceremony illustrated by Niyazi Alisan depicts the traditional molasses ceremony in Findikli.

⁷ “Before tea generation” refers to people more than 64 years old. “Transition generation” refers to people between 55 and 64 years old.

Rapid landscape change due to tea production has affected daily social and work life in Findikli. Women and children used to work and socialize together in the field. For example, while women were using the mill for grinding corn, children were swimming in the creek and their moms were chatting. Farmers used to build family and community relationships in the field while doing necessary work. Now, women and children no longer communicate with each other in the landscape. Women get together by visiting each other at home, and children stay at home to play video games. Places of interpersonal communication have transferred from outdoors to indoors. This has caused a sense of loss of community structure and relationships as social activities have moved from shared work spaces to ‘visiting’ during non-work times. Children’s spaces, once shared with parents and family members, are now likely to be organized sports and recreation spaces if the children go outside. The landscape is now becoming a space that is primarily experienced visually, rather than as a place of work and livelihood.

The social landscape of the Lazi and Hemshin had a very strong connection to the physical landscape before tea production was introduced. People in Findikli perceived the landscape change in the visual characteristics of the landscape as well as in social activities, as traditional life was represented by both tangible and intangible qualities. As long as social activities continued, people were not aware of the loss of their intangible heritage. However, once cultural habits and traditions significantly changed, such as their communication techniques and social interactions in the field, people felt the sense of a loss of place attachment. To strengthen community members’ sense of place and place attachment, the intangible qualities of Findikli are slowly being re-activated by a younger generation. The younger generation is being informed by the older generation with their collective memory.

As people are now becoming more aware of the tangible and intangible losses to their cultural landscape heritage, their larger conservation challenge has become how to preserve the physical landscape elements such that they, and their associated social activities and traditions, can be interpreted for future local generations and visitors. “Recognition of local heritage provides an increase in the focus of past traditions for local people and a scenic quality for tourists, rather

than promoting continued traditional cultural landscape.” (Alisan-Yetkin, 2018)

Conclusion

Historically, intangible community social relationships and cultural practices, as well as tangible land uses and built structures, reflected the activities and functions of each group’s family-based farming in Findikli. The introduction of wide-scale tea production is erasing the region’s cultural and physical heritage, often before local residents are even aware of the physical losses and cultural implications.

The Findikli community has lost a direct connection to its past landscapes shaped by traditional agriculture because there is no longer a continuous production of the traditional physical and social culture by local actors. In other words, local people of Findikli do not practice their lands traditionally, thus they are disconnecting with their lands physically and socially. People have been losing the sense of place attachment with the loss of tangible and intangible qualities of the landscape. Therefore, local people are creating a new ‘heritage nostalgia’ and recreational attachment to some -but not all- places. The Lazi and Hemshin appear to be creating a new and stronger sense of place attachment to urban social areas and activities and less to the former agricultural landscapes important to older people and to the familial heritage of the region. Re-activating intangible qualities strengthens the sense of place. This is new knowledge for cultural landscape studies in terms of management and preservation actions, as they are usually initiated to conserve tangible qualities of landscape, which allows for the recovery of tangible and intangible landscape elements.⁸

⁸ This paper is based upon the work on Aylin Alisan Yetkin’s dissertation study completed in 2018.

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Biographical Notes

Aylin Alisan Yetkin is an Assistant Professor of the Landscape Architecture Program at Bartın University, Turkey. She got her MLA degree from University of Colorado at Denver and Ph.D. from the Landscape Architecture Track of the Architecture and Design Research Ph.D. Program at Virginia Tech. Her research focuses on understanding cultural landscapes, community-based research methods, and documentation of tangible and intangible landscape elements.

Terry L. Clements, FASLA, FCELA, LA is Professor and Chair of the Landscape Architecture Program at Virginia Tech, where she oversees the BLA and MLA degree programs and advises students in the Landscape Architecture Track of the Architecture and Design Research PhD Program. Her scholarship and outreach activities address community engagement practices and impacts within the disciplines of the built environment. Other recent work includes research on the history of women in landscape architecture, and the evolution of landscape architecture education and practice in the United States.