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Guest Editor: Prof. Dr. Tsobanoglou George, University of the Aegean

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Guest-Editor
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To Nikos POULIANOS in MEMORIAM

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Challenges and Opportunities of Tourism Development within Natura 2000 Protected Areas: The role of Integrated Planning and Governance

Tsartas, P[1]., Skoultsos, S[2]., Sarantakou, E[3]., Tsalapati, K[4]., Papatheodorou, A.[5], Kontis, A. P[6]., Papadimitriou, S.[7], Giannopoulos, K[8], Sidirofagis, F[9]., Dede, T[10]., Stara, K[11]. and Papoutsakis, C[12].

Abstract

The study examines the challenges and opportunities of tourism development in protected areas, with a focus on Natura 2000 sites. These areas play a dual role as both biodiversity conservation zones and tourism destinations, requiring a careful balance between environmental protection and economic development. Tourism in protected areas has evolved from mass tourism models to more sustainable and alternative forms, driven by increased environmental awareness and changing traveler preferences. Today, visitors seek authentic, nature-based experiences such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and adventure tourism. Despite their potential, protected areas face significant challenges, including environmental degradation, over-tourism risks, inadequate infrastructure, climate change impacts, and governance inefficiencies. Fragmented decision-making and lack of stakeholder coordination often hinder effective management. At the same time, there are important opportunities for sustainable development. These include promoting alternative tourism models, engaging local communities, leveraging funding and technology, and adopting participatory governance approaches. Sustainable tourism can generate economic benefits while supporting conservation and raising environmental awareness. The study emphasizes the importance of integrated planning and governance as key tools for achieving sustainability. Effective management requires collaboration among stakeholders, strategic zoning, capacity management, and the use of data and technology. Ultimately, protected areas can serve as models of sustainable tourism if they successfully balance ecological preservation with socio-economic development.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Protected Areas, Natura 2000, Biodiversity Conservation, Integrated Planning, Governance, Stakeholder Participation, Alternative Tourism.

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1. Introduction

Protected areas (PAs) serve a dual role as both critical conservation zones and dynamic tourist destinations. This duality highlights the need to balance ecological preservation with sustainable tourism development (Coccosis, 2017; Mason, 2012). Natura 2000 network offers a compelling case study of how protected areas can simultaneously attract visitors and safeguard biodiversity (Dianeosis, 2017; European Union, 2013). To achieve this, strategic goals must be implemented to ensure tourism's long-term viability while respecting the environmental and cultural integrity of these regions (Tsartas et al., 2024; Coccosis, 2017).

Natura 2000 sites are more than just natural sanctuaries; they are biodiversity hotspots enriched with cultural and historical landmarks (European Union, 2013; Richards, 1999). Their dual role demands careful management to avoid degradation while leveraging their unique attributes to attract visitors. Protected areas (PAs) offer diverse tourism experiences, including ecotourism, birdwatching, hiking, and marine activities. These specialized forms of tourism cater to the rising demand for meaningful and unique travel experiences (Briassoulis, 2000; Eagles & McCoo, 2002). However, this potential is constrained by challenges such as limited infrastructure, seasonality, and accessibility issues (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Novelli, 2007).

The rise of environmental awareness and a shift in traveler preferences since the 1970s have significantly influenced tourism models in protected areas (Ballinger, 1996; UNWTO, 2018). Today, tourists prioritize destinations that offer authentic and eco-friendly experiences over standardized vacation packages (Amelung et al., 2007; Becken & Hay, 2012). This trend aligns well with the specialized activities available in PAs, providing a pathway to merge conservation efforts with tourism development (Scott et al., 2012). In recent years, the emphasis on sustainable tourism within protected areas has intensified, with a focus on balancing visitor experiences and environment conservation. A World Bank study (2023) highlighted that investing in sustainable, inclusive tourism in protected areas yields significant economic growth. Additionally, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) emphasizes that tourism in protected areas is a major part of the global tourism industry and can be a powerful argument for conservation when managed responsibly. These developments underscore the growing recognition of sustainable tourism as a vital component in the management and preservation of protected areas (Leung et al., 2018; Silva & Vieira, 2023).

However, despite these positive developments, the development of tourism in protected areas faces several challenges. Chief among these is the tension between conservation and economic development. While tourism generates revenue and creates jobs, unregulated activities can lead to environmental degradation, habitat loss, and pollution. Governance gaps further exacerbate these issues, as fragmented responsibilities among stakeholders hinder effective management (Husbands & Harrison, 1996).

Infrastructure deficits pose another significant challenge. Many Natura 2000 areas lack visitor facilities and year-round accessibility, limiting their potential as tourist destinations. Additionally, the threat of over-tourism looms large, with the influx of visitors straining local ecosystems and communities. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of tourism in protected areas.

The dual role of PAs as tourist destinations and conservation priorities is both an opportunity and a challenge. With their rich biodiversity and cultural heritage, Natura 2000 areas have immense potential to attract environmentally conscious travelers. However, achieving sustainable tourism requires addressing infrastructure deficits, managing tourism flows, and establishing robust governance frameworks. By implementing the outlined strategic goals, protected areas can evolve into models of sustainable tourism, offering

unique experiences while preserving their ecological and cultural treasures for future generations.

Economic Geography has played a pivotal role in Tourism Destinations Planning since the early 1960s when massive tourism became a dominant global development pattern. Over time, particularly from the 1980s onward, tourism development patterns evolved under the influence of sustainable, local and participatory planning frameworks. This shift introduced a new era of spatial planning for tourism destinations, emphasizing resource diversity, specialization and sustainability considerations.

In this context, this chapter focuses on the necessity of multidimensional and environmental spatial planning for emerging tourism destinations, particular protected areas (PAs). The growing demand for travel to these destinations, which contain highly valuable yet fragile environmental resources, underscores the need for a strategic, participatory and sustainable approach to spatial planning. The aim is to explore the complexities of tourism development in PAs and emphasise the balance between conservation and economic growth. Additionally, the chapter analyses the role of integrated planning and governance in addressing these challenges while seizing opportunities for sustainable tourism development. The specific objectives include: identifying key challenges faced in managing tourism in protected areas, assessing the opportunities for promoting local economic development through tourism without compromising conservation goals and examining the role of integrated planning in achieving sustainable tourism development at PAs.

2. Protected Areas: Characteristics and Importance

According to the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) definition, a protected area is "a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values'' (IUCN, 2025).

Protected areas, such as those established under the Natura 2000 network, are integral to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development (Coccossis, 2017; UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2025). In Europe, they serve as crucial hubs for maintaining ecological balance and preserving cultural heritage (Benoit & Comeau, 2012; Mason, 2012). Renowned for their ecological richness and biodiversity, these areas often function as biodiversity hotspots, harbouring numerous endangered species. They sustain critical ecosystems and play a key role in ensuring ecological continuity. Their management prioritizes habitat conservation and minimizes human impacts to preserve these delicate environments.

