

Exploring Value Adding Initiatives in Rural Northern Greece



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ABSTRACT

The European economic crisis has had variable impact relative to geographic space and industry. Rural areas have been particularly affected, but studies indicate that certain sectors, including tourism, have offered stabilizing economic opportunities. This project examined innovative efforts to develop the rural economy, with a focus on tourism in Halkidiki, Greece. We conducted a case study analysis of two such innovative efforts: the Rotsios family's farm house Airbnb listing and the Agios Antonios Women's Cooperative. Our analyses revealed that internal resistance and failing infrastructure have to be overcome, but funding support is available (although difficult to acquire) to develop tourism initiatives and outsiders have seen the value and economic potential in rural spaces.

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INTRODUCTION

The international economy has experienced great volatility and uncertainty in the last decade. The global financial crisis that began in the United States in 2008 was followed by a severe debt crisis in Europe affecting national economies in different ways. Greece has been the worst-hit country within the European Union and has remained in a deep recession for eight consecutive years. The unemployment rate in Greece has soared to record levels, from 8% in 2008 to 20.9% in 2017 (Country Economy, 2018), while in contrast, in Germany it decreased from 7.5% to 5.3% (Eurostat, 2014a). These figures indicate the diversity in which regions and localities have experienced the negative repercussions of the global economic crisis.

Rural areas make up about 52% of the European territory and contain half of the population and economic activity. As such, rural areas play a particularly vital role in the European Union (Giannakis, 2017). However, the income per inhabitant in rural areas is 25–30% lower than in urban areas (Giannakis, 2017) and prior examples have shown that during a crisis the incidence of poverty increases more in rural than in urban areas (Fallon & Lucas, 2002). Farm and rural households are among the low-income groups in society and have proven to be the section of the population that is most vulnerable to the risk of poverty (Giannakis, 2017). As such, more attention needs to be paid to the development or expansion of economic opportunities in rural regions.

Even so, resilience studies indicate that agriculture in the rural Greek countryside has formed a safety net against the current economic downturn (Giannakis, 2017; Psycharis, 2014). In addition, agriculture creates strong linkages with the food manufacturing industry, which can strengthen the whole agro-food chain, empower rural economies, and invigorate national economies even in recession periods (Giannakis, 2017; Mattas & Tsakiridou, 2010). Unemployed urban dwellers are engaging in a ‘back-to-the-land’ and ‘back-to-the-sea’ movement, further strengthening both the agricultural and tourism sectors and creating new opportunities for industry-mixing (Salvioni et al. 2014; Sánchez-Zamora et al. 2014). Analyses identify the most resilient Greek prefectures to include the islands;

two prefectures in the North-West part of the country; areas with a growing harbor; areas rich in cultural heritage monuments; and the Thessaloniki prefecture of Halkidiki, which is a well-known tourism destination especially for tourists from the Balkan countries and the Russian Federation (Psycharis, 2014). The resilience of these areas compared to others is mainly attributed to the positive industry-mix and regional shift effects of the tourism sector. Scholars suggest that the long-term success of rural territories depends on innovation, human capital, natural resources, infrastructures, economic diversity, and policy support (Gianniakis, 2017).

In an effort to take advantage of the rural space in Greece, tourism has been expanded. In order to reap further benefits, the sector could take advantage of new tourism platforms, such as Airbnb. Airbnb allows homeowners to list available space for short term rentals (Guttentag, 2015). Alternatively, existing efforts, such as cooperatives could be further expanded in innovative ways to support and further fuel the tourism industry. There have been successful women’s cooperatives in Greece since 1883, many developed through funding and support from the Ministry of Agriculture and EU programs (Sergaki, Partalidou, & Iakovidou, 2015). Cooperatives often operate under the principle of providing homemade, traditional products and mutually benefitting the interests of all members (Sergaki & Semos, 2006). Marketing these products to tourists offers more incentive to explore rural areas.

This project aimed to explore efforts to bring value to rural regions in the Halkidiki prefecture of Thessaloniki, Greece. We conducted a case study analysis of two initiatives that add value to rural space within the Nea Kallikratia region: the Rotsios family’s Airbnb farm house listing, which was opened in 2017, and the Agios Antonios Women’s Cooperative, founded in 1999. This case study approach offers a rich understanding of how innovative strategies to expand economic potentials in rural Greece, both new and established, might inform other opportunities for economic growth and foster economic resilience throughout the region.

BACKGROUND

Many Greeks are burdened by austerity measures demanded by international creditors in exchange for bailout funds

In 2008, the world experienced the most severe economic downturn in decades. The economic incident which started in the U.S. quickly spread across the world, becoming an international economic crisis. The effects of the global economic crisis on the European Union (EU) became known as the Euro Crisis. Over the course of eight years, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Greece dropped by almost 50% from €354.461 billion in 2008 to €194.6 billion in 2016 (Worldbank, 2018). The unemployment rate also increased, rising to 23.3% in Greece in 2016; which was more than double the average rate of 8.7% in the EU (Eurostat, 2018), see Figure 1.

Greece found itself much more affected by the economic crisis than other European nations due to the financial weakness the country had been experiencing for the decades leading up to the crisis. In order to gain entry into the Eurozone, nations had to meet a variety of criteria laid out by the Maastricht

Treaty, an agreement which laid the groundwork for a single uniting currency. The guidelines it set forth limited government deficit to no more than 3% of the GDP and requires a public debt equivalent to no more than 60% of GDP (Johnston, 2018). While Greece reported to have met these conditions in order to join the Eurozone, it was later revealed that the government deficit was close to 15%, almost five times higher than reported (Bird, 2015).

As this discrepancy was not known at the time of Greece's entry into the Eurozone, Greece was seen as a safe investment, which led to a lowering of the rates of interest on loans that the Greek government received. Consequently, borrowing and subsequent spending by the Greek government increased (Johnston, 2018). In 2010, when the global economic crisis reached Greece, interest rates increased for both government and private borrowing, but because of Greece's membership in the EU, it was constrained by regulations of the European Central Bank. This meant that Greece could not implement policies such as devaluing currency or reducing interest rates to stimulate economic growth, which would allow it to address this situation, (Kindreich, 2017).

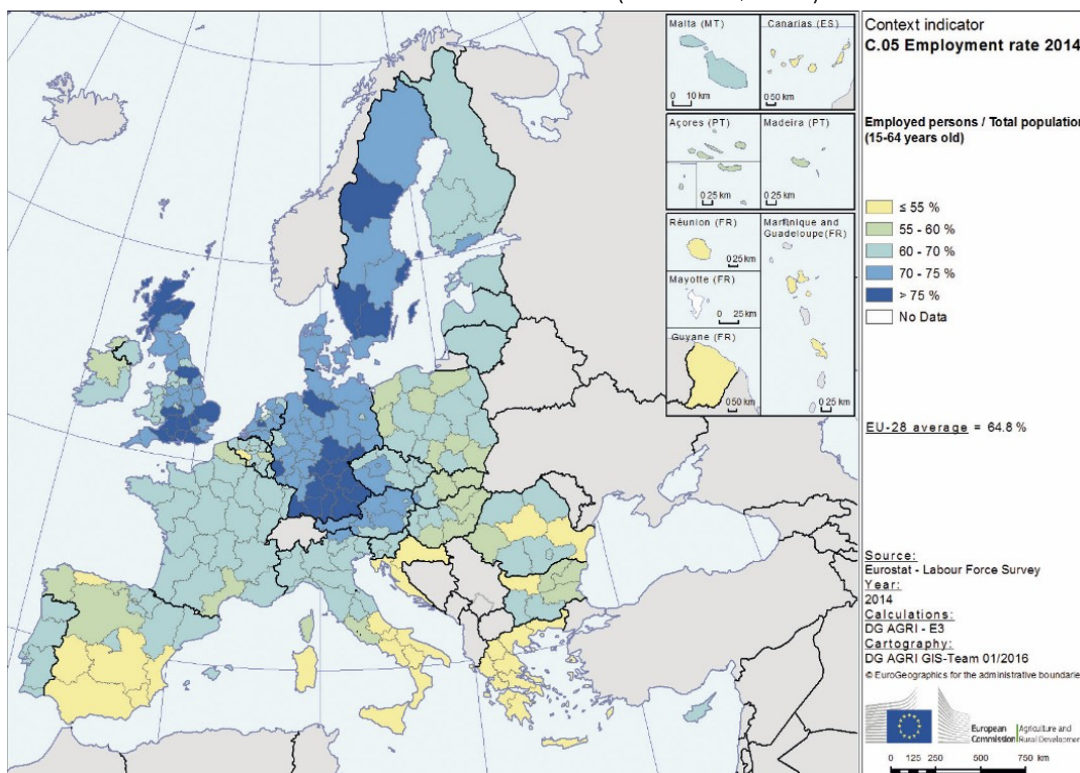


Figure 1. Employment Rate in 2014 in European Union countries (European Commission, 2017)

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In order to prevent Greece from defaulting on its debt, which would have further jeopardized other nations in the Eurozone, outside entities stepped in to provide assistance. The European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided Greece with multiple bailout loans totaling €326 billion (Reality Check, 2017). The majority of this money went into paying off existing loans (Rocholl & Stahmer, 2016). As a result, only a small amount of the money received in bailouts has made its way into the economy, resulting in minimal improvements, allowing the crisis to endure (New York Times, 2016). The conditions of these loans led to huge increases in taxation and austerity measures that affected all of Greece.

In the three years following the first bailout, budget cuts and tax increases were enacted that would allow for €30 billion in government budget savings from 2010 to 2013 (Kindreich, 2017). In addition to this, spending on healthcare was cut by almost half (Reality Check, 2017). At the beginning of the crisis, the minimum wage was €863 per month and has been reduced to just €683.80 per month (Reality Check, 2017). Benefits for the Greek people were also cut following the austerity measures, reducing funds for social security by €1.09 billion in 2011 with more cuts in the following years (Greek government austerity measures, 2011). Government budget cuts led to massive layoffs in the civil service sector, with over 200,000 people losing their jobs from 2010 to 2013 (Greek government austerity measures, 2011). As a result of widespread unemployment and pay decreases, the amount of disposable income available decreased significantly, leading those affected to cut back on expenditures. This included paying more attention to prices and discounts when buying food, and cutting out more expensive purchases or vacations. This change in

purchasing mentality, which decreased the amount of money Greeks were willing to spend, damaged business earnings and exacerbated the existing financial situation (Amaro, 2017).

CAP reforms exacerbated the effects of the economic crisis on small rural farms

Rural areas of Greece have been particularly affected by the economic crisis, although they were already struggling given Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms implemented in 1981 upon Greece joining the European Community (Baltas, 2011). In 2015, there was an unemployment rate of 9.1% across rural regions in the EU (Eurostat, 2017) and 19.8% of rural residents were at risk of monetary poverty, which is defined as having an income of less than 60% of the national median of their respective member state (Eurostat, 2017). Additionally, 25.5% of the EU's rural population was At Risk for Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE), which is a term used to describe the situation of people either at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity, which is defined as persons aged 18–59 working less than 20% of their total potential over the previous year (Eurostat, 2013).

