ENVR370 / URBS370 Urban Sustainability: Theory and Case Studies in Greece Fall 2023

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Course description

Have you ever wondered how effective urban sustainability practices are in addressing the pressing environmental challenges we face today? Do you find yourself questioning the urban age discourse and its ability to describe the complex city-nature nexus and the diverse local experiences within places?

Have you ever considered the process through which a goal adopted by the Member States of the UN is translated into a policy that determines implementation mechanisms and projects at the local scale?

Additionally, have you ever thought about how specific historical paths, spatial structures, and planning traditions influence the implementation of sustainable restructuring in cities?

Considering the global context, how can we address the unequal environmental priorities between cities in the global North and South? Is it possible to prioritize sustainable practices, even when working with limited budgets? To what extent does sustainable development remain a privilege accessible primarily to affluent locations, and populations that have already resolved fundamental survival concerns?

Culture plays a significant role in influencing sustainability, but how does it impact sustainable practices in urban areas? Can green urban polices be made more inclusive and participatory? Furthermore, how does urban sustainability align with the growing trend of tourist-driven development in cities?

Lastly, how does the digitalization of urban space influence urban sustainability efforts?

In this course, we will analyze specific case studies in Athens and other cities to explore these questions and more to uncover the contradictions in urban processes and in the utilization of natural resources.

We aim to create an open, welcoming, and engaging learning environment where your participation, unique perspectives and socio-spatial experiences are not just welcomed, but also highly valued.

Course approach and outline

The course combines the theory of urban planning and history with insights from science, technology, ecology, and environmental studies. We will analyze the environmental and infrastructural aspects of cities, as well as issues of human development, common life, public policy, and social equity.

Class sessions use different learning modes to promote critical thinking, creativity, and collective work. You will analyze readings and videos, post short commentaries on the week's assignments, participate in class discussions and debates, exchange ideas with invited experts, write, and present your findings. During the field trips and projects, you will collect data and collaborate with others to identify how cultural, spatial, social, and economic components of sustainability efforts influence actors, institutions, and the production of space at different scales.

The course is broken down into three parts. During Part I (Intro) we will trace the roots of sustainability as a concept and policy agenda, the evolution of the term over time, and the methods that have been used to define it. We will discuss the transfer of the relevant discourse in different geographical contexts and its appropriation in Greece, considering the history and the particularities of the European and the Greek cities, the environmental and planning traditions, and the social and administrative structures.

During Part II (socio-spatial entanglements) we will analyze the complex city-nature nexus in Athens, focusing on the city's water patterns and its relation to the sea. To gain a better understanding of urban metabolism we will visit Athens's wastewater treatment plant on Psyttalia island, make a fieldtrip at the coastal zone of Attica, visit Chalandri municipality and discover the Urban Innovative Actions promoted for Adrian's Aqueduct, and organize together the semester project of the course.

Finally, during Part III (politics of space), we will focus on the urban, a crucial but often missing part for understanding social transformations, analyze urban regeneration, tourist-led gentrification, property restructuring, and the ways that the digital technology is changing urban life and we will evaluate urban policies, projects and interventions using the perspectives covered in the course.

The course seeks to provide a framework for understanding today's environmental and urban debates, while engaging in a critical discussion of the idea and practices of sustainable development. Through studying Athens, we investigate issues and challenges that apply to other cities and through a continuous comparison method we learn that the discourse on cities and sustainability is experienced and practiced in a variety of ways, and it evolves, shaped by changing perspectives and circumstances.

In this context, most of the things we will discuss will drive us to think comparatively, study social and ecological relations across spatial scales, and from the standpoint of different actors and stakeholders.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Define the key concepts of sustainability and connect them with current urban debates
- Establish connections between past and present urbanization processes
- Compare planning traditions and environmental practices in cities in Europe, Greece, and the US
- Discuss and interpret urban plans and policies using the theoretical framework of sustainability
- Reflect on the contradictions inherent in urban sustainability theory and 'best practices'
- Examine the urban and environmental challenges in the post-crisis and post-pandemic phase
- Evaluate the access to environmental 'goods' and exposure to environmental 'bads'

In addition to the academic objectives, the course will help students to:

- Improve their ability to organize ideas within context and enhance communicative skills
- Be aware of the preconceived notions that shape our understanding / evaluation of cities
- Foster openness and strengthen learning capacity through self-reflection
- Develop critical thinking skills to evaluate personal perspectives and the reasoning of others

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation

Attendance is a mandatory and integral part of this class. Absences are recorded and have consequences. In case of illness please inform the instructor and the Student Affairs Office. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes from your classmates.