The Natura 2000 protected areas in the European Union form the largest network of protected areas in the world, covering nearly one-fifth of its terrestrial surface. In Greece, however, the Natura 2000 network encompasses an even larger portion of the country's territory, covering approximately 27% of the land area (WPDA, 2025). These areas include unique ecosystems such as the wetlands of Prespa, the forests of Rhodope, and the marine ecosystems of the Sporades. As a result, they play a crucial role in protecting the country's natural environment.

The designation and management of protected areas are guided by robust institutional and policy frameworks. In Europe, the Natura 2000 network operates under the European Union's Habitats Directive[13] (92/43/EEC), which emphasizes both biodiversity preservation and the promotion of sustainable tourism (European Union, 2013; WTO, 2019). These policies provide a comprehensive framework for balancing environmental conservation with socioeconomic objectives (Bramwell, 2013; Fayos Sola

[13] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/habitats-directive_en

& Cooper, 2018). A key component of this framework is the integration of international agreements and conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, into national policies. These policies align ecological preservation with socioeconomic goals, ensuring sustainable development. This often involves creating management plans tailored to specific protected areas, addressing their unique ecological and cultural attributes.

Protected areas serve multiple functions, supporting ecosystem services, recreational activities, and educational opportunities. Their governance involves a variety of stakeholders, including governments, local authorities, NGOs, scientists, and residents. This collaborative structure ensures a balanced approach that aligns conservation goals with community development and sustainable use of resources. An essential aspect of protected areas is their integration into local economic strategies. By developing alternative tourism models, such as eco-tourism, these areas enhance local livelihoods while conserving environmental and cultural resources. Tourism initiatives in protected areas often emphasize educational and cultural experiences, fostering both economic growth and environmental awareness (Nella & Stergiou, 2025).

Protected areas are critical for safeguarding ecosystems essential to life. They protect water sources, mitigate its impacts of climate change and prevent habitat destruction. These areas also act as ecological buffers, enhancing resilience against environmental degradation and contributing to global ecological stability (GFANC, 1997). They exemplify a shift toward sustainable tourism practices, offering authentic, nature-based experiences that emphasize environmental and cultural values. By promoting alternative tourism models, these areas reduce reliance on mass tourism, mitigating its associated environmental impacts. Moreover, sustainable tourism in these regions fosters environmental awareness and encourages responsible behaviour among visitors.

Many protected areas include sites of cultural and historical importance, providing valuable opportunities for environmental education and cultural exchange (Richards, 1999) . Activities such as guided tours, volunteer programs, and cultural events allow visitors to engage deeply with both the natural environment and the heritage of these regions, fostering a sense of stewardship and appreciation. Beyond their ecological and cultural roles, protected areas significantly contribute to local economies. By diversifying income sources through eco-tourism and conservation-related activities, they create employment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship. These initiatives not only strengthen local economies but also underline the value of sustainable resource management (Benoit & Comeau, 2012).

On a global scale, protected areas play a crucial role in combating climate change and preserving biodiversity. They serve as reference sites for scientific research, driving innovation in sustainable practices and influencing environmental policy worldwide. Their global significance underscores their role as essential pillars in addressing environmental challenges. Protected areas are crucial for maintaining ecological balance, promoting sustainable tourism, and supporting socio-economic development. Effective management of these areas requires a strategic blend of conservation, stakeholder engagement, and innovation. As vital components of sustainable development, protected areas provide a blueprint for harmonizing environmental preservation with human well-being (Holden, 2008).

3. Tourism in Protected Areas: Challenges for Sustainable Development

Tourism has undergone significant transformation over time, evolving in response to economic, societal and environmental changes (Tsartas, 2016; Rontos et al., 2016). This evolution can be divided into two distinct phases: the Mass Tourism Era (1960-1990) and

the Post-1990 Era, each characterized by different development and priorities (Briassoulis, 2013; Mason, 2012).

During the first era, Organized Mass Tourism (OMT) dominated the industry, focusing on large-scale tourism infrastructure and services tailored to international tourists (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; OECD, 1994; Mathieson, 1982). The primary objectives of this model were relaxation, leisure and cultural experiences, often facilitated through standardized travel packages. Centralized planning played a crucial role, ensuring uniformity in tourism offerings while emphasizing economic benefits over localized and sustainable considerations. Destinations were primarily developed to accommodate large groups, prioritizing accessibility and efficiency over environmental or cultural sensitivity (Baloglu, S & Brinberg, 1997).

As tourism developed, several emerging trends have begun shaping the industry, particularly in protected areas. Since the 1970s, growing ecological concerns influenced both tourists and policymakers, leading to increased efforts toward sustainable tourism practices (Ballinger, R., (1996). Modern travellers increasingly seek meaningful, experience-based travel, moving away from standardized vacation packages in favor of immersive and responsible tourism (Amelung, B., et al., 2007; Coccossis, 2008). The rise of digital platforms, e-tourism, and online marketing has facilitated greater accessibility to remote and protected destinations, allowing for better visitor management and awareness (Benckendorff et al., 2019; Buhalis & Law, 2008). Sustainability is no longer an optional consideration but a fundamental aspect of modern tourism development, influencing everything from infrastructure design to visitor engagement strategies.

Unlike the centralized approach of the previous phase, decision-making now involves multiple stakeholders, including local communities, environmental organizations and tourists, ensuring a more inclusive and balanced approach to tourism development (Bramwell & Lane, 2013; Castanho et al., 2020). This shift has led to the emergence of three primary tourism models: [a] Adapted Mass Tourism, [b] Sustainable Tourism and [c] Alternative Tourism (Coccossis & Soteriou, 2010; Jenkins & Schroeder, 2013).

As a result, traditional Organized Mass Tourism has evolved and adapted to modern demands by offering more flexible options, such as all-inclusive packages with enhanced service customization. Meanwhile, Sustainable Tourism has increasingly emphasized on eco-friendly and community-based initiatives to minimize environmental impact and support local populations. Additionally, Alternative Tourism has grown, catering to niche markets such as ecotourism, cultural tourism and adventure tourism, appealing to travellers seeking unique and immersive experiences.

As these models evolved—particularly those of sustainable and alternative tourism—they facilitated the development of diverse tourism activities, including eco-friendly and nature-based experiences. Tourists, shifting their preferences, increasingly seek out natural and cultural attractions, visiting areas i.e. of outstanding natural beauty, national parks, cultural heritage monuments etc. This shift, supported by participatory governance, enabled tourism growth in these regions while prioritizing the preservation and promotion of their natural and cultural heritage.

Tourism in Protected Areas - particularly those under the Natura 2000 network - present distinct opportunities and challenges. These regions are recognised for their ecological and cultural significance, requiring careful management to balance conservation and visitor engagement. Specifically, their attractiveness as tourist destinations lies on certain important characteristics (CETTO, 2020). For example, these areas host rare species, while nature is abundant, and visitors may explore various habitats and ecosystems. Another significant feature is their cultural and historical value, as many of these regions house important historical landmarks and traditions that enhance their appeal to visitors (Coccossis, 2008, 2017). Unlike conventional tourism destinations, protected

areas offer specialized tourism activities such as birdwatching, hiking, ecotourism, and marine tourism, attracting visitors with specific interests (Briassoulis, 2013; Nella & Stergiou, 2025). Despite their appeal, many protected areas face logistical challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure and limited year-round accessibility, which can impact tourism flows and sustainability.

