

RCC: Resilient cities and communities (RCC) Part 2:

Sustainable Local Development and Tourism

Coordinators: Thanasis Kizos, László Pintér, Nikolas Zouros

Email: akizos@aegean.gr

Lecturers/Instructors: Thanasis Kizos, László Pintér, Nikolas Zouros

ECTS Credits: 3

Duration: April 1- May 23, 2026

Pre-requisites none

Aims, Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The main objective of the course is to expand both conceptually and empirically the notion of communities as adaptive socio-ecological systems introduced in Part 1. On the one hand urbanization appears to be an unstoppable megatrend for now, but during most of their history, the vast majority of humans lived life in communities far below the scale of what we would consider medium-size towns in most countries today. On the other hand, many rural and/or remote communities are reimagined and visited by urbanites.

The answer to many problems associated with urbanization can be found in cities themselves, but the resilience and sustainability of smaller communities is today more critical than ever. In part, this is because poor socio-economic and environmental conditions in rural communities can be among the main drivers of unsustainable urbanization. However, due to their direct interface and livelihoods associated with the environment, rural communities also play a critical role in taking care of natural assets and capitals. How this role is played has not only significance for community well-being and contributes to resilience at the local level, but also directly affect global trends through natural processes and supply chains.

The course will start with the presentation of different processes and trends in urbanization and counterurbanization in rural areas with typologies of “urbanity” and “rurality”. Then, the effects of these processes are discussed in resource management in different places and spaces in both the global North and the global South.

Some of the most important processes and issues are related to the commercialization of rural areas as post-production spaces, where visitors, second homeowners and tourists flock to have access to different types and kinds of services. In this course, students will be familiarized with different aspects of tourism and sustainability in rural areas, including economic, social, cultural, ecological, conservation, valorization and protection of natural and cultural resources and contributions to local development.

Specific focus is given to agritourism and local networks as important components of a strategy of sustainable local development with issues of community-based vs global sustainability for different types of communities. Students will be introduced to tourism and agritourism definitions and conceptualizations and discuss agritourism in the context of networks between and among local and non-local actors.

Students will also be introduced to existing frameworks of designated and protected areas including UNESCO Global Geoparks and to the different geological, ecological, cultural, educational, economic, and social factors in managing protected areas and planning for sustainable tourism and local development. Future trajectories and options are also addressed for different spatial typologies and degrees of urbanization and development.

Specific focus will be given to rural and agri-tourism activities in such communities and their stakeholders in the real world i.e., with a view of the challenges and difficulties involved in approaching a complex socioecological system and its stakeholders and designing a management approach.

Students will attend lectures and participate in field trips for more context into tourism and sustainable local development. They will have to prepare and present an assignment on rural tourism related activities on Lesvos. By utilizing a variety of different types of data and information they will have to document and develop sustainable tourism solutions with products/ services based on local resources and community engagement. Students are encouraged to be creative with the assignment; it could be a website, an essay, a story map, a video, or in whatever format they think would be fitting for a specific tourism product/ service.

Wolff, M., & Mykhnenko, V. (2023). COVID-19 as a game-changer? The impact of the pandemic on urban trajectories. *Cities*, 134, 104162. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275122006011>

Pot F.J., Piesch L. (2024) How far is too far? Urban versus rural acceptable travel distances, *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 137, DOI: 10.1016/j.trd.2024.104474

Some key tourism / agritourism references include: Karampela, S., Kizos, T. (2018) Agritourism and local development: Evidence from two case studies in Greece, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2206>

Karampela, S., Kavroudakis, D., Kizos, T. (2017) Agritourism networks: empirical evidence from two case studies in Greece. *Current Issues in Tourism*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1379475>

Karampela, S., Kizos, T., Spilanis, I. (2016) Evaluating the impact of agritourism on local development in small islands. *Island Studies Journal*, 11(1):161-176.

<https://www.local2030.org/>

Learning Outcome	Assessment	Activities	Estimated Workload

<p>Upon successful completion of this subject, students will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarized with the different aspects of the urban – rural continuum • Familiarized with tourism and sustainability, including economic, social, cultural, ecological, conservation, valorization and protection of natural and cultural resources; • Familiarized with the definition and content of agritourism; • Familiarized with the process and principles of good management planning embracing current best practice in protected areas; • Familiarized with the process of community-led resilience and sustainability plans; • Able to analyze a variety of different types of data and information and translate these into inputs for the design and the implementation of the management approach; • Able to work in multidisciplinary approaches and combine the different research approaches into an integrated management plan; • Able to build an argument and defend it in public; 	<p>Students will be individually graded based on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual assessment (assignment) (70%) on “Building Resilient Communities with Sustainable Tourism products/ services on Lesvos: Building Utopias that work” 2. Evaluation of presentation of the essay (30%) 	<p>Lectures</p> <p>Field Work</p> <p>Assignment</p>	<p>30h</p> <p>20h</p> <p>40h</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total hours 90 			<p>90</p>

Additional information including a full description of course assessments, schedule, and readings can be found in the full course syllabus on the course’s e-learning site.

The course will involve 9 classroom sessions, including 5 classes with a combination of lectures, discussion of readings, and Q&A with guest lecturers. Two field trips will take students to rural community locations and introduce them to different community-led initiatives. The 5th class will involve a debate event, where students will debate what does and what does not work in building resilient communities. The final class will be the presentation of the final paper on “Building Resilient Communities with Sustainable Tourism products/ services on Lesvos: Building Utopias that work”.

Final paper: Building Resilient Communities with Sustainable Tourism products/ services on Lesvos: Building Utopias that work (70%)

The final assignment will be on resilient communities and tourism related activities on Lesvos. By utilizing a variety of different types of data and information the paper will focus on documenting and developing sustainable tourism solutions with products/ services based on local resources and community engagement. Students are encouraged to be creative with the assignment; it could be a website, an essay, a story map, a video, or any other format they think would be fitting to analyze and communicate the analysis and solutions for a specific tourism product/ service. Students can work alone or in small self-selected groups of 2-3 to develop the project and the paper A short 5-minute presentation of results in the last class will be followed by facilitated discussion.

Outline of class topics

DATE		
Day 1: 3 April	Introduction to the course Lecture 1: Sustainable Tourism and agritourism: concepts and practice	Lectures (T. Kizos)
Day 2: 20 April	Lecture 2: Sustainable rural revitalization: Back to the future? Shrinking cities – growing cities: concepts, challenges and opportunities of urban growth and degrowth	Lectures (László Pintér)
Day 3: 26 April	Field Trip 1: Kalloni birdwatching Mesotopos village: Women's Agrotourist Cooperative and Farmers' Cooperative: visit and tasting of products Eressos village: tourism and agritourism	Field Course: N. Zouros, T. Kizos László Pintér
Day 4: 06 May	Field Trip 2: The Lesvos Petrified Forest : geoconservation, and agri-geo-tourism potential	Field Course N. Zouros, T. Kizos
Day 5: 08 May	Lecture 3: Agritourism and local networks: size, density and types of links for higher local impact	Lectures (T. Kizos)
Day 6: 15 May	Lecture 4: Sustainable agritourism on Lesvos: potential and setbacks and Preparing the assignments for developing sustainable agritourism products/ services	Lectures (T. Kizos)
Day 7: 22 May	Presentations of assignments	
30 May	Submissions of assignments	