In Greece, 30–40% of its rural population is classified as AROPE. Additionally, Greece's employment rates in rural areas are among the lowest rates in the EU, falling below 60% (Eurostat, 2017). Twenty-two percent of the population of Greece lived in rural areas in 2016 (WorldBank, 2016), and 60.4% of land was used for agricultural purposes in 2015 (WorldBank, 2015). Given that such a large portion of Greece is considered to be rural, the economic success of these areas is vital to invigorate the national economy (Giannakis, 2017).

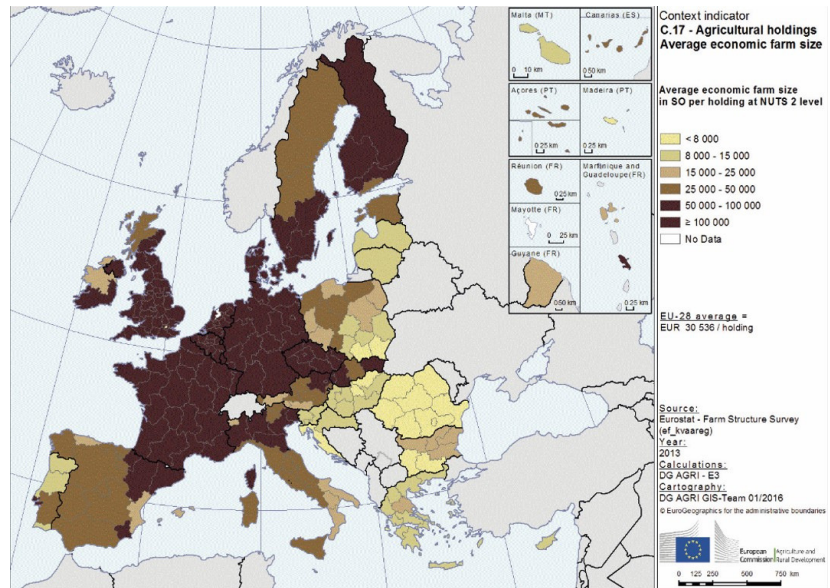
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Figure 2: Average Economic Farm Size in countries in European Union (European Commission, 2017)

While many of the hardships faced by rural areas can be attributed to the economic crisis, farmers were already struggling to compete in the EU market. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, a majority of the farms in Greece are small scale, both in monetary value of output and in physical size. Figure 2 shows the standard output (SO) of farms across the EU, which is defined as the average monetary value of the

agricultural output of the farm in euro per hectare. As shown in Figure 3, about 77% of all farm holdings in Greece are less than 5 hectares and represent a little over a quarter of all land dedicated to agriculture. Given their small size, farmers in Greece have struggled to compete against farmers who had advantages of economies of scale, more effective supply chains, and subsidies from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP was initially designed to fit the needs of the agriculture industry. This meant that the greatest portion of aid generally went to large landowners, which only make up 17% of Greek farmers (Eurostat, 2012). As a result, small farms have struggled to gain a foothold in the market and have not had the resources to effectively diversify their farms, leaving them susceptible to market variability (Anthopoulou et al., 2017; Papadopoulos, 2015).

According to the European Commission, recent reforms to the CAP aim to “provide a stable,



sustainably produced supply of safe food at affordable prices for Europeans, while also ensuring a decent standard of living for farmers and agricultural workers” (The history of the common agricultural policy, 2017). CAP reforms also center on promoting social inclusion, preserving rural ecosystems, and increasing the competitiveness of all types of rural enterprises (European Commission, 2016). According to the European Commission (2014) 23,900 young Greek farmers will benefit from €863,433,393 of CAP funds that focus on updating their business development plans in order to modernize their business and increase their competitiveness. Additionally, €673,376,049 was allocated to developing rural areas by focusing on job creation, investments in non-agricultural activities, and improvements in information and communication infrastructure (European Commission, 2014). The process is

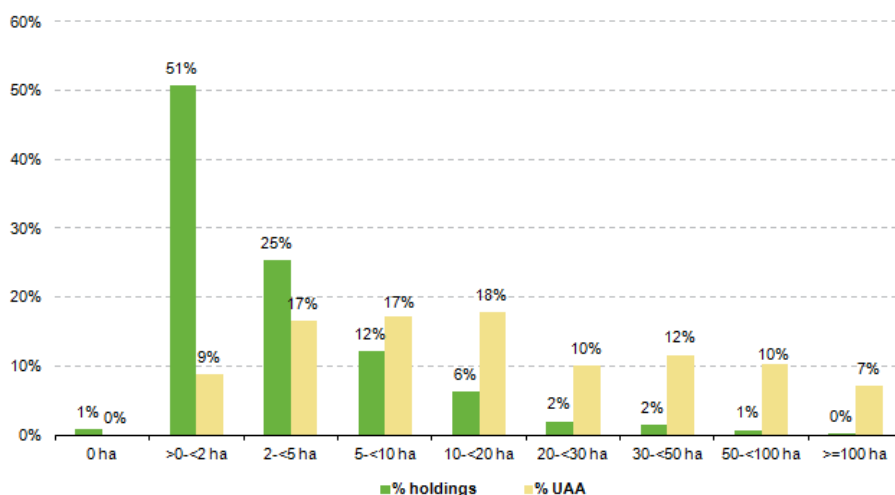


Figure 3. Number of holdings and UAA by UAA size classes, Greece, 2010 (%) (Eurostat, 2012). Utilized agricultural area (UAA) is defined as the sum of all the land contributing to agricultural activity, including arable land, permanent grassland and permanent crops. Examples of things not included in agriculture holdings are: common land allotted for share farming or rented out for tenant farming, slaughterhouses, stables, kennels, markets, game reserves growing crops solely to feed wild animals, and holdings that exclusively perform post-harvest activities (Eurostat, 2017).

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estimated to have created 4,860 jobs, 2,000 of which are through the LEADER/CLLD program (European Commission, 2014).

In order to further support rural areas, the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) has created several Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) that are funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and are expected to cover nearly half of Greece's rural population (LEADER/CLLD, 2017). Specifically, the LEADER program has been used to “engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas” (LEADER/CLLD, 2017). This program has helped to support initiatives within vulnerable rural communities as well as facilitate conferences and workshops to educate the public on the resources available within their communities (Vidal, 2009). Rural cooperatives are eligible for LEADER support and the Agios Antonios Women’s Cooperative is only one example of the type of organization that has been able to benefit from this program. It has in turn benefited the community by providing jobs for previously unemployed women in the region. Currently, LEADER has been rebranded as part of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and continues to support the efforts of local action groups and rural development (LEADER/CLLD, 2017). LEADER measures accomplish this by supporting innovation through the creation of small and medium sized enterprises, encouragement of tourist activities, promotion of rural heritage and assistance in networking and the engagement of non-agricultural activities (Chardas, 2017). In supporting rural innovation, education, and employment outside of agriculture, the LEADER program has contributed to factors that have been shown to be important in the recovery of rural areas (Giannakis, 2017).

Finding economic opportunities in Greece’s rural areas

Despite the hardships faced in rural areas of Greece, many Greeks, particularly young adults entering the workforce, have expressed frustration with the lack of employment opportunities in urban areas. Consequently, they have turned towards rural areas in search of economic prospects, resulting in urban emigration to the countryside in a movement known as counterurbanization (Gkartzios & Scott, 2015). The Ministry of Rural Development and Food surveyed a sample of the 1.5 million residents of Thessaloniki and found that that 68% of respondents had thought of moving to rural areas (Agronews, 2012). Although agriculture remains the primary economic activity in rural areas of Greece, 52% of the survey respondents considering a move to a rural area aimed to get involved in other economic sectors such as tourism, commerce, or education. Respondents perceived that rural areas offered a better quality of life in addition to a lower cost of living (Agronews, 2012; Nilsson et. al., 2007). Additionally, many of those returning to rural areas from urban life do so because of existing family ties to the area (Donadio, 2012).

While most researchers have focused on studying the negative impacts of the economic crisis, some have shed light on the Greek people’s ability to adapt to the situation and overcome adversity. A recent study by Lahad, Cohen, Fanaras, Leykin, & Apostolopoulou assessed the coping mechanisms of Greek adults during the economic crisis through 3000 telephone interviews over the course of a year (Lahad, Cohen, Fanaras, Leykin, & Apostolopoulou, 2018). The researchers applied a simple random sample using the telephone directory of the Hellenic Telecommunications Organization. The interview questions focused on subjectively measuring individual and community resilience of participants. The

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concept of resilience is broadly defined as the capacity of a system to cope with disruptions in such a way that it still maintains functionality (Psycharis, 2014). Lahad and colleagues' (2018) found that most people classified themselves as "struggling" as opposed to "suffering," which they determined is indicative of an overall resilient attitude towards the crisis. The study also found that those who believed that they are cared for by others, with an emphasis on the family, fared better psychologically than those who indicated feelings of loneliness.

Other scholars, including Anthopoulou, Kaberis and Petrou (2017), offer a more nuanced point of view regarding rural resilience. They conducted an in-depth analysis of rural resilience in Greece following the economic crisis, with a focus on exploring the experiences of those employed in the rural economy. The study involved 37 semi-structured interviews conducted across the Agrinion and Thebes areas. In Agrinion, 21 people were interviewed, 9 of whom were farmers who had never left the district, 6 had left the rural and have returned, and 6 who were counter-urbanites with no existing ties to the area. In Thebes, only 16 farmers who had never left were interviewed, as no returners of either category were identified in the research area. The interviewees were asked a variety of questions regarding their experience with the crisis, focusing on their strategies for coping with crisis conditions at the professional, personal, and family levels. Based on the personal narratives gathered from the study, the findings indicate that returning to the "rural milieu" at this point in the crisis can oftentimes hide instances of underemployment and social deprivation, especially for people arriving with no existing support systems (Anthopoulou, Kaberis, Petrou, 2017). As such, indications of trust and support identified by Lahad et al. (2018) suggest that the trend of returning to smaller, rural communities in the wake of the crisis is not regression, but rather a demonstration of resilience, with previously

under-valued farming or other rural activities are being rediscovered as a strategy to manage the economic crisis (Anthopoulou, Kaberis, Petrou, 2017).

Tourism brings increased opportunities to rural Greece

Within the farming household, multifunctionality or diversification is one strategy increasingly utilized by families in order an effort to supplement their income (Anthopoulou, et al, 2017; Charalambos & Papadopoulos, 2013; Kizos, 2010). Multifunctionality has been defined by researchers as the capacity of farm households and other rural actors involved in agricultural activities to respond to societal and consumers' demands through the provisioning of a variety of goods, services, and non-market functions (Oostindië & Renting, 2005). According to environmental science and policy researcher Thanasis Kizos, three pathways to increase multifunctionality have been recognized: broadening, which refers to the introduction of new productive activities; deepening, which refers to differentiations of supply networks or niche production, and regrounding, which refers to the mobilization of the households' resources. He developed this understanding from scholars Ploeg & Renting (2004) who define these strategies as "jumps" that the agricultural enterprise has gone through that focus on either adding new value or generating more added value per unit of product.