In several regions of Europe, sustainable tourism has developed significantly, while in others, a better management plan is needed. A strong example is the Azores in Portugal. This destination has effectively integrated sustainability into its tourism model, emphasizing adventure tourism and nature-based activities such as hiking, birdwatching, and marine conservation efforts. The Strategic and Commercial Tourism Plan of the Azores (PEMTA) prioritizes nature tourism and promotes eco-friendly experiences, ensuring the protection of local biodiversity while supporting economic development. Local and regional organizations actively contribute to sustainable tourism growth, fostering collaboration between stakeholders to maintain environmental integrity.

Another notable example of sustainable tourism is the Alonissos Marine Park in Greece. This protected area is home to rare species, including the Mediterranean monk seal, and has developed eco-friendly tourism initiatives. Activities such as guided snorkeling, wildlife observation, and responsible boating are promoted, ensuring minimal environmental impact. The park operates under strict conservation guidelines, balancing tourism with the preservation of marine biodiversity. (Konaxis, 2020; Paraskevopoulos, 2017).

However, there are areas that require significant improvements in sustainable tourism development. For example, certain popular destinations face issues related to seasonal over-density of tourists, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Despite the potential for eco-tourism, some regions lack proper waste management systems, effective local governance, and structured conservation efforts. Addressing these issues through strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and policy enforcement is crucial for achieving long-term sustainability

Despite the growing emphasis on sustainability, managing tourism in Natura 2000 areas presents several challenges. A key difficulty lies in balancing development and conservation, as tourism must generate economic benefits while ensuring that natural resources remain protected from overuse and degradation (Cruz & Benedicto, 2009). Additionally, many protected areas lack the necessary facilities to support sustainable tourism, limiting their ability to accommodate visitors without causing environmental harm. Without proper regulation, high tourist volumes can lead to habitat loss, pollution, and increased pressure on local communities and ecosystems. Effective management is often hindered by fragmented or unclear responsibilities among stakeholders, making it difficult to implement cohesive conservation and tourism strategies (Briassoulis, 2000).

Although it cannot be argued that protected areas suffer from over-tourism, their popularity may lead to an excessive number of visitors beyond their ecological carrying capacity. This may cause habitat degradation, water and air pollution, soil erosion, and disturbances to wildlife, particularly near breeding or nesting grounds. For instance, frequent human activities near breeding or nesting grounds disrupt animal behaviours, potentially causing population declines. Addressing these problems requires implementing visitor management systems, enforcing zoning regulations and educating tourists about their impact on these sensitive ecosystems.

Climate change significantly threatens the biodiversity of protected areas. Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and phenomena like wetland drying, forest fires, and coral bleaching habitat loss and species extinction. Protected areas often serve as ecological buffers, yet they are not immune to the broader climate crisis. Adaptive

management plans, grounded in scientific research, are crucial to enhance the resilience of these ecosystems.

Effective decision-making depends on accurate and comprehensive environmental data. However, many protected areas face gaps in monitoring and data collection systems. These deficiencies hinder the ability to assess visitor impacts, determine ecological thresholds, and develop evidence-based management strategies. Investing in technologies like remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and community-driven monitoring can bridge (CETTO, 2020).

The success of tourism initiatives in protected areas hinges on the active involvement of local communities. However, governance inefficiencies often exclude citizens from decision-making processes, leading to mistrust and conflicts. For instance, communities might oppose conservation efforts if they perceive them as limiting their access to natural resources. Empowering the local population through participatory governance structures and benefit-sharing mechanisms can foster a sense of ownership and cooperation.

While tourism can help preserve and showcase local cultures, unchecked growth risks commodifying traditions, diminishing their authenticity. The demand for cultural tourism may lead to performances or crafts tailored to tourist expectations rather than genuine practices. Policies must promote cultural heritage while respecting community traditions to ensure tourism supports rather than undermines cultural identity.

Many PAs lack the infrastructure to accommodate large tourist volumes sustainably. Inadequate transportation, accommodations, and waste management harm ecosystems and reduce visitor satisfaction. Eco-friendly infrastructure investments, such as renewable energy systems and sustainable waste management, are critical to addressing these gaps.

Developing tourism infrastructure, funding conservation programs, and training staff require significant financial resources. However, protected areas often operate under constrained budgets. This can result in subpar facilities, inadequate staffing, and limited capacity to manage the pressures of tourism. Diversifying funding sources—such as entrance fees, grants, public-private partnerships, and carbon offset programs—can alleviate financial burdens.

Protected areas are not insulated from broader economic fluctuations. Recessions, fluctuating tourism trends, and global crises such as pandemics can sharply reduce visitor numbers and revenue. Such challenges highlight the need for resilience strategies, including diversifying local economies and developing contingency plans to sustain conservation efforts during economic downturns.

Over-reliance on tourism revenue creates vulnerabilities, particularly in destinations with strong seasonal patterns. For instance, protected areas that rely on summer tourists may face prolonged revenue gaps during the off-season. Exploring alternative revenue streams, such as scientific research funding, educational programs, or virtual tourism, can help reduce dependence on fluctuating visitor numbers.

4. Opportunities in Tourism for Protected Areas

Protected areas, including prominent networks like Natura 2000, hold immense potential for sustainable tourism development (Tsartas et al., 2024; Paraskevopoulos, 2017). These areas contribute significantly to local economic growth, support conservation efforts, and provide visitors with enriching and meaningful experiences. However, to fully realize their potential, PAs require strategic planning and collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring they serve as exemplary models of sustainable tourism that balances ecological preservation with socio-economic benefits.

One of the most promising opportunities for PAs lies in the development of alternative and specialized tourism forms (Coccosis et al., 2020; Gossling & Peeters, 2015)). Unlike traditional mass tourism, which often places strain on natural resources and ecosystems, these activities focus on low-impact, high-value experiences that align with conservation goals (Coccosis, 2017; Hall et al., 2015). Examples of alternative tourism include eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and adventure tourism. Eco-tourism provides visitors with opportunities for guided nature tours and wildlife observation, promoting awareness of biodiversity and the importance of preservation. Cultural tourism emphasizes immersive experiences that showcase local traditions, gastronomy, and historical heritage. Adventure tourism caters to those seeking active exploration, offering activities such as hiking, climbing, or kayaking in protected landscapes. By diversifying tourism offerings, PAs can attract a broader and more environmentally conscious audience. This approach reduces reliance on mass tourism while generating revenue that supports conservation efforts. Furthermore, it enhances the sustainability of tourism activities by aligning them with the ecological and cultural values of the region.

