Theme 4: Rural change: landscapes, circular economy and local food production: rural landscape in vernacular settlements

Over the past 40 years or more, as Pafos has undergone dramatic expansion and growth in population, its ancient rural hinterland has undergone an equally dramatic transformation driven by outmigration. Whilst areas of traditional agricultural landscape still remain today, the patterns and rhythms of agriculture have changed fundamentally, form no longer matches function, and rural settlements have suffered significant depopulation; remaining populations have aged, farmland has been abandoned along with its vernacular heritage and forest cover is slowly reclaiming agricultural ground in many areas.

The future of rural landscapes is the subject of considerable debate between policy-makers and landscape designers who aim at raising public awareness of social, economic and political forces affecting future rural landscapes. In recent years, rural landscapes have been subject to major changes due to natural trends and/or evolutions in societal land use driven by different forms of public intervention, by changes in social practices and, more generally, by the evolution of socio-economic and cultural conditions. Agriculture and rural development policies, as well as housing and urban planning policies, are identified as the most relevant policies in understanding rural landscape modification. The principles of circular economy are guiding to sustainable forms of organisation and production and these will influence the development of the urban and rural landscape. The production of local food and renewable energy are important aspects of circular economy.

The vernacular settlement of Arodes will be used as a case study. It is a village in the North West of Cyprus close to the Akamas peninsula at about 23 km from the town of Pafos. Arodes is composed of two smaller settlements; Pano Arodes (mainly Greek Cypriot) and Kato Arodes (previously mainly Turkish Cypriot). In 1975 (a year after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus), Kato Arodes was abandoned and many of the buildings fell into disrepair. Some houses have now been renovated and made into retreat homes for vacation. In 1995 an earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale destroyed 20 stone houses. The population of Pano Arodes has decreased in the past 30 years as the population has aged and younger residents move to towns for employment.
In the workshop we will explore the problems faced by rural change and the potentials offered by landscape planning, design and management for maintaining valued aspects of the cultural heritage, regenerating the local economy and ways of life and for new landscapes arising from these changes and for opportunities for using the built vernacular heritage and the resources in the area. We will closely examine the traditional settlement of Arodes and its relationship to the rural landscape. We will look at the various ways this traditional village and agricultural landscape merge together at a close distance from the Akamas peninsula. Arodes is an ancient area where archaeology, traditional architecture buildings, agricultural landscape and the natural environment occur together. Questions, challenges and themes might include:

- How can landscape planning and design contribute to sustainable development of the changing rural landscape of the Mediterranean? With a sustainable development concerning the environment, economy, and people’s needs.

- How can landscape character be developed and maintained together with the introduction of new processes for sustainable local economy. Can urban sprawl be guided and regulated so that it comes more into harmony with the inherited ex-rural landscape?

- How can new functions for existing rural features be found so as to develop and conserve the cultural landscape, for instance by sustainable local food production, production of renewable energy or other factors that enhance circular economy?

- How can new technologies and innovation promote sustainability of the rural settlements?

- How can we promote quality of life in rural areas and which landscape resource may be used to offer new opportunities for young people? How can we foster economic well-being of rural settlements?

- How can we implement agri-environment measures in order to bring human impact in harmony with the existing landscapes?