One such example of multifunctionality that rural households can take advantage of is participation in the tourism industry. Tourism is an influential and rapidly growing sector of the Greek economy (Bayramoğlu, & Onur Ari, 2015). Following shipping, tourism is the highest contributor to national GDP (Guduraras, 2014; Smith, 2017) and supports one in five jobs (Bayramoğlu, & Onur Ari, 2015; Lane, 2017; Smith, 2011). Annually, Greece has over 20

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million tourists visit the country (Freiermuth & Turner, 2017) and more are visiting every year. According to the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE Intelligence, 2017), there was an 8.6% increase in international arrivals, with the largest increases in traditionally “off season” months, suggesting that the tourism season is expanding. Usually, most tourists visit in the summer months of July and August. In 2017, these months saw an increase of 5.7% and 5.9% respectively, while traditionally off season months of April and October had the highest increase of 28.7% and 15.2% (GTP editing, 2017).

Greece benefits from general increases in tourism, which is viewed by many as one of the most promising solutions to the economic crisis because of the potential of culturally rich experiences via tourism (Thompson, 2017). Traditionally Greece’s main attractions have been the historical cities and islands (Menitos & Polyzos, 2011) where tourists seek a “sun, sand, and sea” vacation (Guduras, 2014), but Greece has much more to offer, especially in its rural areas. There is potential for Greece to be rebranded in such a way that advertises, as The Guardian contributor Helena Smith puts it in her 2011 article on Greek tourism, “The Greece that we Greeks know,” referring to the mountains, hills, countryside and sea that are “simply not promoted,” especially in rural Greece.

Rural tourism is an expansive term with many definitions and encompasses other types of tourism such as agritourism, ecotourism, and village tourism (Karampela, Kizos & Spilanis, 2016; Olah & Pakurar, 2008). It is defined here as any tourist activity led in rural areas, involving contact with local populations and cultures, and featuring local resources (Henche Garcia, 2004; Stancu, 2014; Stoian, 2001; Surugiu, 2008). In his doctoral thesis on rural tourism’s role in rural development in Greece, Anestis Fotiadis (2009) explained that rural tourism attracts tourists who want to become more familiar with rural activities and the countryside. He listed a wide variety of types

of rural tourism in Greece which include but are not limited to: rural tourism in villages of exceptional natural beauty, in traditional settlements with an exceptional architecture, in partnership accommodations where (mainly women) offer their products from local production and authentic hospitality, in rural regions of cultural interest which are accompanied by “intellectual activities,” and in camp sites placed at the surroundings of rural settlements (Fotiadis, 2009).

The market for these types of touristic experiences is growing, according to Forbes magazine contributor Everett Potter (2018). Potter claims that here is an emerging market for “transformative travel,” which is described as returning with a changed world-view, focusing on self-reflection and interaction with a new culture surrounded by nature. Rural tourism can give visitors the opportunity to find more transformative experiences through local festivals, traditional food, picturesque landscapes, untouched natural landmarks, and interaction with residents (Stancu, 2014). However, researcher Athena Smith (2011) argues that there are significant obstacles standing in the way of alternative tourism growth such as: corruption and mismanagement of government programs designed to develop tourism, mislabeling of agro-tourism activities that in reality are tourist traps, the intrusion of mass tourism on ecotourism destinations by businessmen who exploit the environment instead of conserving it, the increasing value of local housing markets and resulting hostilities created in the community due to foreign buyers, the difficulties that people migrating from urban areas have found when attempting to work in the rural space, and the culture of tax evasion and resulting mentality that has led to the creation of a €55 billion per year shadow economy.

In order for countries such as Greece to capitalize on this growing market, attention needs to be paid to developing rural tourism.

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In an overview of rural tourism development in Europe, with a focus on Romania and European Union support funding for development initiatives, economist, Nitescu Alina (2015) argues that a rethinking of strategies for rural development is required because of growth of alternative tourism. Speaking specifically about research conducted by the British Tourism Office, she argues that the desire for authenticity is a major factor in attracting tourists to the countryside. This desire, she argues, “comes from a medium dominated by powerful industrialized products, monochrome urban images, collective, impersonal relationships, the tourist appreciates more authenticity, the naturalness of life in the countryside, the kindness specific to small rural communities” (Alina, 2015, p. 2). Taking these findings in the context of Potter’s (2018) article on transformative travel, it seems that rural spaces appeal to this niche market. Whether or not rural spaces are well-equipped to actually take advantage of his appeal is a different story, however, as one could also view these findings skeptically in the context of Smith (2011) who although recognizing the opportunity that rural tourism presents, concludes that this potential should be enhanced by strict application of the law in matters of labeling, use of funds, corruption, and tax evasion.

Opportunities for innovative strategies to develop tourism and the economy in rural Greece

There exist many different programs and initiatives, both on an individual and collaborative level, which add value to rural regions. In the wake of the crisis, people and businesses have become more resourceful, taking advantage of the available resources in order to adapt to changing times. One such platform is Airbnb which is an online platform where homeowners, can host visitors for short term rentals. Tourists often choose Airbnb because it can be cheaper, more spacious, and

foster more personal interactions than a hotel normally would (Guttentag, 2015). This platform is widely used in cities and has faced some backlash for limiting permanent residents’ access to housing (Brown, 2016). However, when implemented in rural regions, it can provide accommodations in areas where tourists may not have otherwise stayed for overnight visits. By offering accommodations, Airbnb has increased the potential for visitors to stay in rural areas and participate in rural tourism (Airbnb, 2016). Airbnb as a platform provides opportunities for anyone, with any type of accommodation, to supplement their income and become involved in the tourism industry (Guttentag, 2015). The platform’s business model centers on providing personalized experience that provides value to both host and guest (Salter, 2012).

Participating in Airbnb is one way that individuals or families can get involved in rural tourism and development, but there exist other avenues, such as cooperatives, that function based on collaboration between community members as opposed to individual approaches. Cooperatives allow community members to come together and utilize their collective resources and skills to capitalize on an untapped market. A cooperative is specifically structured to mutually benefit the needs and interests of the owner-members (Sergaki & Semos, 2006). Cooperatives function based on democracy, development of individual empowerment, and the sharing of ideas and practices (Wilhoit, 2005).

In Greece, there are currently more than 3,000 agriculture cooperatives and 48 women’s cooperatives (Douvitsa & Kassavetis, 2015). Women’s cooperatives are present in many rural areas but are not successful in much of Europe. However, many cooperatives in Greece are agriculturally based and offer traditional products such as pie dough, jams, and noodles (Koutsu, Iakovidou, & Gotsinas, 2003). Rural women’s cooperatives have been benefiting women in Greece since the establishment of

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cooperative in Grevena by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1957 (Sergaki, Partalidou, & Iakovidou, 2015).

The Greek government heavily encouraged women's entrepreneurial growth by providing training seminars in development of rural tourism (Koutsou, Notta, Samathrakis, & Partalidou, 2009). For example, the previously discussed LEADER Programmes specifically considered women's agricultural cooperatives as potential growth for rural tourism as they are mostly located in Northern Greece, away from traditional tourist locations (Iakovidou, Koutsouris, & Partalidou, 2002; Koutsou, Notta, Samathrakis, & Partalidou, 2009).

Women's cooperatives provide jobs and supplemental income as well as personal development of self-confidence and social status (Iakovidou et. al., 2002; Koutsou et. al., 2009). Many of the women have little formal education, but cooperatives give them an opportunity to use their daily skills, like cooking and sewing, to make an income and benefit their families (Anthopoulou, 2010; Koutsou et. al., 2009; Koutsu et. al., 2003; Sergaki et. al., 2015; Vakoufaris, Zacharaki, Kizos, Koulouri, & Spilanis, 2007). In the wake of the economic crisis, participation in these cooperatives has increased further due to rising unemployment. This increase in membership allows the organizations to expand their operation and in turn, further develop the rural areas where they are located (Utratel, 2017).

Although women's cooperatives can have positive influences on the participants, there are many factors limiting their success and growth. The most common challenges stem from the women's lack of effective marketing and distribution of products due to a lack of educated and experienced leadership (Anthopoulou, 2008; Sergaki et. al., 2015; Vakoufaris et. al., 2007). Another significant obstacle is the inability to attract new members. Often, cooperatives' membership primarily consists of relatively older women which can result in a lack of innovation and

growth (Koutsou et. al., 2009; Sergaki et. al., 2015). Despite these challenges, many cooperatives have been able to sustain themselves and provide opportunities for women in areas where they might not otherwise find a job (Sergaki et. al., 2015).

METHODS

This project aimed to explore efforts to bring value to a rural region of northern Greece, (Nea Kallikratia and surrounding villages, in Halkidiki and Central Macedonia) with a particular focus on innovative tourism development initiatives. We conducted two case study analyses of innovative approaches to rural development in the region: use of the Airbnb platform and a women's cooperative. The case study approach offered a rich perspective on how present strategies to expand economic potentials in rural Greece might inform other opportunities for economic growth and the fostering of economic resilience throughout the region.

Setting

Nea Kallikratia is a small beach town (108.894 sq km, National statistical service of Greece, 2001) with a population of 11,571 (Hellenic Statistical Authority, Census 2011)

situated in Halkidiki in the region of Central Macedonia, Greece. The area includes not only the main town, but the surrounding rural areas as well. The beach town is 44.7 kilometers away from Thessaloniki, see Figure 5, making it a popular destination for day trips during the summer (Nea Kallikratia, 2018). A K.T.E.L. bus goes between Thessaloniki and Nea Kallikratia, among other locations, multiple times a day. The trip is 35 minutes and €4.5 each way. The two case study locations, the Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural cooperative of Traditional Products and the Rotsios family farm, are indicated in Figure 5 by the blue and orange dots, respectively.

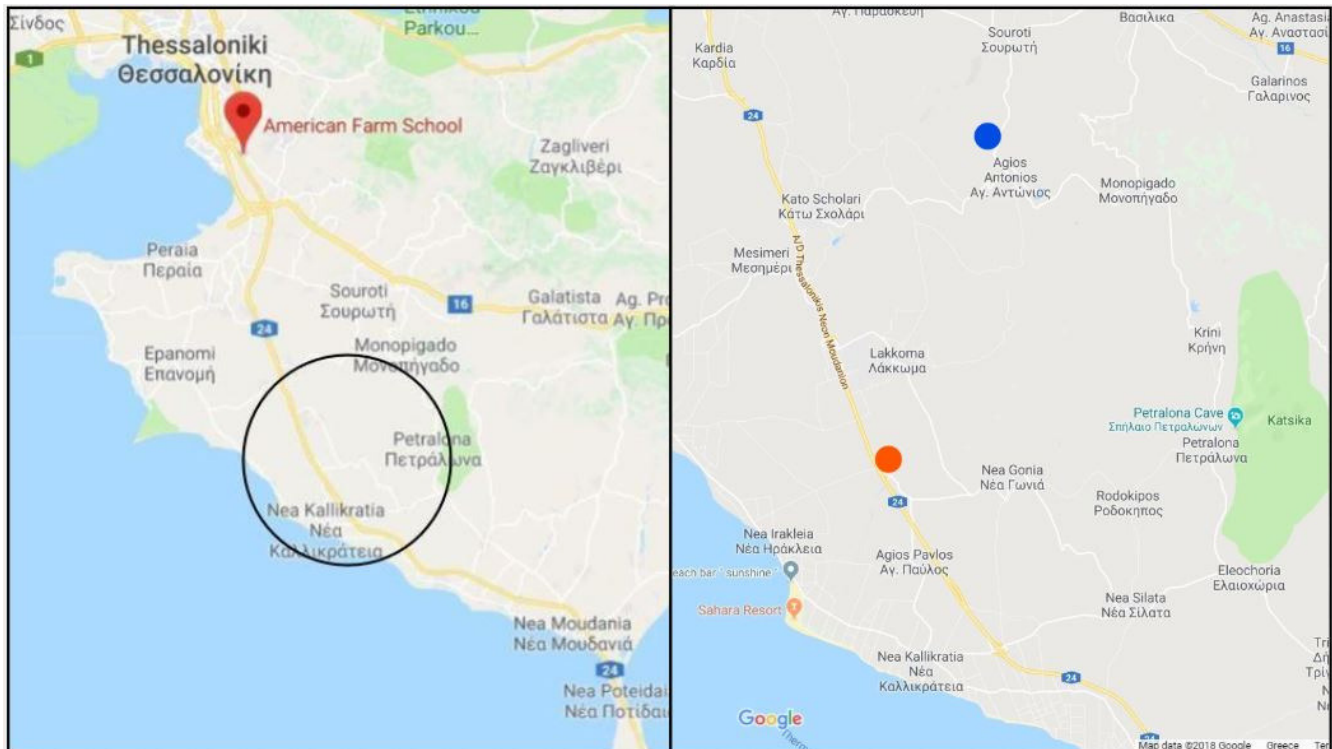


Figure 4: Location of Nea Kallikratia and Agios Antonios Women's Cooperative (Adapted from Google maps, 2018a)