Another critical opportunity for sustainable tourism development is the active involvement of local communities (Castellani et al., 2007). Participatory governance and community engagement enhance the effectiveness of conservation initiatives while supporting the socio-economic development of these populations (Castanho et al., 2020). For instance, local citizens can be trained as tour guides or conservation ambassadors, providing them with employment opportunities and fostering a sense of pride in their cultural and natural heritage. Community-led tourism initiatives, such as guesthouses, handicraft markets, and cultural performances, allow citizens to actively contribute to and benefit from tourism activities. Moreover, involving communities in decision-making processes builds trust, fosters a sense of ownership, and strengthens the long-term sustainability of conservation objectives. This integration of local communities enriches the visitor experience by providing authentic, locally driven narratives. It enables travellers to gain deeper insights into the region's cultural and natural significance, fostering a more meaningful connection with the destination.

Protected areas also have access to significant funding opportunities from the European Union and other organizations, enabling them to support both tourism development and conservation goals. Funding programs such as LIFE, Interreg, and the Recovery and Resilience Facility provide financial resources to enhance infrastructure, train personnel, and implement sustainable practices (European Union, 2013). With these resources, PAs can undertake transformative projects, including the construction of eco-friendly infrastructure such as energy-efficient visitor centres and sustainable transportation systems. Digital technologies, such as mobile applications for visitor guidance, virtual tours for enhanced accessibility, and data-driven tools for monitoring tourism impacts, further support effective management. Emerging technologies like GIS mapping and smart tourism solutions also offer invaluable tools for improving the management of protected areas. These innovations allow PAs to monitor visitor flows, optimize resource allocation, and enhance the overall visitor experience while minimizing environmental impact.

The increasing global awareness of environmental challenges presents a strong market for sustainable tourism. Travelers now seek destinations that offer eco-friendly and meaningful experiences, making protected areas, with their unparalleled biodiversity and cultural significance, highly attractive. This demand positions PAs as ideal destinations for visitors who value sustainability and authenticity (Becken & Hay, 2021).

The supportive policy environment at international and national levels further strengthens the prospects for sustainable tourism in PAs. Advances in institutional and legal frameworks provide a robust foundation for aligning tourism initiatives with

sustainability goals. These frameworks guide the development of policies and practices that balance conservation with tourism growth.

In addition, opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing enable PAs to collaborate with other destinations through regional and international platforms. These collaborations foster innovation, enhance competitiveness, and provide access to best practices, enabling PAs to address common challenges and implement effective solutions.

Protected areas offer unparalleled opportunities for sustainable tourism development, serving as models for balancing conservation and socio-economic benefits. Through the development of alternative tourism, engagement with local communities, effective use of funding and technology, and participation in policy and networking frameworks, PAs can unlock their full potential.

Strategic planning and participatory governance will remain essential to ensuring the sustainability of tourism in these areas. By embracing innovation and collaboration, protected areas can secure long-term benefits for nature, local communities, and visitors alike, positioning themselves as leading examples of sustainable development in the tourism sector.

5. Integrated Planning and Governance in Protected Areas

The sustainable development of protected areas (PAs), including those within the Natura 2000 network, requires robust integrated planning and governance frameworks (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2012; Laws et al., 2011). These frameworks are essential to balance environmental protection, tourism development, and socio-economic benefits while involving diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. By integrating governance models, sustainable tourism principles, strategic zoning, capacity management and institutional coordination, these frameworks establish a holistic approach to protected areas management (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2012; Halko et al., 2019).

Definitions of Governance and Integrating planning.

The concept of governance has been widely researched and analyzed by several international organizations during the last decades. Due to the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP (1997) *"Governance can be seen as the exercise of economic, political, administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences".* The approach of Governance has been evolved to date and principles of its effective implementation have been published from several organizations.

European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) of Council of Europe (2008) has adopted the 12 Principles in the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at local level as follows:

1.Participation, Representation, Fair Conduct of Elections,
2.Responsiveness (refers to the response of public services to requests and complaints)
3.Efficiency and Effectiveness
4.Openness and Transparency (Information on decisions, implementation of policies and results is made available to the public)
5. Rule of Law
6. Ethical Conduct
7. Competence and Capacity
8. Innovation and Openness to Change
9. Sustainability and Long-Term Orientation
10. Sound Financial Management
11. Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion
12. Accountability

Practices of effective Governance have become a goal for tourism destinations. Tourism is a complex system that includes a set of directly and indirectly interested parties (stakeholders) which may have various approaches towards tourism development. Below is a list of stakeholders that make up the tourism system in a destination:

● Local businesses: Includes businesses that are directly and indirectly related to tourism activities.

● Local authorities: These are the entities responsible for local governance, originating from the public sector.

● Local population: This category includes all segments of the local population, as well as landowners and second-home owners in the area.

● Local organizations: This includes all local organizations involved either in environmental protection or other issues of the local community.

An extension of the above system includes stakeholders who influence the destination but are not geographically located within the local area. This category includes tourists/visitors to the region, tour operators, investors, organizations involved in environmental protection at a national level, as well as the Central Government Authorities.

Due to the above, the practice of integrating all the stakeholders to the decision making processes contributes a lot to long-term viability of tourism to host areas. Integrating planning describes the traditional planning process of destination management with the additional exchange of opinions and concerns between local communities and businesses so as to proactively plan for the solutions to the upcoming challenges of tourism development. The process of integrated planning can be described as follows (Goeldner & Brent (2009: 446-447):

- Where are we today? - 1. Gather information
- Where do we want to go? - 2. Identify community values, 3. Create a vision, 4. Identify concerns and opportunities, 5. Develop a mission, 6. Develop goals
- How are we going to get there? - 7. Develop objectives, 8. Develop actions
- How did we do? - 9. Evaluate progress, 10. Update and modify plan

As a result, effective implementation of Governance is a key factor for the success of integrated planning that has been proposed as a widely effective management of tourism destinations. During each of the above 10 steps, the process focuses on four main stages of information based on a. Organizational Development, b. Community Involvement, c. Tourism Product Development and d. Tourism Product Marketing (Goeldner & Brent, 2009: 446-447).

Governance Significance and Challenges

Overlapping jurisdictions and unclear roles among stakeholders often lead to fragmented decision-making. For example, conflicts between national authorities, local governments, and private stakeholders may result in inconsistent enforcement of regulations. Streamlining governance frameworks and fostering interagency collaboration are essential to address these inefficiencies (Bramwell & Lane. 2013). For the tourism industry and destinations there are various reasons that local governance has been approached as a necessity *(Cokkosis & Tsartas, 2019, pp. 109-110):*

- The impacts of unplanned tourism development led to the degradation of the resources of many tourist destinations, highlighting the importance of a long-term sustainable planning approach with a local character.
- Sustainable development policies have decisively contributed to the promotion of policies related to local governance.
- Participatory planning has been a key element of local tourism development.