Participation and teamwork are crucial. Students are expected to interact with course materials in creative and critical ways. It is primarily a discussion driven course, where all thoughtful questions and comments are welcomed. Please demonstrate sensitivity to the opinions of others and show respect your fellow students. You have the right to be identified by your preferred name and pronouns. Please let me know if the documentation reflects a name different than what you use and if you have any questions or concerns. Our classroom is a safe and respectful academic environment for learning and engagement.

Being fully present at the classroom is of the outmost importance. If you use your laptop for notetaking and referencing materials, refrain from surfing the web. You can always resume your social activities after our class is over. If you don't use electronic devices or if you feel distracted if they sit close to one, please inform the instructor to create a laptop-free zone in class.

In-class activities: In addition to lectures, classes may include activities that supplement the course objectives, such as quick writes, group discussions, evaluation of presentations, role-playing exercises to defend different positions and vote on controversial issues.

Discussion Questions & Facilitation: Each week students will write a short commentary (200-300 words) on the week's readings due by Wednesday at 6pm. This will help you interact with the ideas presented, reflect on what you found to be interesting or not, participate and contribute to current urban and environmental debates. You could also use this space to discuss how you see the readings relating to each other and to the weekly topic.

You will need to post your comments and questions on time, so others have the chance to read over them before class. These comments will be used by the discussion leaders to keep the discussion active. Everyone will be required to lead the course discussion at least once. All the readings, assignments, and handouts will be uploaded on the course's Moodle page.



2. Semester project

The semester project will be introduced at the second part of the course. Its subject will be Athens' water patterns and its relation to the sea. It will be organized in three parts:

- Adrian's Aqueduct Fieldtrip. We will visit the Chalandri city and learn about the Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project, that is part of the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA), an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. The project involves the re-introduction of Hadrian Aqueduct to everyday life through its heritage values and its vital function as an unexploited water resource for irrigation purposes, the revitalization of the community/ies through participatory processes, the promotion of green urban policies on sustainable water use and green public spaces, and the empowering the local economy.
- **Psyttalia Fieldtrip.** We will visit the wastewater treatment plant of Athens located on an uninhabited island at the west coast of Piraeus and discuss with people from the Athens Water Supply and Sewage Company (EYDAP) about the processes and the technologies used, and about the energy that is recovered from water and sludge treatment.
- **Coastal Fieldtrip:** We will visit coastal areas with different characteristics. Students will be encouraged to understand the social and spatial characteristics of Attica coastal zone through direct observation / documentation and with the help of the secondary sources. The coastal zone of Attica is a unique environment and landscape and a 'common good' for the people of Athens, a city without significant parks and green spaces. In the field trip we will visit different areas at the coastal zone of Attica, analyze their environmental characteristics and the conflicts that are expressed in the way the city is related to the sea. We will start the fieldtrip from Faleron and discuss about the landfills that changed the relation between the city and the sea, the sport venues that were built in the narrow publicly owned strip of coast for the 2004 Olympic games and the SNFCC, the large-scale Cultural Urban Project that has been recently constructed at the area. Then we will visit the western part of the coast and stop at the former fertilizer Plant, a brownfield situated near Piraeus port, at the working-class neighborhood of Drapetsona, where a new public space have been constructed by the local municipality. Finally, we will stop at Agios Kosmas and Flisvos where we will visit marinas, parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities of the waterfront. During the field trip we will analyze the social, spatial, and environmental differentiation between the western part of the coast, a zone that includes industries, port facilities and working-class neighborhoods without access to the sea, and the eastern Saronic Gulf, an area with important number of touristic and leisure facilities that is surrounded by upper and upper middle class residential areas.
- **Field Lab Project:** The class will break into groups to analyze and present the information collected from the fieldtrips about Athens' water patterns and its relation to the sea. Students will propose ideas for the management and the planning of theareas that they will select based on ideas implemented in cities they have lived in, or they have visited.
- **Poster**: Each student will prepare a poster about the coastal zone of Athens or about the city's water patterns. The poster will present the main challenges and proposals and it will include sketches, photos, maps, and other visual material from Athens and other cities.
- 3. **Essay Paper** on a topic of interest related to sustainability (2500 words). Note: the research process is more relevant if you care about your topic! Any excerpts from the work of others must be identified as a quotation, and a proper citation should be provided. We will use the Chicago Manual of Style documentation system.
- 4. **Mid-term & Final Quiz** deriving from the readings that we have discussed in class. At the end of the semester the lowest quiz grade will be dropped and only the other one will be counted.