METHODS

The town has many cafes, restaurants, hotels, and beach shops scattered throughout the few blocks closest to the seafront, see Figure 6. The heart of the town is mostly businesses and concrete apartment buildings. The rural area around Nea Kallikratia houses many farms, mostly growing various vegetables, grapes, and olives. In the summer many farms sell their products on the side of the road to the beach-goers who are stuck in traffic.

Case Studies

Convenience sampling was used to identify different strategies that add value to the region of Nea Kallikratia in rural northern Greece. We selected strategies based on their proximity and ease of access (Convenience Sampling, 2009), and we used existing connections to find subjects to interview. The consent script for interviewees can be found in Appendix A.



Figure 5: Images of Nea Kallikratia, March 2018. Top to bottom, right- roadside vineyards, boat docks, surrounding farmland, typical apartment building.

Left- "Ayia Paraskevi the Epivatini"



METHODS

Airbnb

We first explored the potential presented through the use of the Airbnb platform. We accomplished this through: in-depth engagements with the Rotsios family and interviews with other Airbnb hosts in the area, as well as content analysis on Airbnb listings in the area and their related reviews.

Part 1: Develop a deep understanding of the case of the Rotsios Family

To accomplish this objective, we focused our research on answering the following questions.

- What are motivations for participating in Airbnb or any form of new or innovative rural economy development?
- What effect has participation had on their sense of community, personal well-being, and economic situation?
- How has participation impacted their daily life?

Semi-structured interview with family

Before going to stay on the farm, we analyzed the reviews of the Rotsios family farm on Airbnb to determine the perspective and experiences of the visitors. A word cloud was used to determine common words used in visitor reviews of the farm. This was done beforehand in order to acquaint ourselves with the experience the farm has provided for tourists before arriving to get to know the family. Also, we conducted a semi-structured interview via Skype with a family that stayed at the Rotsios family farm in 2017 in order to develop an in-depth understanding of why someone would choose to visit not only this region, but also the Rotsios listing specifically.

Next, we conducted a semi-structured interview with Mr. and Mrs. Rotsios. This was done in order to collect some initial information and begin to build a relationship. These questions, located in Appendix C, were asked in order to understand the Rotsios family's experiences with Airbnb, the perceptions of other local Airbnb listings, and how the family plans to improve their Airbnb and economic situation in the near future.

All interviews conducted were semi-structured. To conduct this type of interview, we went into each interview with a previously developed interview plan with a list of questions and topics that needed to be covered during the interview. The questions did not have to be asked in a specific order which allowed us to let the conversation flow in a way that made sense (Cohen, 2006). This allowed for certain ideas to be explored and expanded upon, or new ideas to emerge, resulting in rich information that could be thematically assessed. We recorded the interviews when consent was given and later transcribed the recordings. Transcripts, or notes of interviews that were not recorded, were then assessed for recurrent themes. All interview transcripts were coded for recurrent ideas. Coding involves reviewing the data, identifying the key issues and themes (codes) and then adding additional comments or notes to these segments. The process of coding was started by utilizing the ground up approach. This method involves identifying important phrases, patterns and themes, isolating emergent patterns, commonalities and differences, explaining consistencies, and relating these to a formalized body of knowledge (Neale, 2016). This meant analyzing interview transcripts for common themes that arose and looking for overlap between interviews. This was ongoing throughout the period of data collection. Initial analyses were performed individually and then were discussed as a team in order to develop a coherent analysis (Stuckey, 2013). Once the qualitative data was found, it was then interpreted in a way that allowed us to look for patterns, categories, and themes.

METHODS

Participant Observation

After the initial interview with the Rotsioses, we stayed with the family on their farm for three days and two nights. During our stay with the Rotsios family, we worked alongside them doing work on the farm. We also had conversations in order to help us better understand the impact of their participation in Airbnb. This was done in order to learn more about why they opted to become a host in Airbnb, and what effects these interactions with tourists have had for them as individuals and as a family. Rather than formally interviewing them, this information was collected through extracting information that each family member would share during casual conversations. This style of data collection allowed for us to learn about their life beyond what we could learn from specifically outlined questions or a formal interview approach. This method helped us to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of the family.

At the end of the stay on the farm, a team member was able shadow Mr. Rotsios for an afternoon as he went around the area and sold his dairy products to local residents. While doing so, the strategy of participant observation was used in order to gain a clear picture of his network and how he goes about conducting the sales. Participant observation was also done throughout the entire stay in the home of the family. While interviews focus on talking and listening to others, participant observation involves watching, sensing, feeling, and being present with people (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016). We kept personal notebooks throughout the stay in which we recorded key observations. This approach allowed us to look at the daily lives of the Rotsios family through the lens of not just an outsider, but a participating observer. Examples of things that were documented include the relationships within the family, what their daily life around the farm consists of, and how they prepare and

maintain their Airbnb listing. This was done in order to understand what changes they made to their home in order to list it as an Airbnb in addition to what they plan to do before the tourist season this year.

Part 2: Develop a Broad Understanding of Airbnb in the Area

Semi-structured interviews with hosts

In order to develop a broader understanding of motivations behind and experiences with the Airbnb platform, we interviewed hosts with listings in the Nea Kallikratia area. We purposefully selected Airbnb hosts based on: rural location, not on a beach, and not an apartment complex. These criteria were chosen so that we would have a sample of Airbnb listings similar to the listing of the Rotsios family. Since we studied the Rotsios family in-depth, we wanted a comparative sample of similar listings. There are well over 300 Airbnb listings in Halkidiki, excluding the three peninsulas. Of these listings, 23 were identified to fit our criteria, see Figure 6.

We began by reaching out to hosts electronically via their listing on Airbnb's website. Hosts who responded indicated whether or not they would be willing to participate in an interview in person or electronically either over email or through Airbnb's website. We wanted to explore how and why the hosts became involved in Airbnb, and if and to what extent hosts and local businesses collaborated. The interview plan for face-to-face interviews and the electronic interview questions can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively. In person interviews were typically 30 minutes and the location was selected by the interviewee. Four were interested in participating, three by semi-structured in-person interviews and one through email.

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Content analysis of Airbnb listing descriptions and reviews

Before going to stay on the farm, we analyzed the reviews of the Rotsios family farm on Airbnb to determine the perspective and experiences of the visitors. A word cloud was used to determine common words used in visitor reviews of the farm. Additional analysis was performed on the descriptions of all 23 Airbnb listing in order to explore any trends in how rural Airbnb listings are marketed by hosts. We utilized content analysis to determine what factors were most frequently mentioned in the descriptions. In order to do this, we developed a list of topics based on what we thought hosts would include in their descriptions, in addition to topics that were chosen after reading the descriptions (see Figure 7). Each listing was analyzed for the presence or absence of mention of these designated topics. From this, we were able to compare how many listings included certain topics in their descriptions which helped us to develop a picture of what hosts thought to be important aspects of their listing.

Between the 23 Airbnb listings, there were 186 visitor reviews which were also analyzed using content analysis. Similar categories were used and expanded upon based on common themes in descriptions and other reviews (see Figure 7). From this, we were able to determine what aspects of the Airbnb stood out the most to the visitors and why guests might choose to stay in rural areas.

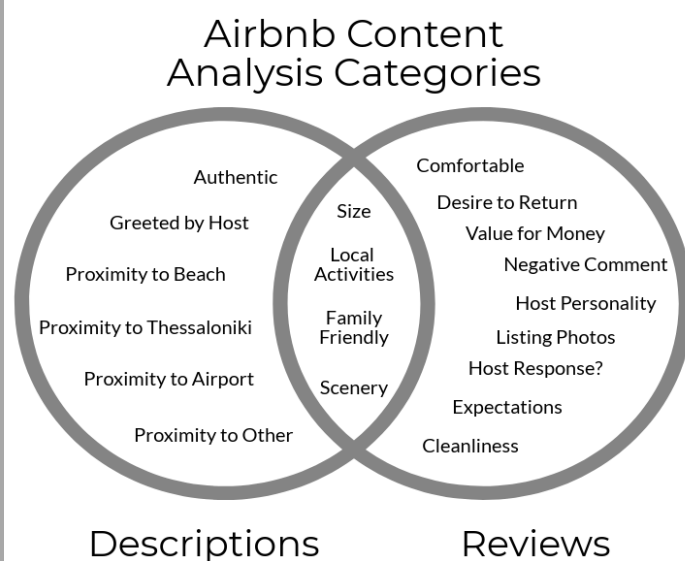


Figure 7: Airbnb content analysis category comparison

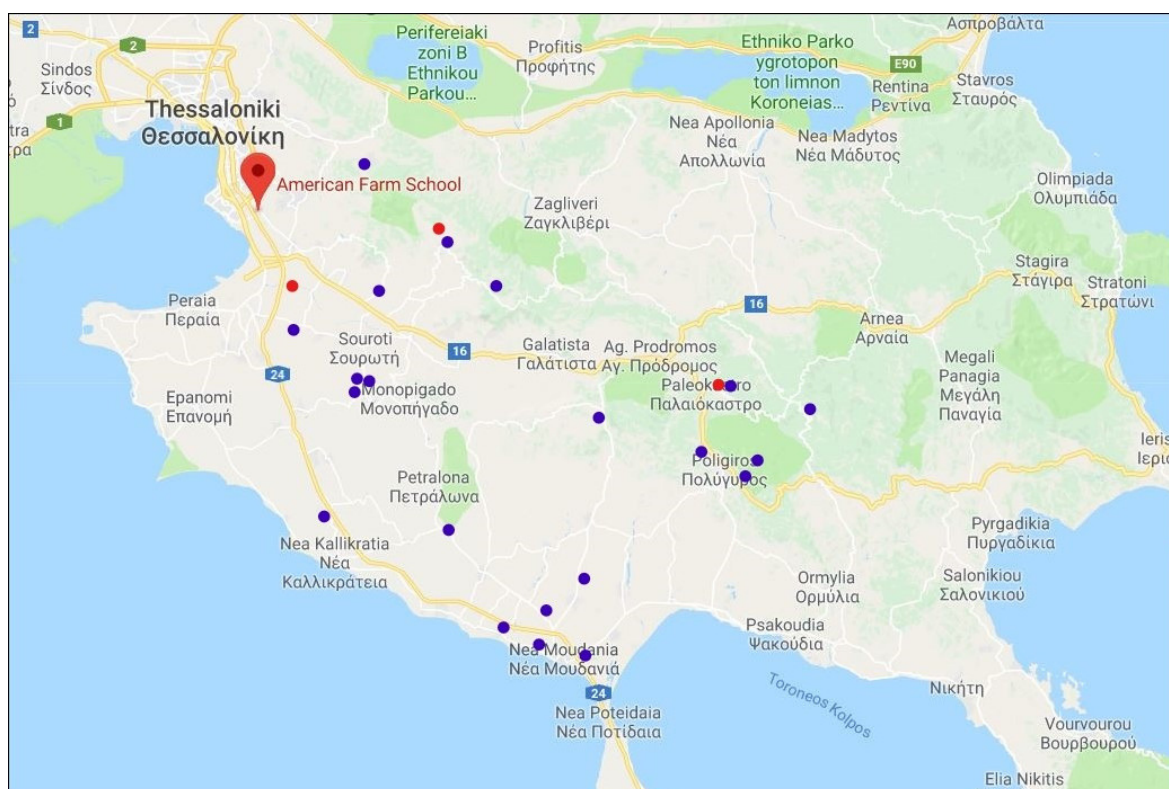


Figure 6: Airbnb hosts contacted (blue) and interviewed (red). (adapted from Google maps, 2018)