- The increase in the number of interest groups (international, national, and local) involved in the process of local development requires synergies and complex consultation policies.
- Growing international and national competition led many tourist destinations to establish Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), which were tasked with managing the development, management, and promotion of the tourist destination at the local level.
- The global acceptance of the concept of the tourist destination as the central core of tourism supply highlighted the need for a different governance model with a focus on local conditions.

Especially for PAs, Illegal activities such as poaching, unauthorized logging, or unregulated tourism practices can be significant threats. Weak enforcement of regulations undermines conservation goals, allowing unsustainable activities to persist. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, increasing enforcement personnel, and leveraging technology such as drones or surveillance systems can improve compliance.

The absence of mechanisms for stakeholder engagement hinders consensus-building and the development of inclusive policies. Without the involvement of local communities, researchers, and other interest groups, conservation efforts risk alienating critical partners. Establishing permanent consultation bodies can ensure that diverse perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes, enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance efforts.

Tourism in protected areas reflects the broader challenge of sustainable development. Addressing environmental, social, economic, and governance challenges requires coordinated, evidence-based strategies that prioritize capacity building and community engagement. Without proactive measures, the potential of protected areas to serve as models of sustainability may remain unrealized. By balancing conservation and development, these areas can become powerful examples of how tourism can contribute to a sustainable future.

Effective governance in protected areas requires active collaboration between various stakeholders, including local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientific institutions and government agencies. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures long-term sustainability by aligning conservation goals with the needs of local communities and broader socio-economic objectives (Castanho et al., 2020; Reddy & Wilkes, 2012).

Protected areas require a governance model that brings together multiple stakeholders such as (Castellani et al., 2007):

- Local Community: community involvement is essential for successful governance. By participating in decision-making, local populations can ensure that tourism and conservation efforts align with their needs and aspirations. This fosters a sense of ownership and stewardship for natural resources.
- NGOs: These organizations provide expertise in conservation, capacity building, and policy advocacy, often acting as intermediaries facilitating communication and collaboration between various social groups, stakeholders and government entities.
- Government Bodies: National, regional, and local authorities are responsible for implementing policies, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and providing funding for protected area management.
- Scientific Institutions: Research organizations contribute valuable data and insights on ecological and social impacts, enabling evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management.

It has to be highlighted that in practice participatory mechanisms such as advisory councils, public consultations, and community forums enhance inclusivity and

transparency in governance. These tools foster dialogue, build trust, and minimize conflicts, ensuring that diverse voices are heard in the decision-making process.

Implementing sustainable tourism principles is essential for the effective management of protected areas (PAs). By prioritizing ecological conservation and community well-being, tourism development can complement conservation goals rather than compromise them. A key strategy for managing tourism activities is strategic zoning, which divides protected areas into zones based on ecological sensitivity and tourism potential (Briassoulis & Van der Staaten, 2013). These zones include core areas with strict human activity restrictions, buffer zones with limited tourism under guidelines, and development zones designed for infrastructure while minimizing environmental impact. Carrying capacity management is also critical to prevent over-tourism; strategies like visitor quotas, seasonal management, and monitoring systems can help maintain ecological integrity while accommodating tourists (Scott et al., 2012).

6. Conclusions

Protected areas (PAs), such as those within the Natura 2000 network, play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism, and local socio-economic development (Dianeosis, 2017; UNWTO, 2011). However, to fully harness their potential, an integrated approach that addresses challenges, leverages opportunities, and strengthens governance is imperative. By considering adaptive governance, technological advancements and stakeholder collaboration, PAs can be transformed into models of sustainable management that benefit both nature and local communities (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013).

Addressing Challenges with Adaptive Strategies

PAs face significant challenges, including environmental pressures, governance inefficiencies, and data gaps. Seasonal tourist over-density, resource depletion, and climate change necessitate continuous monitoring and adaptive governance frameworks that evolve with changing conditions (Tsartas et al., 2024). Climate change, in particular, has introduced new complexities by altering ecosystems, increasing the frequency of extreme weather events, and threatening endemic species (Sauter et al., 2013). Without a proactive approach, these challenges could compromise the ecological integrity of protected areas.

A crucial step in overcoming these challenges is investing in infrastructure and data collection. Continuous monitoring, through environmental impact assessments and visitor behavior tracking, can help optimize capacity and prevent degradation. Implementing digital tools like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) enhances real-time data collection, enabling authorities to make informed decisions that align with conservation priorities (Buhalis & Law, 2008).

Furthermore, governance inefficiencies often arise due to fragmented decision-making structures and a lack of cooperation among different authorities. Establishing clear, adaptive governance frameworks that integrate diverse stakeholders—ranging from governmental bodies to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local communities—can streamline decision-making and ensure that conservation efforts remain dynamic and responsive to emerging threats (Costa et al., 2013).

Harnessing Opportunities for Sustainable Development

Despite these challenges, PAs offer numerous opportunities for sustainable development. Eco-tourism and cultural tourism models generate revenue while minimizing environmental harm, providing local communities with alternative income sources (UNWTO, 2018). By developing sustainable tourism strategies that emphasize low-impact activities, such as wildlife observation, guided nature walks, and cultural heritage experiences, PAs can balance economic benefits with conservation objectives.

Engaging local communities in participatory planning and community-based tourism initiatives ensures that conservation goals align with local needs (Michailidou et al., 2016). When local stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making and benefit economically from conservation efforts, they are more likely to support and uphold environmental protection measures. Capacity-building programs that offer training in sustainable tourism management and environmental stewardship can further empower local communities.

Additionally, international collaboration and technological advancements provide avenues for enhancing infrastructure and resource management. Global partnerships enable knowledge-sharing and best practice dissemination, while funding programs such as those offered by the European Union (EU) provide essential financial support for conservation projects. Technological innovations, including the use of artificial intelligence in monitoring biodiversity and climate adaptation strategies, can further strengthen the resilience of PAs (WEF, 2022).

Strengthening Governance Through Integration and Collaboration

Effective governance is fundamental to sustainable PA management. Adaptive governance frameworks must balance ecological, social, and economic priorities while integrating diverse stakeholders. Governments, NGOs, researchers, and local communities each play a role in ensuring that conservation strategies are comprehensive and inclusive (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013).

Strategic zoning, capacity management, and visitor quotas help prevent environmental degradation by regulating human activity within PAs. For instance, defining specific zones for high, moderate, and low tourism activity ensures that sensitive ecological areas remain undisturbed while still allowing for recreational and economic activities in less fragile zones. The implementation of carrying capacity assessments can help determine the maximum number of visitors an area can sustain without compromising its ecological integrity (Tsartas et al., 2024).

International knowledge-sharing fosters innovation and builds resilience against global challenges like climate change. By studying successful conservation models in other regions and applying relevant strategies, PAs can enhance their management effectiveness. Cross-border cooperation between countries that share transboundary protected areas is particularly crucial in addressing ecosystem-wide challenges that transcend political boundaries (Sauter et al., 2013).

