

AGROFORESTRY HISTORICAL LANDSCAPES IN EVRYTANIA: OLD GROWTH OAKS AS HERITAGE IDENTITY AND A DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Evrytania is a mountainous region in the center of Greece with a long livestock farming tradition. The pastoral communities in the mountains of southern Pindos practiced communal management of the mountain pastures until the last decades of the 20th century. This traditional management has shaped the mountain agricultural and agroforestry mosaic landscape around the communities. Large parts of the forests adjacent to the mountain settlements are characterized as social forests as well as sacred forests and have a special protective character that is highly respected even at present. The structural features of this high nature and cultural value landscape were documented in dissertation research focusing on the dominant elements of those historical landscapes, the monumental century-old oak trees that coexist with stone-built rural monuments of traditional architecture such as churches. The interdisciplinary team at the university is working towards evaluation and mapping of mature oaks, both evergreen and deciduous, recognizing their ecological and cultural values. An environmental education program was designed and implemented for students, giving them the opportunity to learn about the biodiversity of species and habitats that support these giant trees and to connect them to local history through experiential exploratory cooperative learning activities.

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