METHODS

Other Innovative Strategies

Content analysis of Airbnb listing descriptions and reviews

To understand initiatives other than Airbnb which add value to the region, we interviewed local stakeholders in the Nea Kallikratia region. We identified businesses during our day trips to Nea Kallikratia and asked for interviews in person at their place of business. We conducted semi-structured interviews with business owners and entrepreneurs to address topics related to the local economy, how tourism is managed, and local collaboration among entities involved in tourism. Again, convenience sampling was used. One interview was conducted with the founder of the Agios Antonios Women's cooperative. The goal of this interview was to learn more about collaboration in the region and how they have developed both before and after the crisis. The interview took place at the cooperative's cafe and lasted approximately one hour. Because of the language barrier, an interpreter was used while conducting the interview. The interview plan for this can be found in Appendix G. The questions were developed to understand the creation of the women's cooperative, how government funded programs influenced their business, how the cooperative is currently run, and how tourism is related to Agios Antonios and the cooperative.

Another goal of these interviews was to learn about where tourists are likely to go when visiting Nea Kallikratia and the surrounding region and how these business are affected by tourism. All interview transcripts were coded for recurrent ideas using the deductive approach mentioned previously.

In order to understand the government's role in rural development, we interviewed the Vice Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, in charge of the Region's Rural

Development and Agricultural Economy. The questions that were asked are included in Appendix H and addressed tourism promotion efforts in rural areas and policies in place that either control or foster rural tourism development. The questions aimed to explain government funded development programs we had identified either through our review of the literature or that were mentioned in our interviews, such as the LEADER Programme, how tourism affects rural development, what rural tourism opportunities are emerging, and how tourism has changed since the creation of Airbnb.

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CASE STUDIES

Case studies

Based on our interviews with various community members of northern Greece, two cases which add value to rural space through various strategies were identified: the Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Traditional Products, and Airbnb. There are many ways to add value to an area, including improving quality of life, stimulating economic activity, and attracting outside visitors to the area. These avenues for development provide opportunities for their participants and surrounding communities to cope with the ongoing economic crisis.

Case 1: Airbnb

Airbnb has been utilized by over 230 homeowners in the Nea Kallikratia region, but for this study we focused on the Rotsios family, who started listing their home in July of 2017. Dimitris and Vaso Rotsios, and their two children: Anna Maria and Panagiotis live on a functioning farm 30 kilometers southeast of Thessaloniki and 4 kilometers from the beaches of Nea Kallikratia. Like many families in the area, they have been searching for different ways to overcome adversity and diversify their income in the wake of the crisis. The surrounding community was also severely impacted, as there used to be over 80 active

factories in the area, but now, only a small fraction remain operational, forcing many inhabitants of the surrounding villages to find work elsewhere.

When Dimitris took over the family farm about 30 years ago, it was primarily a dairy farm containing over 200 cows. Dimitris had gone to technical school for animal husbandry, specializing in cows during his last year of studies. He loved working with cows, a trait he said he took from his father. The legacy and importance of cows to the family is represented through their 55 year presence on the farm, dating back to the early days of his father's management of the property. After Greece's entry into the EU, large milk producers in northern Europe had access to the Greek market. Greek dairy farmers were unable to compete on price with the far larger, more efficient EU producers. Like many small-scale dairy farmers, Dimitris had to adapt. As of four years ago, he began breeding sheep and now has a herd of some 60 animals to produce milk, cheese, and other dairy products. He also has chickens, pigs, and a few dairy cows. In addition to livestock, the farm grows wheat and barley, and will soon be producing olives once the recently planted trees have matured. The farm is also host to a wide variety of other animals, including dogs, cats, peacocks, horses, and a variety of birds such as pigeons and songbirds.

The Rotsios Farm



Dimitris and Panagotis Rotsios tending to one of their horses



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CASE STUDIES

The Rotsios family was encouraged to list their home on the Airbnb platform by a friend who had a listing in another region. With some help from his brother Kostas, a Dean at the American Farm School in Thessaloniki, Dimitris was able to list their home on Airbnb within a couple of months after hearing about the opportunity. In the first summer hosting, in 2017, they had eight reservations, mostly by families with young children. Their listing offers three bedrooms with six beds, one bathroom, an outdoor porch, and a kitchen and sitting area for €41 per night. Assuming each of the eight bookings lasted for the minimum requirement of four nights, we can estimate that the Rotsios family made €1640 in revenue from their first summer in operation. Out of the approximately 230 other Airbnb listings in the area, prices vary from €29 to €368 per night, with the average being \$65 per night. The Airbnb listing prices fluctuate based on proximity to the beach, size, and level of privacy and luxury.

Case 2: Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Traditional Products

The Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Traditional Products was the first women's cooperative in Thessaloniki, and was founded with the purpose of promoting

"the employment of rural women, strengthening the family income, the development of the village, the preservation and dissemination of the tradition through the production and marketing of a range of healthy, quality handmade products made with love" (Women's agricultural cooperative, 2016). The cooperative was founded in 1999 after extensive market research conducted by a local organization which concluded that Thessaloniki residents were interested in locally produced food products. The cooperative is known for its traditional products which include jams, pie dough, noodles, and cakes. The women of the cooperative do all of the preparation, packaging, and cooking themselves. The products are then distributed to other retailers and sold through the cooperative's website and cafe.

This women's cooperative was founded by Despoina Ioannidou and became an inspiration for women's cooperatives all over northern Greece. Ioannidou was born and raised in Thessaloniki but moved to Agios Antonios with her husband who was stationed in the area as a priest. When she got there she was intrigued by the traditional products she found. After verifying there was a market for these products, she utilized multiple available programs such as LEADER. She also took advantage of educational seminars organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, the American Farm School and the Ministry of Education. These seminars

The Rotsios's Airbnb Listing Description

ENTIRE HOUSE

Peaceful farm house in Neochoraki close to the sea

Nea Kallikratia



Konstantinos

6 guests 3 bedrooms 6 beds 1 bath

This recently renovated, farm house, is located in an operating family farm (dairy, sheep, chicken, olive trees, wheat and barley), less than 4 km from the beautiful beaches of N. Iraklia. The house's proximity to historical, cultural and entertainment sites makes it an excellent and affordable choice, for families with young children and pets.

Finally, the accessibility of the location, also makes it unique as the distance to the Macedonia airport is 20 km, and to Downtown Thessaloniki, 30 km.

[Read more about the space](#)

[Contact host](#)

The Rotsios's Airbnb



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CASE STUDIES & DISCUSSION

taught people how to access financial aid while offering advice on economics, marketing, public relations, and food safety. Ioannidou attributes her success to these programs along with ample support from the community and the institutions which provided assistance.

To join the cooperative, each member is required to purchase a share worth €1000, which is paid for over time through work rather than out of pocket. According to Ioannidou, the cooperative, after nearly 20 years in operation, employs the daughters of women who were original members.

When it began, the cooperative offered only a few handmade products that were made in the women's kitchens. As the cooperative continued to grow, the local municipality provided them with a plot of land. This space was developed, with aid from the LEADER Programmes, to house a cafe and contain an area for manufacturing and packaging of products. The cafe opened in 2008 and was recently renovated to add an enclosed dining area due to increased patronage. Currently the cooperative employs 25 women and offers over 30 different products, including pastas, cookies, jams, and other sweets.

Discussion

Motivations:

Economic opportunity is a motivating force behind involvement in innovative strategies to expand tourism potential in rural areas

Following the crisis, many Greeks were faced with financial hardship and needed to find ways to earn enough to support themselves and their families. The Rotsios family was no different. The largest hardship for them stemmed from having to sell off a majority of their cows, a decision Dimitris admits he should have done earlier on, once he noticed things going downhill. The monetary loss was compounded by the fact that Dimitris was forced to part ways with animals he was passionate about caring for and had spent most of his life specializing in. He described working with cows as difficult, but extremely satisfying. "I liked working with cows, it was a choice, not an obligation" (D. Rotsios, personal communication, April 24, 2018). He switched to sheep farming to cope with the crisis, but with the herd only being about 4-years old he explains that he is still learning the best ways to care for them and it is frustrating to have to start over with an animal he was not nearly as passionate about. "All the cows had names, they were individuals. Sheep are a herd... they are all the same" (D. Rotsios, personal

View of fields and Olympus in the distance from the cooperative's Cafe



A woman from the Agios Antonios Women's Cooperative cooking savory and sweet traditional pies



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communication, April 24, 2018). Following the loss of their cows, the family was motivated to become Airbnb hosts to supplement their income, demonstrating their ability to adapt in the face of adversity.

The women of Agios Antonios showed similar versatility when faced with a depleted job market and a lack of opportunities outside of the village. Ioannidou indicated that in recent years people have been returning to the village after finding no, or limited, job opportunities in the city. She noted, "The daughters are now in the cooperatives of the initial women, ... they try to find work [in the city]. They might have found that the quality of life wasn't as good ... So they came back to the village and they started working in the cooperative. Then, during their stay here they saw that there is a value here" (D. Ioannidou, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

Although the women's cooperative was founded prior to the current economic crisis, its success and resilience has enabled it to provide economic opportunities for families in and around the area for the past two decades. As Ioannidou said, "This was the first time that the women in this village had been gaining their own income. Because, back in the [1990s], women in this village were mostly housewives" (D. Ioannidou, personal communication, March 30, 2018). The cooperative currently employs 25 women and gives them secure income through a stipend. Given that the average net monthly salary for Greeks (after taxes) is around €700, the additional (non-taxed cooperative) income is a valuable addition for families (Cost of Living in Greece, 2018).

