BRIDGING THE GAPS TOWARD EFFECTIVE INCORPORATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT APPROACH IN LAND-USE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN ISRAEL

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Abstract - Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has gained a significant weight in informing land use policies and reducing anthropogenic pressures on valuable landscapes around the globe. Yet, the understanding of the challenges faced by planners and decision- makers in incorporating LCA processes and outputs in land-use planning remains insufficient. This study presents a snapshot of the barriers to effective LCA-based land-use planning in Israel, with regard to four distinct phases of the process: (a) the knowledge development phase, i.e., the formulation of a credible LCA approach; (b) the approach adoption phase, i.e., the willingness to incorporate LCA processes and outputs into land-use planning; (c) the knowledge transfer phase, i.e., the actual incorporation of LCA outputs into land-use planning; and (d) the application management phase, i.e., the transition of LCA- based plans into action. To investigate the barriers, the study combines a literature review with thematic analysis of the major Israeli LCA-based planning schemes, and individual in-depth interviews with senior planners and decision makers involved in the design and implementation of these plans. The study reveals that within the general trajectory of mainstreaming LCA approach in Israel over the past two and a half decades, significant gaps exist between LCA knowledge, LCA-based land-use planning, and on- ground action and results. The extent of the gaps differs across plans and planning scales. The gaps are rooted in the complexity of the LCA approach; language barriers; scientific and technical limitations; inconsistency and subjectivity; different academic, planning, and decision-making traditions; limited institutional capacity; vagueness and over-flexibility of approved LCA-based planning principles and instructions; and lack of sufficient involvement by stakeholders. The study offers suggestions as to how these gaps might be bridged in the Israeli context.

Keywords - Landscape characterizations; Landscape classification; Landscape typology