

XXIV ESRS Congress - *Inequality and diversity in European rural areas*
22-25 August 2011, Chania, Greece

Working Group 21 - *Fertile Links? Understanding the connections between tourism activities, socioeconomic fabrics and local development in European rural areas*

Convenors:

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Aims and Scope

Despite their diversity, European rural areas are facing major changes in economic and social terms, mainly due to transformations in the role, meaning and place of agriculture. These transformations have different impacts in diverse rural areas, resulting in a more profound loss of competitiveness in peripheral European regions. Particularly in these regions, the loss of the productive character strongly contributed to the emergence of new roles and functions constituting the rural as multifunctional and consumption space. In this context, leisure and tourism activities seem to be key elements.

Despite the difficulties in defining rural tourism in a consensual manner, a common (yet very broad) definition suggests it as being the entire tourism activity developed in a rural area, motivated by features of *rurality*. In this sense rural tourism should stand on local activities and specificities, therefore contributing to local development. In fact, rural tourism is frequently presented (mainly at the political level) as the panacea to solve rural areas' problems and constraints. However, empirical evidence has shown that the connections between tourism activities and the broader rural contexts are often faint and fragile. On the one hand this fragility can be attributed to the economic and social vulnerability of many rural areas. On the other hand, rural tourism establishments, for their private character and limited dimension, cannot be held responsible for local development.

Empirical evidence shows that tourism promoters often act in an 'isolated' manner, sometimes detached from local contexts and specificities, although benefiting from them mainly in promotion and advertisement. Frequently they use traditional local features (e.g. landscape, natural resources, food productions, agricultural practices, festivities) to promote the establishments and to attract guests, but in practical terms those features are not materialised in the services and activities offered. In consequence local resources are not being capitalised and valued and the specific character of rural tourism (being attached/connected to local contexts) is not fulfilled.

Some studies have demonstrated that building efficient networks – *fertile links* – between tourism promoters and other local agents and actors can result in successful rural tourism activities and in local development. However, the same researches evidenced the difficulties and constraints in building collective action and synergies among the diverse rural stakeholders, due to their characteristics, to the peculiarities of the socioeconomic contexts (particularly in *remote* rural areas) as well as to the lack of adequate political and institutional measures, strategies and instruments to foster local cooperation.

Taking the abovementioned aspects, this working group aims at:

1. Analysing and discussing diverse types of connections and interactions between rural tourism and other economic, social and cultural activities (e.g. handicrafts, agriculture, food production, environmental and natural resources protection);
2. Identifying the diverse effects that different types of connections and interactions can have in different rural areas and social groups;
3. Analysing the relevance of networking to promote both successful rural tourism activities and local development strategies;
4. Identifying the main factors underlying successful networks and *fertile links* between rural tourism agents and promoters and local populations, economic agents, cultural actors, political and administrative entities, among others;
5. Discussing the role of public policies and political strategies to foster *fertile links* and networks between rural tourism and local communities.

Proposals are invited that offer **both empirical and conceptual reflections and perspectives on the abovementioned topics**.

Abstract Submission:

Please use the form on the following page. Send your abstract to elisa@ua.pt and to chania2011@agr.unipi.it

Authors will be notified on the acceptance of proposals by the 20th May, by the convenors.

Full papers must be submitted until June, 30th (see the last page of this document for further details).

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ABSTRACT FORM

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ABSTRACTS IS APRIL 30th , 2011

Please return in **electronic form**, by e-mail both to elisa@ua.pt and chania2011@agr.unipi.it

WORKING GROUP NUMBER: _____

ABSTRACT TITLE:

PRESENTING AUTHOR:

Surname: _____ First Name: _____

Title: Prof ☐ Dr ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐

Affiliation: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal code: _____ Country _____

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ABSTRACT

Title in capital letters (Times New Roman; font size 12)

Name(s) of authors in small case letters

Brief name and address of Organization/Institution in small case letters

The text of Abstract must be no longer than **250-300** words and typed single-spaced

Authors are responsible for the content and presentation of the abstract

Abstracts will be accepted under the condition that at least one author is registered for the meeting

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Paper Submission:

Full paper submission deadline: **30th June 2011**

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Size of the paper: up to 6000 words

General guidelines for papers:

Font: Times new roman 12p

Title: CAPITALS LETTERS

Name of the authors

Name of the organization

Section 1: 1. AGROTOURISM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Subsection: 1.1. Agrotourism and local development

Subsection 2: Not recommended 1.1.1 – Agrotourism and local development

Quoted references in the text:

(Bell, 2006: 150) orBell (2006: 150)

List of references, including the quoted references (examples):

Book:

Cloke, P.; Marsden, T. and Mooney, P. H. (Eds.) (2006). *Handbook of Rural Studies*, London: Sage Publications.

Book Chapters:

Figueiredo, E.; Fidélis, T. e Rosa Pires, A. (2001). Grassroots environmental action in Portugal (1974-1994). K. Eder, and M. Kousis (Eds.) *Environmental Politics in Southern Europe – Actors, Institutions and Discourses in a Europeanizing Society*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 197-221.

Papers:

Figueiredo, E. (2008). Imagine there's no rural – the transformation of rural spaces into places of nature conservation in Portugal. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, **15** (2): 159 –171.

Tables and Figures

Insert tables, graphs and figures in the right place in the text, with the legend after in italic (10p).