The role of Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Sustainability in PAs depends on continuous monitoring and adaptive management. Regular environmental impact assessments, coupled with visitor behavior tracking, inform dynamic strategies that optimize capacity while protecting biodiversity (Buhalis & Law, 2008). By integrating climate adaptation strategies into management plans, PAs can safeguard their ecological integrity against changing environmental conditions (WEF, 2022).

For instance, developing early warning systems to detect ecological changes—such as shifts in species distribution or increased frequency of wildfires—enables proactive interventions. Adaptive management approaches, which involve periodic reviews and modifications of conservation strategies based on real-time data, ensure that PA management remains responsive to new challenges (Michailidou et al., 2016).

Furthermore, integrating technology into monitoring efforts can significantly enhance efficiency. Remote sensing, drone surveillance, and AI-powered data analysis facilitate large-scale monitoring with minimal human intervention. By leveraging such technologies, PA authorities can collect and analyze data more effectively, leading to informed and timely conservation decisions (Costa et al., 2013).

Recommendations

To ensure PAs thrive as models of sustainable development, the following strategies are recommended:

Establish Adaptive Governance: Develop flexible, participatory governance frameworks that respond to evolving challenges and align stakeholder interests. This includes integrating local communities, NGOs, researchers, and governmental authorities to create a holistic and adaptive decision-making process (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013; Costa et al., 2013).

Strengthen International Collaboration: Foster global partnerships to share best practices, scale innovative solutions, and mobilize resources. International cooperation provides a platform for learning from successful conservation models and leveraging financial and technical support (UNWTO, 2018; WEF, 2022).

Invest in Monitoring and Technology: Implement robust monitoring systems using advanced technologies to track environmental impacts and support data-driven decision-making. Integrating digital tools like GIS, remote sensing, and AI-powered biodiversity monitoring will enhance conservation effectiveness (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Michailidou et al., 2016).

Promote Sustainable Tourism Models: Encourage eco-tourism and cultural tourism initiatives that generate revenue without compromising conservation goals. Sustainable tourism policies should include visitor quotas, waste management strategies and incentives for businesses that adhere to eco-friendly practices (UNWTO, 2011).

Enhance Climate Adaptation Strategies: Develop and implement climate adaptation plans that address the specific vulnerabilities of PAs. This may include habitat restoration projects, biodiversity corridors and strategies for mitigating the effects of extreme weather events on local ecosystems (Tsartas et. al, 2024; Sauter et al., 2013).

By addressing challenges, embracing opportunities, and fostering collaboration, PAs can successfully balance conservation and sustainable tourism. Through adaptive management, strategic investment and inclusive governance, PAs will continue to safeguard their ecological and socio-economic value for future generations (Tsartas et al., 2024; Sauter et al., 2013).

7. References

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The Charterer's Use of the Yacht under the MYBA 2025 Yacht Charter Agreement

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Abstract:
This article examines the charterer's obligations relating to the use of a crewed yacht, understood as a pleasure vessel employed exclusively for recreational and leisure purposes, which is time chartered - neither demise nor bareboat chartered, under the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025 and which is treated as a ship for the purposes of private maritime law, as evidenced by registration under an IMO number. While disputes in yacht chartering are frequently framed in financial or technical terms, practice shows that many conflicts arise from disagreements as to what the charterer is contractually entitled to do with the yacht during the charter period and under what conditions that entitlement may be restricted. In this context, the article addresses three closely connected questions: First, the contractual meaning of "use of the yacht" under the MYBA 2025 standard terms; second, the identification and systematisation of the specific charterer's obligations through which that use is defined and constrained; and third, the extent to which the 2025 revision incorporates public law related conditions - most notably the KYC, AML and sanctions screening, as contractual obligations affecting the practical enjoyment of the yacht.

Methodologically, the article adopts a doctrinal contract-law approach, based on English common law, treating MYBA 2025 as the primary normative reference and using earlier MYBA versions and established charterparty doctrine only by analogy. It argues that MYBA 2025 does not define "use" as an unfettered right of enjoyment, but as a functionally bounded entitlement, mediated through the captain's authority and conditioned by legality, conduct and compliance. In doing so, the article clarifies the internal logic of the MYBA 2025 use-of-yacht framework and contributes to a more coherent understanding of charterer obligations in contemporary crewed yacht chartering. By treating "use" as a legally conditioned entitlement rather than a residual freedom, the article provides a doctrinal framework for understanding why behavioural and compliance breaches under MYBA 2025 can justify restriction or termination even in the absence of physical damage.

Keywords: MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025; charterer's obligations; crewed yacht charter; time charterparty (leisure vessels); captain's authority; onboard conduct and guest governance; contractual compliance conditions; KYC and AML; sanctions clauses; termination of charterparty; yacht; superyacht.

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1. Introduction

This article examines the charterer's obligations concerning the use of a crewed yacht under a time charter governed by the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025. For these purposes, a "crewed yacht" means a pleasure vessel used for recreational and leisure purposes, which qualifies as a ship by virtue of her registration with a flag state, recognition by the International Maritime Organization and the subsequent allocation of an IMO number. Accordingly, the charter arrangement is a time charter, not a demise or bareboat charter. In particular, the research does not refer to the charterer's financial obligations and owner's duties as regards seaworthiness and technical performance. Instead, it is concerned with those provisions in the contracts, which define the charterer's enjoyment of the yacht during the charter period. Passenger transport and carriage functions are expressly excluded from the scope of the analysis. In this confined setting, the concept of "use of the yacht" emerges as a central organising notion for the allocation of rights and obligations between owner and charterer.

1.1 The problem

Yacht charter disputes are frequently categorised in terms of financial performance, technical deficiencies, or the allocation of operational risk. In practice, however, a substantial number of conflicts arise at an earlier and more fundamental level: disagreement as to what the charterer is contractually entitled to do with the yacht during the charter period and under what conditions that entitlement may be restricted, suspended, or ended. Questions concerning itinerary choices, conduct on board, the presence of guests, compliance with the captain's instructions and the lawfulness of proposed activities often become flashpoints precisely because they touch upon the boundaries of the charterer's "use" of the yacht rather than upon the mechanics of payment or performance in a narrow sense. The prominence of such disputes is not accidental. The charter of a crewed yacht is not a simple transfer of possession or operational control, but a complex contractual arrangement in which enjoyment of a high-value asset is mediated through professional command and subject to a dense network of contractual and legal constraints.

MYBA, now officially known as "The Worldwide Yachting Association" (formerly the Mediterranean Yacht Brokers Association) is an important international professional organisation in the leisure vessel industry; established in 1984, it is a self-regulatory body which sets ethical and professional standards for yacht brokerage codified in standards of chartering and management.[4] In this context, the MYBA Charter Agreement 2025 is the leading example of soft law, which provides the standard contractual terms for the international yachting industry as such, helping harmonise charter practices across both sectors on the international level. Although MYBA 2025 is *jus dispositivum*, it acts as a best practice and regarded as soft law and best standard for the industry charter terms, whereas are made by a private professional association and not a legislative body. As regards governing law and dispute resolution, the parties stipulate *lex contractus*, i.e. that the terms and conditions to be construed and enforced under English law and subject to London arbitration (MYBA Clause 23). By standardising complex obligations in the maritime sector, including seaworthiness, protocols in the event of force-majeure and strict "know your customer" (KYC) and "anti-money laundering" (AML) compliance, the agreement creates a predictable legal environment reducing the need for bespoke negotiations with translated professional ethical standards across jurisdictions.