Grading

Grading will be used as recognition of work, care, engagement, capacity to communicate thoughts and work collectively. Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:



- 1. Attendance & Participation Discussion Questions & Facilitation 30%
- 2. Semester Project 30%
- 3. Essay Paper 30%
- 4. Mid-term & Final Quiz 10%

General Grading Rubrics *

- 1. Attendance & Participation
 - A range participant comes to class prepared: does the reading before class, posts discussion questions on time, contributes to the class discussion with comments that synthesize across readings and discussions and does not overwhelm others during the conversation.
 - A B range participant does the reading before class but may contribute less than a stronger, "A range" participant. May not be as good a listener as an "A range" student. Missed or was late in posting the discussion questions and comments 1-2 times.
 - C range: A "C range" participant fails to do the reading before class but can contribute when asked questions about the conversation or images being shown. Missed or was late in posting the discussion questions and comments 2-3 times.
 - D range: A "D range" participant has excessive absences or is frequently late and cannot participate fruitfully in discussions. Missed or was late in posting the discussion questions and comments 3-4 times.
- 2. Discussion Questions & Facilitation

You will be graded just for turning your questions and comments in on time. The responses will not be graded separately. You will get an A+ if you post them all on time and you are well prepared to lead the discussion the assigned days and a D if there are more than 2 responses missing and you lead the course discussion in such a manner as to convey that the reading was not actually done.

3. Semester Project

The Field Lab Project will be graded according to the ability to collect information, organize and present your fieldnotes and observations, combine them with your experiences and work together with others in a way that enhances creativity and critical thinking. I will take into consideration in the Poster grade the different data collected and the way they are organized and displayed together to communicate your ideas.

- 4. Essay Paper
 - A range papers are very well organized, with a strong, clearly expressed point of view written and presented in a way that exceeds the parameters of the assignment.
 - B range papers will have a good argument, are clearly written and organized, and meet the parameters of the assignment.
 - C range papers show effort to complete the assignment, however, present organizational and argumentation problems and do not address some aspects of the assignment.
 - D range papers demonstrate very little effort, are shorter or extremely longer than anticipated, with serious organizational and argumentation problems.

Note: All submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided (Check the Policy on original work, Student Handbook, p. 7).

* Separate and detailed rubrics will be given in class

Class Schedule

Note:

- * The course schedule will likely change to adapt to class needs and keep up to date with current events. Time and location of the fieldtrips and the days that the guest speakers will visit us may need to change.
- * A few of the field trips may need to go beyond class time period
- * The reading list will be subject to change to benefit student learning and interest. The latest version of the reading list will be uploaded on the course's Moodle page.

| | Date | Daily schedule/ Readings / Assignments |
|---|--------------|---|
| | | Part I – Intro |
| 1 | Thu Sep 7 | What is urban sustainability? (DOCUMENTARY & DISCUSSION) Spirn, Anne Whiston. "City and Nature". In Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy |
| | (Week I) | Beatley, eds. <i>The Sustainable Urban Development Reader</i> , New York: Routledge, 2004. pp. 113-115 |
| | | Rabinovitch, Jonas and Josef Leitman. "Urban Planning in Curitiba." In Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy Beatley, eds. <i>The Sustainable Urban Development Reader</i> , New York: Routledge, 2004. pp. 237-248 *In-class Assignment |
| 2 | Thu | The origins of sustainable planning (DISCUSSION & LECTURE) |
| | Sept 21 | Required readings |
| | (Week II) | Vale, Brenda and Robert Vale. "Principles of Green Architecture." In Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy Beatley, eds. <i>The Sustainable Urban Development Reader</i> . New York: Routledge, 2004. pp. 318-322 |
| | | Vos, Robert O. "Defining sustainability: a conceptual orientation." <i>Journal of Chemical Technology and Biotechnology</i> 82, no. 4 (2004): 334-339 |
| | | Angelo, Hillary, and David Wachsmuth. "Why does everyone think cities can save the planet?" <i>Urban Studies</i> 57, Vol. 11 (2020): 2201-2221 Optional readings |
| | | Wolfgang Sachs. "Environment." In The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power. London, UK: Zed Books, 1992. pp. 26-37 |
| | | Olmsted, Frederic Law. "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns." In LeGates, T. Richard and Frederic Stout, eds. The City Reader. New York: Routledge, 2011. pp. 321-327 |
| | | Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy Beatley, eds. The Sustainable Urban Development Reader, New York: Routledge, 2004. (Ebenezer Howard, Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, pp. 11-14, 15-19, 30-34) |
| | | Carson Rachel, Silent Spring Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002 |
| 3 | Thu | Stavros Niarchos Sustainability hub (VISIT) |
| | Sept 28 | Barbosa, José Amarilio, Luís Bragança, and Ricardo Mateus. "New approach |
| | (Week | addressing sustainability in urban areas using sustainable city models." |
| | III) | International Journal of Sustainable Building Technology and Urban Development |
| | | 5, no. 4 (2014): 297-305 |
| | | 2021 Sustainability Report, Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre, https://www.snfcc.org/sites/default/files/sitefiles_2022-05/snfcc_report- |
| | | 2021 v14 env8.pdf |
| | | Beata Makowska. "Practical Functioning of a Sustainable Urban Complex with a park – |
| | | The Case Study of Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens." |
| | | Sustainability 13, no. 9 (2021), 5071; https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095071 |
| 4 | Thu | Sustainable Urban Development. What is the role of citizens? (INVITED |
| | Oct 5 | SPEAKER: Thanos Andritsos, Architect Urban Planner, PhD Candidate) |