This search for economic opportunity and stability in the rural area is supported by recent literature indicating that throughout Greece people are returning to the land through counterurbanization movements (Gkartzios & Scott, 2015). This movement is driven by a desire for economic stability and a better quality of life, both of which have been advertised as attainable in rural spaces (Anthopoulou et al.,

2017; Gkartzios & Scott, 2015). Many people are moving from cities where there are limited work opportunities to rural areas in search of employment as poverty is prevalent in urban areas due to the high cost of living and high rate of unemployment (Donadio, 2012). Many Greeks see returning to the country's agricultural past as a means to survive the economic crisis (Anthopoulou, 2017; Donadio, 2012).

As indicated in resilience studies, the tourism sector in Greece has remained strong, particularly in rural areas of northern Greece, including the area of Nea Kallikratia (GTP, 2018). Our informants indicated that more Greek tourists have been coming to Nea Kallikratia for day trips during the summer than in previous years, as it is closer to the city than other popular areas of Halkidiki, and therefore allows for cheaper day-trips. As a result, both cases have made efforts to tap specifically into the tourism sector. The Rotsios family has worked diligently to get involved in the tourism sector, as Mrs. Rotsios said on two separate occasions:

I think that most of the Greeks are thinking more and more to find ways to regard the tourism in general. Even small hotels, small restaurants, small cantinas, beach bars, everything that has to do with the tourism (V. Rotsios, personal communication, March 28, 2018).

I think that the Greeks realize that the tourism is right now the solution to the crisis we face for the last 7 or 8 years. So we are trying now to do whatever we can in regards to the tourism (V. Rotsios, personal communication, March 28, 2018)

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Conversations with other Airbnb hosts in the region offered a similar perspective, that the supplemental income offered by listing their unused space motivated their engagement with the platform. The platform was originally founded on the idea of generating economic value from unused space (Airbnb, 2016). For all the Airbnb hosts we engaged with in this rural area of Greece, the platform has served as a valuable marketing tool to reach potential customers looking for rural adventures with no initial investments or added costs. None of the Airbnb hosts we engaged with developed accommodation for an Airbnb listing as a commercial venture (a common practice in urban areas (Wheatley, 2013)), rather they have taken advantage of the platform to market the accommodations they have, which include farm houses (as is the case of the Rotsios family) as well as apartments and villas.

The women's cooperative has tapped into expanding tourism to the region by opening their cafe to attract day tourists in the areas. Later on, they expanded the cafe to have an indoor area so that it could cater to visitors year round. Many of the customers are religious tourists who are visiting the monastery that was constructed near their cafe. This has helped to expose the area to new visitors from all different backgrounds and has facilitated cross-culture interactions.

Strategies:

Diversification to promote economic resilience and business preservation

A portion of the success of both of the explored initiatives can be attributed to dynamic business models and the resourcefulness of the innovators that started them. These strategies include the diversification of income into a

variety of separate, but related activities. Both initiatives utilize one of the pathways of diversification, or multifunctionality, as defined by Kizos (2010). Kizos defines the first pathway, deepening, as the differentiation of the production process and distribution of goods or the production of products that appeal to a niche market. Regrounding is defined as a more efficient utilization of internal resources, common examples of which include pluriactivity and new forms of cost reduction, and broadening is defined as the addition of new activities (Kizos 2010).

The women's cooperative has engaged in the deepening strategy through continually capitalizing on a niche market by providing handmade, high quality, local products to their customers. This is a strategy that has proven successful for the cooperative, as when Ioannidou was asked about her plans to further develop the cooperative, part of her answer was to continue providing the quality service that has got them to this point, "So if [we] offer good quality and serve the customers with smiles, [we] will be able to grow this place here" (D. Ioannidou, personal communication, March 30, 2018). The success of this strategy corroborates the views of Anthopoulou (2010) which states that markets for local, traditional food products offer significant prospects for small-scale industries run by women.

Another example of successful diversification within the women's cooperative is the introduction of their cafe in 2008. This strategy can be viewed under the lens of broadening as it introduced a new activity resulting in an additional revenue stream for the cooperative. The cafe is also something that sets this women's cooperative apart from others, as

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it is an innovative approach to dealing with some of the problems cooperatives commonly face such as insufficient resource distribution methods and limited interaction with customers (Sergaki et. al., 2015). The diversification to the cafe is also an effective long-term business strategy that contributes to the longevity of the cooperative. In other cooperatives this strategy has been successful in preserving the business despite significant turnover of its members (Chatzitheodoridis, Kontogeorgos, Liltsi, Apostolidou and Anastasios, 2016).

The Rotsios family's Airbnb listing offers an example of the regrouping strategy as explained by Kizos (2010); the family utilized the vacant house on their property to provide tourist accommodation. It seemed like a perfect fit for the family, as noted by Panagiotis Rotsios when asked about his family's decision to start Airbnb, "We have an empty house, so why not?" (Panagiotis, personal communication, April 24, 2018). In addition, the Rotsios family also broadens their customer base as the tourists staying in their Airbnb accommodation are likely to consume and purchase the products they make on the farm, such as feta. Currently, Dimitris sells his feta and other dairy products in the surrounding villages twice a week.

Tourists staying in the Airbnb accommodation provided by the family potentially represent an expanded market opportunity. The family has recognized that Airbnb (and the tourism accommodation market) is getting more competitive, especially in this rural area where tourism is expanding, but remains limited and seasonal, and therefore they are constantly thinking of new ways to stand out and improve

their listing. For example, Dimitris is an avid horseback rider, and plans on advertising horseback rides as another way to broaden their offerings. In addition, Dimitris is also interested in advertising the airfield on his Airbnb listing, as he thinks some people may be interested on going for rides in the airplanes. Vasso also had plans to improve their listing, as she expressed interest in Airbnb's new home-dining program, which allows people to purchase and eat meals in the homes of the participants (Ferenstein, 2014).

These diversification strategies are indicative of strategies employed by rural farm families throughout Greece in order to increase their resilience in the wake of the crisis (Anthopoulou et al, 2017). Engaging in what the literature commonly calls "pluriactivity," or more simply, a variety of different but somewhat related activities that contribute to overall income, has been demonstrated to increase the resilience of individuals and households. Pluriactivity is encompassed in the broader multifunctionality strategy of regrouping (Kizos, 2010). Also, the family's utilization of a wide variety of methods to diversify their income demonstrates the importance of innovation as a contributing factor to the resilience of rural households. Innovative strategies have been discussed at length by scholars such as Anthopoulou (2017) and Giannakis (2017) as instrumental to recovery and resilience methods of rural farm households.

The van used by Dimitris Rotsios to sell products biweekly



The Airfield on the Rotsios Property



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Capitalizing on rural appeal

Both strategies used a marketing strategy that took advantage of the rural environment they were operating within. The marketing strategy of the cooperative has been grounded in literature by Chatzitheodoridis et al. (2016) that observed cooperatives in mountainous and less favored areas aim to attract domestic tourists from large urban centers by selling traditional food products. Customers from these urban centers after the economic crisis demonstrated a want for these types of products in a rural area not too far from the city because they represent an affordable escape to the countryside (Chatzitheodoridis et. al, 2016). Since this observation accurately represents the cooperative's customer base, it confirms the success of their marketing research and strategy, which is especially impressive considering that cooperatives in these areas are inherently more vulnerable than their urban counterparts because of the issue surrounding proximity to customers (Chatzitheodoridis et. al, 2016).

Ioannidou has taken advantage of the appeal of rural areas in order to spread word about the Agios Antonios Women's Cooperative. To date, she has been featured in 2 million magazines and numerous television and radio interviews. Her philosophy was to never turn down an opportunity to share her story. In doing so, she was not only

advertising for the women's cooperative, but also showing other women that it is possible to achieve success. This strategy effects the cooperative twofold, as it also helps with the attraction of new members. Retaining members is a well-documented problem facing women's cooperatives, and is mainly due to the failure of marketing policies to properly advertise the existence of the cooperative to potential members (Chatzitheodoridis et. al, 2016).

Airbnb is based on the marketing of a space to potential visitors through descriptions, photographs, and peer reviews. This is accomplished by hosts marketing their own listings as well as peer recommendations to provide credibility to both the hosts and guests. For hosts, "the [reviews] are the best advertisement" (D. Rotsios, personal communication, March 28, 2018). In order to discover how rural Airbnb hosts market their listing, a content analysis was performed on the descriptions and the reviews of the listings in rural Halkidiki. The frequency with which guests mentioned different aspects of their trips indicates the significance of each to their experience, see Figure 7. Scenery and guest-host interactions, host personality, and local activities were the most commonly

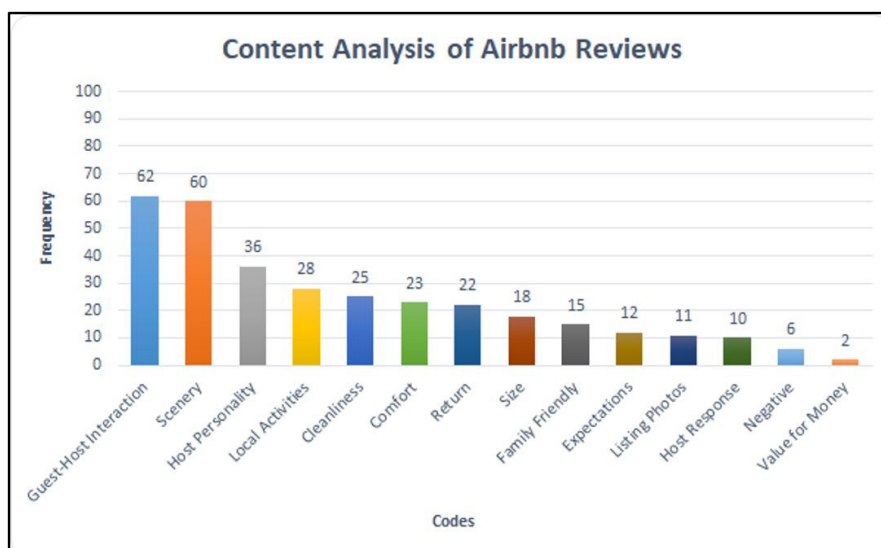


Figure 7: Frequencies of Content Analysis of Airbnb Reviews

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acknowledged concepts in the reviews. These results are supported by literature indicating rural tourists' interest in experiencing a new culture, and interacting with local residents (Fotiadis, 2009; Stancu, 2014; Alina, 2015; Potter, 2018)

Through analyzing the descriptions of the Airbnb listings, the general marketing strategy of hosts in rural Halkidiki was extrapolated. It is clear that most hosts perceive that describing the scenery of their Airbnb and the variety of local activities available is a major factor in guest's decision to book. It is also important to note that 26% of hosts specifically mentioned authentic or traditional experiences on their listing because this is the type of experience that an increasing number of travelers are looking for (Alina, 2015; Potter, 2018), see Figure 8. The want to become more familiar with rural activities and the countryside is articulated by Fotiadis (2009) in his explanation of what attracts visitors to the rural areas. With scenery, local activities, and authenticity at the front of rural host's listing strategies, it seems that the rural can indeed provide these sort of traditional, picturesque, and interactive experiences as argued by Stancu (2014).