In this context, the use of standard form agreements plays a central role in structuring the short-term relationship between the owner and charterer of high-value assets, such as yachts and among them the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement occupies a dominant position in

[4] MYBA The Worldwide Yachting Association, 'What is MYBA' (MYBA The Worldwide Yachting Association) <https://www.myba-association.com/en/what-is-myba.cfm> accessed 10 December 2025.

international practice. Yet, despite its practical importance, the notion of "use of the yacht" remains conceptually under-analysed. It is not defined in a single provision of the MYBA form, nor is it reducible to a checklist of permitted or prohibited acts. Instead, it emerges indirectly, through a constellation of clauses that regulate programme, conduct, authority and legality.

The 2025 revision of the MYBA standard form sharpens these issues further. By refining conduct-related provisions and introducing an explicit compliance perimeter - most notably through express terms (e.g. KYC) and sanctions clauses - the revised agreement reinforces the conditions under which the charterer's enjoyment of the yacht may lawfully and practically occur. This development invites closer scrutiny of how "use" is constructed contractually and of how the charterer's use-related obligations function within the overall architecture of the MYBA 2025 agreement.

1.2 Research questions

Against this background, the article addresses three interrelated research questions.

(i) What is the contractual meaning of "use of the yacht" under the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025?

(ii) Which specific charterer obligations constitute the MYBA 2025 use-of-yacht regime and how are these obligations structured across the standard form rather than concentrated in a single clause?

(iii) To what extent does the 2025 revision incorporate compliance-related conditions (e.g. the KYC / AML and sanctions screening) as contractual obligations affecting the charterer's liberty to use the yacht; thus, what implications does this have for the practical operation of the agreement?

These questions are deliberately framed narrowly. They are not concerned with the charterer's financial obligations, nor with the technical performance of the yacht as such, but with the contractual delineation of enjoyment and control during the charter period. By focusing on "use" as a legal construct, the article seeks to clarify a recurrent source of dispute that is often addressed in practice on an ad hoc basis, without a coherent doctrinal framework.

1.3 The research gap

While there is a growing body of literature on yacht chartering and on the MYBA standard form more generally, existing analyses tend either to survey charterer's obligations in broad terms or to concentrate on specific issues such as payment mechanics, redelivery, or technical deficiencies. The concept of "use of the yacht" is typically treated descriptively, as a matter of common sense or market expectation, rather than as a structured contractual entitlement defined and constrained by interlocking provisions. Moreover, the MYBA 2025 revision has not yet been examined systematically from the perspective of how it reshapes the charterer's use-related obligations, particularly through the introduction of express compliance mechanisms.

This article seeks to fill that gap by isolating "use of the yacht" as an analytically distinct category of charterer's obligations and by examining how MYBA 2025 gives that category legal form. In doing so, it does not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of all charterer's duties under the agreement, but to offer a focused doctrinal analysis of those obligations that define, condition and police the charterer's enjoyment of the yacht.

1.4 Scope, terminology and methodological note

The analysis that follows adopts a doctrinal contract-law approach, taking the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025 as its primary normative reference. For the purposes of this article, the term "use of the yacht" is employed in a functional and limited sense, referring to the charterer's enjoyment and programme of the yacht during the charter period as regulated by the MYBA standard terms. It does not extend to the charterer's financial or payment-related

obligations, which are governed by a distinct contractual logic and fall outside the scope of the present study.

An earlier version of the MYBA agreement (i.e. MYBA 2017), as well as selected charterparty doctrine, are used sporadically, comparatively and by analogy, to clarify the structure and function of the 2025 form. International carriage of goods and passenger conventions are naturally excluded as governing regimes and are referred to only insofar as they reflect background common-law reasoning on contractual performance and risk allocation. On this basis, the article proceeds to examine the background literature and contractual framework before turning to a detailed analysis of the MYBA 2025 use-of-yacht regime.

2. Background - Literature Review

The literature relevant to the charterer's use of the yacht may be divided between general charterparty doctrine, which supplies the analytical tools, and yacht-specific scholarship, which addresses the distinctive structure of crewed leisure chartering.

Also, although the MYBA form may not be considered as "literature" in the academic sense, it is placed at the beginning of our Review chapter as it is our main research subject and is the principal normative text against which both scholarship and disputes are organised. For Research Questions (i) - (ii), the important thing to observe is that MYBA does not really define "use" in a single, abstract clause, but it creates "use" by a network of provisions that regulates lawfulness, conduct, guest behaviour, captain's authority, safety and now compliance screening.

Clause 13 ("Use of the Vessel") is the most explicit "use" module in the contract. It includes obligations for the charterer (and guests) to comply with local laws; prohibition on bringing pets without owner consent; prohibition of nuisance/disrepute; prohibition of commercial photo/film shoots without permission; respect obligations towards crew (and the vessel); restrictions on smoking; and restrictions on diving for rendezvous diving unless otherwise agreed. It then operates the enforcement by enshrining a path of warning - and - escalation (captain warns; if continued, escalation occurs and owner may terminate under Clause 7) and separately, as being seriously enough, certain categories (offences that result in detention/seizure, zero tolerance physical/sexual assault, illegal drugs, weapons) can justify a termination without warning and without refund. This makes up the contractual core of what "use" means in MYBA 2025: "use" is permitted enjoyment, with limits of legality, dignity, safety and reputational controls and termination calibrated to seriousness.

Clause 7 (captain's authority) complements Clause 13 by affirming that the captain must comply with reasonable charterer orders in relation to management/operation/movement but is not required to comply with orders which would be unsafe, hinder redelivery or lead to a breach of Clause 13 (and related obligations).[5] The clause also affirms the captain's rights

[5] Clause 7 reads: "CAPTAIN'S AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES: a. The OWNER shall ensure that the Captain shows the CHARTERER the same attention as if the CHARTERER were the OWNER. The Captain shall comply with all reasonable orders given to him by the CHARTERER regarding the management, operation and movement of the Vessel, wind, weather and other circumstances permitting. The Captain shall not, however, be bound to comply with any order which might, in the reasonable opinion of the Captain, result in the Vessel moving to any port or place that is not safe and proper, or might result in the CHARTERER failing to re-deliver the Vessel upon the expiration of the Charter Period, or would, in the reasonable opinion of the Captain, cause a breach of Clause 13 and/or any other clause of this Agreement. Further, without prejudice to any other remedy of the OWNER, if in the reasonable opinion of the Captain, the CHARTERER or any of his Guests fail to observe any of the provisions in Clause 13 and if such failure continues after the Captain has given a due and specific warning to the CHARTERER and Broker in writing in respect of the same, the Captain shall inform the OWNER, the Broker and the Stakeholder and the OWNER may terminate the Charter forthwith or instruct the Captain to return the Vessel to the Place of Re-Delivery and upon such return the Charter Period shall be terminated. The CHARTERER and his Guests shall disembark, the CHARTERER having settled all outstanding expenses with the Captain beforehand and the CHARTERER shall not be entitled to any refund of the Charter

to limit the access of water sport activities where guests are unsafe, irresponsible, drunk, or putting others in danger. This is important because it demonstrates that "use" is not a free-standing charterer liberty: It is filtered through professional command and safety judgement, and this becomes part of the legal architecture of permissible enjoyment.

