

# DEFINING GENIUS LOCI AND QUALIFYING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

OF THE MINAHASA ETHNIC COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA

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## THESIS SUMMARY

*Cultural and geographical landscapes are of major importance in Minahasan life. Minahasa, similar to other regions in Indonesia, has a rich and diverse suite of bio-ecosystems, cultures and ethnic communities. Increasing population growth and development in the Minahasa region in recent decades have, however, resulted in the disappearance of much of the natural landscape as well as deterioration of the distinct culture and traditions of its resident ethnic groups. In order to maintain these socio-cultural and environmental systems, conserving and protecting the natural environment and the culture become important agendas at both regional and national levels. Minahasa has key environmental features and characteristic; hence to overcome this problem requires comprehension of the socio-cultural systems of their society and the development of a holistic environmental-conservation strategy to assist the maintenance of their ethno-ecological relationships. This thesis documents and analyzes the concept of genius loci as it relates to the land occupied by the ethnic groups of Minahasa. The thesis seeks to qualify the contribution of genius loci to better inform landscape and environmental planning systems in the region with the potential of implementation in the Indonesian context. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to examine a different interpretation of genius loci and develop new frameworks to conceptualizing genius loci. The ethnographic research methodology applied in this research seeks to identify, characterize, and compare genius loci and test it through ethnoecology and landscape knowledge systems using selected locations in the Minahasa Region as case studies. The analysis unpacks different ethnoecological information. A range of interview strategies were used in order to gain a deep understanding of the Minahasan cultural landscape components, both tangible and intangible. This thesis interrogated the existence of genius loci and its connection to folklore, memory, sense of place and the identity of the Minahasa and their land. Further, "ethnospecific" ecological-landscape knowledge is documented, and the interactions between the Minahasa and their landscape are compiled and documented. The thesis demonstrates the important role genius loci has in shaping the identity of a community and this region that presently hosts a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, as well as providing an avenue to determine the validity of genius loci as a component of cultural landscape systems. The novelty of approaches in this study can be applied in future analyses of people-place-environment relations using culture as an analysis instrument. It is hoped that the genius loci findings of this research can provide an efficient, innovative and responsive tool to inform ethnic-relevant environmental planning and development in the region and Indonesia.*

**Key Words:** *Genius Loci, Cultural landscape, Minahasa region, Minahasan, Indonesia, Indigenous culture, Traditional knowledge, Conservation, Sustainability.*



## DECLARATION

NAME : CYNTHIA ERLITA VIRGIN WUISANG  
PROGRAM : PHD IN ARCHITECTURE (LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE)

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by other person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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SIGNATURE

DATE: 14 FEBRUARY 2014



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family; my loving husband Min Jefry Purnama who is always beside me when I experience distress and patiently supporting me to finish this thesis writing, and to my two precious sons Kevind Timothy Purnama and Ken Phillip Purnama for their love and companionship, and becoming “my reminder” to boost this thesis to the end.

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