Outcomes:

Beyond income development, these innovative strategies offer personal growth and development

Through participation in Airbnb, hosts are able to interact with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds. While this is not the initial motivation for joining Airbnb, it is one effect and many hosts cited it as a reason for their continued involvement in the platform and why they enjoy being hosts. In the case of Airbnb, a few of the hosts said that even though they may not be earning a substantial amount of money from their listing, they continue to host because they enjoy interacting with guests from all over the world. One Airbnb host said, "I wouldn't do it for free, but I also like to have the positive experiences with my guests" (I. Karasaridis, personal communication, April 18, 2018).

The Rotsios family also had a very positive experience with the personal connections that came about as a result of hosting. Dimitris explained how much he enjoyed the company of his guests and how he now considers them to be family friends, saying, "We became friends. [They] gave us a lot of energy to keep trying and do something better" (D. Rotsios, personal

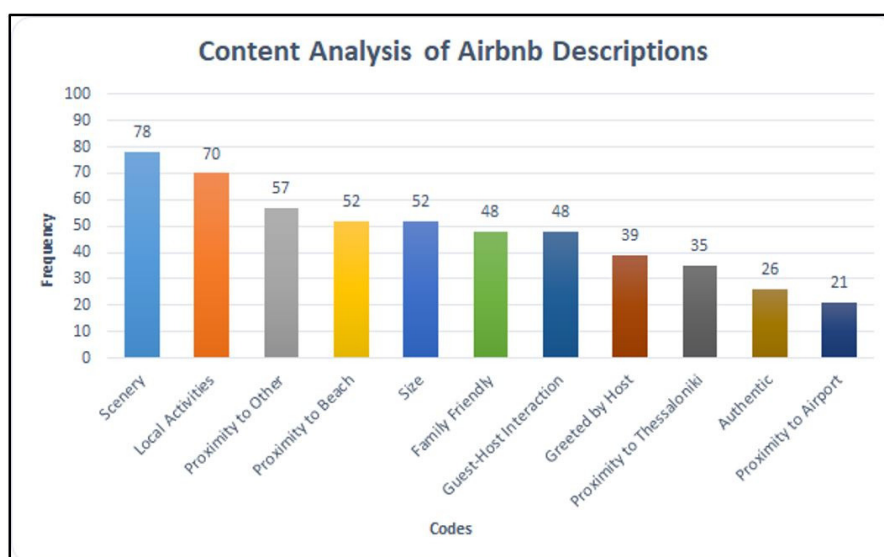


Figure 8: Frequencies of Content Analysis of Airbnb Descriptions

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communication, March 28, 2018). The relationships they created with guests and the positive feedback that they received gave them the encouragement they needed to continue hosting and from this they have gained a sense of motivation and self-worth. V Rotsios explains, "The first family that we had was a family from Russia. They were very polite and enthusiastic so they gave us the energy. At the end she wrote us a very touching letter, Kostas has it. They told us 'you are ready, everything is okay, you are ready, keep going'. It was very sweet." (personal communication, March 28, 2018). This is consistent with the 2010–2014 study examining the effects of the economic crisis on Greek psychology involving 4,500 adults (Pezirkianidis et al., 2016). It was determined that experiencing positive emotions helps to diminish the effects negative emotion can have, breaking the cycle of negative outlooks and detrimental thought patterns. Also, having a sense of purpose and bringing meaning to one's life can help to increase optimism and happiness while reducing anxiety and depression. The shift in attitude that the family has experienced since becoming hosts has led them to incrementally improve their home to prepare for the tourist season such as cleaning the garden, moving an old shed, or painting a fence. These small changes made not only aesthetic improvements to their surroundings, but also gave them a renewed sense of purpose.

Similar to Airbnb, participation in the women's cooperative changed the attitude of those involved. These women have gained more confidence in their abilities and they have grown individually within the cooperative. Prior to involvement in the cooperative, many of the women in the community were housewives due to social expectations and the lack of employment opportunities in the area. When asked if she had noticed any changes in the women after they joined the cooperative, Ioannidou responded, "To start with, they became more extroverted. They believe more in themselves, that they can accomplish things" (personal communication, March 30, 2018). Similar trends are observed in

the literature, concluding that such programs help participating women develop independence, higher self-esteem and self-confidence (Iakovidou, 2012).

Challenges:

The value of rural areas is recognized by outsiders

Another interesting observation of both the examined strategies was that someone who was not native to a rural area was the catalyst for innovation. Ioannidou grew up in the city before moving to Agios Antonios. While Mr. and Mrs. Rotsios are residents in rural Nea Kallikratia, their listing was created by their brother Kostas Rotsios, the Academic Dean of Perrotis College who lives outside of the region. This suggests an interesting dynamic between the perspectives of those who live in rural regions, "insiders," and those who live outside of these areas, "outsiders." Ioannidou conveyed this concept very clearly during our interview, stating that she believes "agrotourism initiatives in Greece are born from people that are from the city, not from rural people" (D. Ioannidou, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

The Airbnb hosts we spoke with said they initially listed their homes as a result of previously discussed motivations, but were



The Rotsios family is working hard to make small aesthetic improvement to prepare for tourist season, such as weeding the patio and walkway, and repainting trees, fences, flowerpots, and their house.

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not sure if they would actually book any visitors. The hosts were unable to fully recognize the appeal of their listing and therefore had to rely on the perceptions of Airbnb users, as the success of these listings is contingent on the value outsiders place on their space. That being said, the success experienced by some hosts in rural areas speaks to the amount of value and appeal these areas have to outsiders. In the case of the Rotsios family, they were unsure as to whether guests would enjoy staying on a working farm, but the raving reviews they received indicate that there is value to their listing that they themselves could not see. The listing currently has an overall five star rating as well as five stars in each of the specified categories: accuracy, communication, cleanliness, location, check-in, and value. Below is one of the reviews left on the Rotsios's Airbnb listing, along with a five star rating:

The idea that value recognition typically stems from outsiders reveals a potential internal roadblock for rural innovation. This idea is also supported by research from sociologist Mary Godwyn's (2011) analysis of those outside the business mainstream by virtue of their gender and/or minority status (which in this context is defined as non-white), which suggests that those outside of the mainstream are highly innovative and have increased capacity to create novel solutions that generate both business and social value. The research followed a United States based African-American mannequin entrepreneur who saw value in areas where her clients did not. A specific example of this is when she convinced a client to purchase mannequins of different races in order to appeal to a larger market (Godwyn 2011). This supports the idea that outsiders, by virtue of their status outside the mainstream, are more observant of the value present in these rural settings. That being said, if the insiders who live in these regions are unable to identify the value of their surroundings on their own in order to capitalize on the unique aspects of their culture and lifestyle, then initiatives may be limited in their effectiveness.

Family of 4, coming from a big city in the USA, we picked this local Greek farm to stay at and how happy we are to be able to share an insight into our incredible experience. This farm place is the only building structure standing from the original village since early 1900's. This lovely decorated with beautiful ancient artifacts, house is in great condition, very roomy, clean, with all the amenities. The owners greeted us with authentic Greek delicacies, and one morning we woke up to find a cute note with homemade cake on our porch ... After spending some time getting to know each other, I felt special joy, these people have such great hearts and full of wisdom, they are kind to share their wonderful energy with us ... our kids enjoy exploring the farm and their animals, in the morning they would get up and go to feed horses, donkey, check out baby goat and observe chickens and peacocks... we enjoyed this place and it's ambience so much that we have booked it again for a few nights as part of the same trip ... Vaso & Dimitri, Kosta... thank you (Sergey's Review of Rotsios's Airbnb Listing, August 2017)

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Another factor that may limit the effectiveness of these approaches is that there appears to be internal resistance amongst the population to collaborate. From our interview with the Vice Governor of Rural Development, it was revealed that traditionally there was a mentality amongst Greeks to work individually and not collaborate. Recently the government has been encouraging rural farmers to work together, and they have found that the younger generations of farmers are more willing to cooperate with each other than their older counterparts.

It also seems that gender may also be a factor inhibiting collaborative efforts as the women's cooperative has faced resistance when trying to work with the men in the surrounding village. In the interview with Ioannidou, she explained that the logical next step for the organization would be to collaborate with the men's cooperative which is much less active than the women's. "Convincing the other forces of the area, mainly the men, to cooperate and feel that if they invest in this initiative they will be able to harvest more, expand more and grow...if the men of the village will be more cooperative, this place will be much better... but simply men do not want to collaborate yet." (D. Ioannidou, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

Failing Infrastructure Restricts Growth and Efficiency

One of the main hindrances that emerged was that current municipal amenities are not sufficient enough to support the number of visitors that come to the area and can therefore impede the success of these strategies. When speaking with Dimitris Rotsios, he cited many aspects of the current infrastructure that could be improved upon:

We don't have roads, we don't have services...

Starting from the airport which is in a place where half of the year has too much fog and the planes cannot land. It is really small so the bigger airplanes cannot land. The transportation system is not good at all... The road system, everything, everything. In the summer they cannot handle a lot of people. They are not organized to service so many people. Around this area they say that 100,000 people come in July and August. There are no parking lots, nothing. (D. Rotsios, personal communication, March 28, 2018)

The lack of facilities available, especially the limited transportation, reduces accessibility to rural regions and may dissuade tourists from visiting. This is a shared sentiment as another Airbnb host also noted that a better busing system was needed because currently buses only run every two hours in their area. As a result, this host suggests his guests rent a car which may be a deterrent for guests that are reluctant to spend money on additional transportation.

Also, multiple interviewees mentioned that the roads are insufficient to handle the number of cars that come to the Nea Kallikratia area during peak tourist season. Kostas noted on our drive to his brother's farm that many of the roads in the area were originally constructed for farmers and are therefore small and not designed to accommodate large volumes of traffic. In the summer, these roads are filled

Typical farm road near Nea Kallikratia



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with tourists waiting to go to the beach, which makes it difficult for local residents to get around their own community in addition to preventing tourists from quickly reaching their destinations. These road conditions, coupled with limited transportation, results in inefficient travel and affects accessibility to rural Airbnb listings which could discourage tourists from booking in these regions. While the issue of infrastructure was mainly discussed during interviews with individuals who utilized the Airbnb strategy, the same issues likely extend to the other strategies in a less direct way. The lack of municipal amenities may discourage tourists from visiting rural areas and therefore impact the success of the other strategies.

These issues have been recognized by the government, and in 2009 the United Nations Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD) listed investing in rural communities' infrastructure and services as one of the necessary actions to support sustainable rural development "(Rural Development, n.d., para. 2). Specifically, one of the CSD's action goals is to "increase public and private investments in infrastructure in rural areas, including roads, waterways and transport systems, storage and market facilities, livestock facilities, irrigation systems, affordable housing, water supply and sanitation services, electrification facilities, and information and communications networks" ("Rural Development," n.d., para. 7). More recently in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was unveiled with the aim to implement its developmental goals and targets by the year 2030. A few of the goals discussed investing in rural infrastructure, increasing community resiliency and sustainability, and improving the connections between urban and rural areas through better regional development planning ("Transforming our world," n.d.,

para. 70 & 79). As these issues are addressed, it may become easier for rural regions to accommodate more visitors and therefore allow value-adding strategies to be more successful.