| | (Week | Required readings |
|---|------------|--|
| | IV) | ТВА |
| | | Optional readings |
| | | Beatley, Timothy. "Planning for Sustainability in European Cities: A review of Practice |
| | | in Leading Cities." In Wheeler M. Stephen and Beatley, Timothy eds. <i>The</i> |
| | | <i>Sustainable Urban</i> Development Reader. New York: Routledge, 2014. pp. 422-431 |
| | | Part II - Socio-natural entanglements |
| 5 | Thu | The Greek city in history: Athens as a case study (LECTURE) |
| 5 | Oct 12 | Required readings |
| | (Week V) | Vaiou, Dina. "Milestones in the Urban History of Athens." Treballs de la Societat |
| | (<i>)</i> | Catalana de Geografia, 2003 |
| | | Theocharopoulou, Ioanna. Builders, Housewives and the Construction of Modern |
| | | Athens, London: Artifice Books on Architecture, 2017. pp. 9-18 |
| | | Chatzikonstantinou, Evangelia and Fereniki Vatavali. "Housing Production and Energy |
| | | Use in Greece. Insights from History and New Social Challenges". Architektura & |
| | | Urbanizmus 3-4 (2020): pp. 155-165 |
| | | Optional readings |
| | | Lozano, Eduardo. "Density in Communities, or the Most Important Factor in Building |
| | | Urbanity." In Larice, Michael and Elizabeth, Macdonald, eds. The Urban Design Reader. New York: Routledge, 2013. pp. 399-414 |
| | | Maloutas, Thomas and Spyros Spyrellis. Vertical social segregation in Athenian |
| | | apartment building. In Maloutas Thomas and Spyros Spyrellis (eds). Athens Social |
| | | Atlas. Digital compendium of texts and visual material. Available |
| | | at: http://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/en/article/vertical-segregation/ |
| | | *Essay topics |
| 6 | Thu | MIDTERMS & Designing urban nature and landscape |
| | Oct 19 | Required readings |
| | (Week | Steiner, Frederick. "Landscape Ecological Urbanism." In Wheeler, M. Stephen and |
| | VI) | Timothy Beatley, eds. <i>The Sustainable Urban Development Reader</i> . New York: |
| | | Routledge, 2004. pp. 190-194 |
| | | Iles, Jeremy. "The Social Role of Community Farms and Gardens in the City" & Giradet, Herbert. "Urban Agriculture and Sustainable Urban Development" In |
| | | Viljoen, André, Katrin Bohn, and Joe Howe, eds. <i>Continuous Productive Urban</i> |
| | | Landscapes: Designing Urban Agriculture for Sustainable Cities. Oxford: |
| | | Architectural Press, 2005. pp. 32-39, 83-88 |
| | | Optional readings |
| | | Madanipour, Ali. "Introduction," "The Changing Nature of Public Space in City |
| | | Centres," and "Whose Public Space?" In Larice, Michael and Elizabeth, |
| | | Macdonald, eds. The Urban Design Reader. New York: Routledge, 2013. pp. 443- |
| | | 458 |
| | | *Essay topics |
| 7 | Thu | "WATER AS A COMMON GOOD: Examples of participatory and community |
| | Nov 2 | management of water resources and networks (VISIT AND DISCUSSION with |
| | (Week | Christos Giovanopoulos, Dr. Social and Cultural Anthropology, Researcher) |
| | VII) | Required readings |
| | | https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/news/contemporary-life-roman-aqueduct. https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/news/water-community-making |
| | | Optional readings |
| | | https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/news/cultural-hidrant-journal-no1 |
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| 8 | Thu Nov 16 (Week VIII) | The Wastewater treatment plant of Athens, Psyttalia Island (VISIT) Lyle, John Tillman. "Waste as a recourse." In Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy Beatley, eds. <i>The Sustainable Urban Development Reader</i>, New York: Routledge, 2004. pp. 133-140 Roseland, Mark. <i>Toward Sustainable Communities. Resources for Citizens and their</i> <i>Governments</i>. Stony Creek, CT: New Society Publishers, 2012. pp. 60-73 Ministry of the Environment, Planning & Planning Works. <i>Waste water treatment plant –</i> <i>Psyttalia</i>. Athens: 2004 |