Monetary resources are available, but not necessarily accessible

Generally when topics concerning government policies and programs were discussed, interviewees had responses that conveyed suspicion and hesitancy. This indicates shared national sentiments as evidenced by figures from the Pew Research Center which show that 79% of Greeks are unsatisfied with the way democracy is working in their country (Fetterolf, Simmons, Stokes, & Wike, 2017). This was reflected while speaking with locals in Nea Kallikratia with one interviewee even going so far as to call many of the politicians "thieves" and saying he does not consider them to be worthy of being considered Greeks. This it is plausible that mistrust in government dissuades individuals from taking part in government programs.

Beyond this, it appears to be a rather unclear and confusing application process to the general public. Multiple interviewees gave us the impression that pursuing these programs was too complicated and not worth the effort. Only the women's cooperative actively participated in and took advantage of the available government funding. The Rotsios family is currently in the process of preparing their listing so that it will meet the standards set forth to be eligible for the "Helping New Touristic Businesses" grant, a government program that supports the expansion of tourism ventures.

We speculate that the potentially unclear application process may limit

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participation. From an outsider's perspective, it was very difficult to find information on these programs and understand what resources are available to the public. Even after speaking with the former Vice Governor of Central Macedonia, who was in charge of rural and agricultural development in the region, it was still unclear as to how exactly the application process worked and what the necessary qualifications were to participate. It was communicated, though, that funding is awarded by a committee reviews the application, not a single individual. Additionally, many interviewees, including business owners and Airbnb hosts, indicated that they were aware of available programs, but did not provide any further details regarding requirements or regulations. Attempts to probe deeper revealed little information, giving the impression that even though these programs exist, it is hard to take the first step to get involved.

It appears to be difficult to find the correct information and get in contact with the right people in order to begin and navigate through the application process. While interviewing Ioannidou at the women's cooperative, we asked many questions about government programs as the cooperative effectively and successfully utilized the resources provided by the municipality. When asked how the women were able to get involved with EU funded programs, Kostas responded (while translating for Ioannidou), "because they are very outgoing, they had a lot of support from different organizations like the [American Farm School], like local development agencies, touristic agencies, and back then there was a lot of support into this effort. From the very beginning they were in very close contact with many institutions in Thessaloniki. ...Everybody was

very supportive of this. And of course a lot of work on their part" (K. Rotsios, personal communication, March 30, 2018).

After hearing that the women received an outpouring of support, we questioned whether these programs would be accessible to the everyday person who typically would complete the application alone and if the process would be feasible. K. Rotsios responded by saying, "No, it is not easy. Yes, these programs are open, you can find them on the internet and other things, but when it comes to the bureaucracy and paperwork, this requires a lot of work. These are EU funded programs that are very strict and require a lot of bureaucracy" (personal communication, March 30, 2018).

This response suggests that accessibility to available resources is limited by the technical capacity of applicants. This hinders certain value-adding strategies from utilizing these programs as often the typical businessman or resident does not have the needed connections required to facilitate the application process. This may explain why many of the interviewed Airbnb hosts were aware of government programs, but only one of them planned on participating. However, other hosts may not intend to expand and therefore make the deliberate decision to keep their properties as is. Nevertheless, the disparity between the government's perception of accessibility to these initiatives and the public's understanding of said programs needs to be bridged in order to maximize the potential of individual value-adding strategies.

FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study was able to explore two different strategies that add value to rural spaces, more research needs to be done to identify other initiatives that also contribute to development within these regions.

Additionally, more research into how the women's cooperative has impacted the surrounding village of Agios Antonios would be beneficial in order to obtain a more complete picture of how the cooperative's strategy impacted locals. Investigating into reasons why the men appear to be unwilling to collaborate with the women would be another topic to consider when further analyzing strategies to maximize benefits.

Conducting a more thorough analysis surrounding the opinions of guests who stayed at rural Airbnbs, with a focus on their experiences and motivations, would contribute to a better understanding of the appeal rural areas have to tourists. Exploring what their expectations were, and whether or not they were met, would help provide a more complete picture of the state of rural tourism in the region.

Furthermore, a comprehensive assessment of government program accessibility and effectiveness would be interesting as it would allow for a better understanding of the impact these programs had had on the lives of rural individuals. The correlation between mistrust in government and participation in government programs should also be studied to deepen our understanding of how public opinion of the municipality influences rural development.

CONCLUSION

We examined two strategies that add value to rural spaces: Airbnb and the Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural Cooperative of Traditional Products. The primary motivation for participating in both of these strategies was to generate an income, however the personal fulfillment and sense of purpose resulting from participation encouraged sustained involvement. These strategies were found to work best when available resources, both monetary and material, were utilized in conjunction with diversification principles. Innovative marketing promoted both of these strategies effectively when directed to appeal to a target audience. Factors that hinder rural development such as failing infrastructure and mistrust in government proved to be detrimental to the success of these strategies and limited the opportunities for innovators to expand their respective approaches. In order for value-adding strategies to be optimized, these obstacles need to be addressed and accessibility to promoting factors needs to be improved.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Script:

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. We are conducting interviews with officials from the local organizations which promote tourism to the region. We believe this kind of research will ultimately lead to a more effective collaboration between locals and tourists. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. This interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Please remember that your answers will remain confidential. No names or identifying information will appear in any of the project reports or publications unless consent is given. Your participation is greatly appreciated. A copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

Contact: greeksharingeconomy@wpi.edu

Thank you again for agreeing to this interview with us. If you would prefer that no identifying information about this interview is included in our final project, that can be arranged. In addition, we would be happy to provide a copy of the report to you once we are finished with the study.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Rotsios Airbnb Guests:

- Have you ever visited this region before?
- When you go on vacations, do you typically stay in a hotel or an Airbnb? Why?
- Why did you choose to stay in the Nea Kallikratia area?
- Why did you book the Rotsios listing?
- Could you describe the level of interaction you had with the Rotsios family throughout your stay? This is the only one we haven't really delved into
- What was something about your stay at the Rotsios farm that stood out to you?
- If you were to return to Nea Kallikratia where would you stay?
- What activities did you participate in throughout your stay?
- How did you find out about them?
- Where did you spend most of your time while staying in this region?
- What was your favorite part of your time in Nea Kallikratia?

APPENDIX C

Initial Interview Questions for Rotsios

- Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
- Could you walk us through a typical work day?
- In/out of tourism season
- How have you seen the effects of the economic crisis in Nea Kallikratia?
- So your brother told us a little bit about this, but could you talk about how you got involved with Airbnb?
- What motivated you to become involved in Airbnb?
- How do you market your home to potential guests?
- How has participating in Airbnb affected your life in the past year?
- What changes has it brought about emotionally, economically, etc
- How do you plan to sustain your listing and to keep keep benefitting from Airbnb?
- How do you hope to grow or to get more involved or market more online?
- How do you plan to keep the benefits in the area?
- Do you know any other Airbnb hosts in the area? Do you work together/discuss business?
- If not, why?
- If you do, what do you talk about?
- On average, how much do you interact with your guests?
- Do you recommend any specific activities, restaurants, or shops to your guests?
- Why do you recommend these businesses?
- Are there programs in the area that support rural farmers/rural tourism/rural Airbnb?
- What tourist policies could help you?
- Could you speak to the tax policy change
- Are there relationships?
- What do you feel like you have gained throughout your experience as a host?
- Do you know how businesses work together in the area?
- Is it a competitive or collaborative environment?

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Airbnb Hosts

Overarching Questions

- Why did you become involved in Airbnb and why do you continue to stay involved?
- What kind of experiences have you had since listing your home?
- How has tourism in the area changed in the past few years?
- How have you seen the effects of the economic crisis?

Specific points to pay attention to throughout interview:

- How long have you been hosting through Airbnb?
- How did you learn about Airbnb?
- Why did you start listing your home?
- How do you market your home to potential guests?
- What motivated you to become involved in Airbnb?
- What type of space is it? Ex. your primary residence, space that was previously owned and empty, space purchased with the purpose of renting it, a guest house, etc.
- Is hosting a primary or secondary source of income?
- Could you describe your typical guest?
- On average, how much do you interact with your guests?
- Do you recommend any specific activities, restaurants, or shops to your guests?
- Why do you recommend these businesses?
- Are you involved in any tourism collaboratives/organizations
- Have you considered joining one? (if not currently involved)
- What are the changes you've witnessed over the past decade?
- What tourist policies could help you?
- Who's involved/important players?
- How have you seen the economic crisis affect this region?
- Based on responses, probe deeper, but need to be careful since this is a sensitive topic.
- What is your favorite part about hosting?
- What is your favorite memory as a host?
- How did it make you feel?
- What is your least favorite part about hosting?
- What do you feel like you have gained throughout your experience as a host?

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions for Airbnb Hosts Via Email

How did you learn about Airbnb?

How long have you been hosting through Airbnb?

Why did you start listing your home on Airbnb?

How do you market your home to potential guests?

Do you recommend any specific activities, restaurants, or shops to your guests?

Why do you recommend these businesses? Are they friends of yours or places you like to go?

Are you involved in any tourism initiatives or programs that are available to help you with your listing?

Have you considered joining one? (if not currently involved)

Have you noticed any trends in tourism over the past few years?

What are the changes you've witnessed over the past decade due to the economic crisis? (Both in your community and personally, if you are comfortable sharing)

What tourist policies could be put in place to help you?

What do you feel like you have gained throughout your experience as a host?

APPENDIX G

Interview Questions for the Women's Cooperative

- Can you tell us a little bit about your life before the cooperative started?
- Seminars
- How did this cooperative start?
- Do you participate in any government programs or receive aid from any external organizations?
- Are the people coming in mostly locals, other Greeks, or tourists?
- How do you market yourselves to the community?
- This area is not traditionally a tourist area, so how did you put this area on the map?
- How have you seen the area change since you started the cooperative?
- What are your opinions on, and advice, for collaboration in rural areas in order to support the community?
- In your opinion, what are some of the biggest roadblocks preventing rural development?
- How could those be overcome?
- What challenges did you have when starting the cooperative?
- Were some of these challenges specific to it being a rural region?
- How are you sustaining this cooperative and this business?
- How do you hope to expand the business?
- Do you have plans in place on how to improve or what the next venture is?
- Where do you see the business going in the next 5 to 10 years?

APPENDIX H

Interview Plan for Vice Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia

- Could you describe your strategy for developing tourism in rural areas?
- Mention LEADER and its approaches: bottom-up, public-private partnership, innovation, etc
- What are some policies and initiatives currently in place promoting tourism and rural development?
- How would you describe the success of these initiatives? In particular, the series of LEADER initiatives that have been implemented over the past 25 years?
- How do you inform intended recipients of these programs?
- Can individuals apply for these or do they need to be an organization or partnered with an organization?
- Are these programs targeted specifically at certain groups, demographically or otherwise (e.g., farmers, women, young people)?
- How has the economic crisis affected tourism in rural regions?
- How has tourism affected economic development in rural regions?
- How much of the tourism to the region is through tourist agencies and all inclusive programs, i.e. resorts?
- Is there collaboration between businesses outside of these all inclusive programs
- If no: Do you believe such collaboration would be beneficial
- If yes: Has such collaboration been beneficial to participating businesses
- From your point of view, what are the biggest challenges that rural areas are facing in regards to developing tourism?
- What are the emerging opportunities for rural tourism?
- What can be done to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas?
- Do you know of any unique efforts to promote tourism in the rural area?
- What changes have you noticed in tourism since Airbnb has become more prevalent in this region?