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| 9 | Fri Nov 17 (Week IX Make-up T/ TH class) | The coastal zone of Attica: Urban projects, public space and everyday life (SEMESTER PROJECT FIELDTRIP) Gehl, Jan. "Three Types of Outdoor Activities," "Living Between Buildings," and "Outdoor Activities and the Quality of Outdoor Space." In LeGates, T. Richard and Frederic Stout, eds. <i>The City Reader</i> . New York: Routledge, 2011. pp. 530- 540 Maloutas, Thomas and Spyrellis, Stavros Nikiforos. The social profile of the city's waterfront and the real estate market. Available at: <u>https://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/en/article/the-athenian-riviera/</u> Markou Maria. "Renovation projects at Faliro Bay." In Maloutas Thomas and Spyros Spyrellis (eds). <i>Athens Social Atlas. Digital compendium of texts and visual material</i> . Available at: <u>http://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/en/article/faliro-bay/</u> * Essay and poster progress |
| 1 0 | Thu Nov 30 (Week X) | Field Lab Project: Public space and everyday life at the coastal zone of Attica Urban Technology and Sustainability (INVITED SPEAKER: Vassiliki Makrygianni, Dr. Architect Urban Planner) <u>Required readings</u> D'Ignazio Catherine and Klein, Lauren. "Unicorns, Janitors, Ninjas, Wizards, and Rock Stars." <i>Data Feminism</i>. Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2020. p.p. 67-90 <u>Optional readings</u> Vaiou, Dina. "Is the crisis in Athens(also) gendered? Facets of access and (in)visibility in everyday public spaces. City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, Action 18, no.4-5 (2014), 533-537 |
| | | Part III - Politics of Space |
| 1 | Thu Dec 1 (Week XI) | Challenges in contemporary urban planning: the case of Athens (LECTURE & DISCUSSION) <u>Required readings</u> Cook, Ian R. and Erik Swyngedouw. "Cities, Nature and Sustainability." In Paddison, Ronan and Eugene McCann, eds. <i>Cities & Social Change. Encounters with Contemporary Urbanism.</i> Singapore: Sage, 2014. pp. 211-225 Harvey, David. "Contested Cities: Social Processes and Spatial Form." In LeGates, T. Richard and Frederic Stout, eds. <i>The City Reader.</i> New York: Routledge, 2011. pp. 230-237 Florida, Richard, Andres Rodriguez-Pose and Michael Storper. Cities in the post-COVID world. Urban Studies (2021) <i>Optional readings</i> Connolly, Creighton, Roger Keil, and S. Harris Ali. Extended urbanisation and the specialities of infectious disease Demographic change, infrastructure and governance. <i>Urban Studies</i> 58, no.2 (2021) * Essay and poster progress |
| 1 2 | Thu Dec 7 (Week | The post-COVID Athens. Touristification, everyday life and housing markets (LECTURE & DISCUSSION) Required readings |

| | XII) | Alexandri, Georgia and Michael Janoschka. "Post-pandemic transnational gentrifications: A critical outlook." Urban Studies 57, no. 15 (2020) Dagkouli-Kyriakoglou Myrto, Simone Tulumello, Agustin Cocola Gant, and Chiara Iacovone. "Digital mediated short term rentals in the (post-) pandemic city." Digital Geography 3 (2022). Balabanidis, Dimitris, Thomas Maloutas, Evangelia Papatzani and Dimitris Pettas (2019). "Informal urban regeneration as a way out of the crisis? Airbnb in Athens and its effects on space and society. Urban Research and Practice. https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2019.1600009 Optional readings Alexandri, Georgia. "Gentrification in the neighborhoods of the Athenian centre". In Maloutas Thomas and Spyros Spirellis (eds). Athens Social Atlas, Digital compendium of texts and visual material. Available at: http://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/en/article/gentrification, tourism and the formation of 'foreign only' enclaves in Barcelona." Urban Studies 57, no.15 (2020): 3025-3043 |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | Thu | Final Quiz |
| 3 | Dec 14 | Poster Presentation and discussion |
| | (Week | * Essay and poster submission |
| | XII) | |