Furthermore, Clause 26 (KYC) and Clause 29 (sanctions) are the new compliance clauses that are most directly pertinent to Research Question (iii). Clause 26 imposes mutual documentary duties (identity, corporate status, residence and - critically for the charterer - sources of wealth and funds) and expressly allows the broker/stakeholder to refuse to receive/transfer funds from the client until satisfaction of KYC and if this is not possible and replacement of the stakeholder is not agreed within seven working days of the agreement is to be cancelled. Clause 29 understands sanctions compliance as a continuous condition, with warranties extended to guests and unilateral termination allowed to non-breaching parties, with the consequences of termination channelled through the termination machinery already established in the form. Together, these clauses confirm that in MYBA 2025 "use" is not only being regulated onboard, but that it can, from upstream, be blocked at the level of documentation and banking permissibility and sanctions status.

Finally, Clause 30 (liability for transfer delays due to AML procedures) strengthens the same perimeter by exempting the stakeholder/broker from liability for delays or failures to transfer amounts, due to the compliance of banks with AML/CTF. Doctrinally, this tends to support the argument that MYBA 2025 internalises regulatory friction as an expected feature of the charter bargain and not as an external abnormality.

2.1 Review of general charterparty doctrines on the "use" of the vessel

Within this subsection, the literature under discussion is taken mainly from the general charterparty doctrine and added to it is a contribution from the scholarship on carriage of goods and passengers developed under the aegis of English law. These sources are not meant as regulatory regimes for the chartering of yachts; nor are international carriage conventions or passenger transport rules imported into the analysis. Rather, they are used by analogy only and for structural guidance only, to the extent that they put in words the contractual logic of the time charterparty as a legal instrument for regulating the use or employment of a vessel. The methodological premise adopted herein is the fact that there is no conceptual or doctrinal conflict in borrowing from time charterparty principles to shed light on the charterer's use of a crewed yacht under the MYBA form. Both arrangements are characterised by the absence of any transfer of possession, retention of navigational command by the owner through the master and the allocation to the charterer of a contractually delimited entitlement to enjoyment or employment of the vessel. The analogy is thus functional and not normative: it clarifies the English law's understanding of "use" as a category of contract, without exercising the carriage regimes beyond their appropriate domain. Taken together, this first body of literature sets out a consistent doctrinal background where "use of the vessel" is viewed as a non-possessory, contractually circumscribed entitlement, subject to legality, safety and compliance constraints and conceptually distinct from both financial obligations and technical performance. It is against this background understanding - which is adopted strictly by analogy and with due methodological restraint - that the subsequent analysis of charterer's use-related obligations under the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025 is informed.

Fee. b. With particular regard to the use of watersports equipment, the Captain shall have the authority to exclude the CHARTERER or any or all of his Guests from the use of any particular watersports equipment if they are unsafe, or behaving in an irresponsible manner, or are under the influence of alcohol, or are failing to show due concern for other persons or property when operating this equipment. c. Failure or delay to enforce any of the provisions of this Agreement, shall not in any manner be construed to be a waiver of any of the OWNER and/or the Captain's rights".

Within this framework, classical British authorities regard the concept of "use" or "employment" as central to the time charterparty. Scrutton et al. point out that the defining characteristic of a time charter is the supply of services instead of the loss of the vessel, with possession and navigation remaining with the owner and the master, while the charterer gains a qualified right to arrange for the employment of the vessel within the contractual and legal parameters (Scrutton et al, 2020, paras 1-002,16-001). The charterer's "use" is therefore structurally non-possessory and inherently conditional in nature, being influenced by express terms and by implied limitations due to safety, legality and seamanship.

John Furness Wilson places this entitlement in the wider law of contractual performance and emphasises that charterer directions must be lawful and compatible with the contract. Thus, supervening illegality or regulatory intervention may suspend or restrict performance without necessarily amounting to breach (Wilson, 2010, pp. 233-237). Although this was developed in the context of commercial carriage, the analysis gives a general common law framework for understanding how external legal constraints may operate as constraint on contractual enjoyment rather than as failure of performance. Girvin formulates the same distinction by emphasising the separation in English law between the possibility of the existence of contractual obligations and the possibility of their performance, especially in cases where illegality, sanctions or compliance requirements come into play (Girvin, 2011, paras 10.18-10.26). This distinction is of methodological significance for yacht chartering, where in many disputes it is not non-performance as such that is at issue, but the refusal to allow certain forms of use.

Evi Plomaritou, in her discussion of charterer's obligations, she highlights the need to distinguish charterer's rights of use under a time charter from possession and management of the goods and for use misuse or employment of the goods that is not permissible under the charter to cause some form of contractual consequence even if a loss cannot be quantified (Plomaritou, 2014, pp. 309-312). Together with Emmanouil Nikolaidis she further shows that many of the chartering risks crystallise at the level of conduct and operational behaviour and not of payment or hire, which gives further relevance to "use" as analytically distinct (Plomaritou & Nikolaidis, 2016, pp. 266-269). This position is strengthened in Plomaritou's monographic treatment of chartering (Navlosis – Ναυλώσεις) with Anthony Papadopoulos and Konstantinos Giziakis, where "use" is offered as an entitlement legally mediated by the allocation of contractual authority and risk, not as a factual freedom of exploitation (Plomaritou, Papadopoulos & Giziakis, 2010, pp. 145-"150). Comparative Greek scholarship by Lia Athanasiou, as well as by Ioannis Rokas and George Theocharidis goes even further in supporting this analytical separation of use, possession and control, warning against conflation of types of charter and emphasising that the time charter structures consistently maintained owner control while granting only somewhat limited rights of use (Athanasiou, 2020, pp. 401-405; Rokas and Theocharidis, 2021, pp. 287-291).

Although this research expressly excludes passenger carriage regimes and does not analyse the Athens Convention or related instruments as such, reference to Paul Todd's work on the Carriage of Passengers by Sea remains methodologically instructive in one limited but important respect - the articulation of the human element of maritime use and the normative expectations attached to it. Todd highlights that passenger carriage by sea is no longer exhausted by the physical transportation of persons, but involves a complex relationship of care, accommodation and controlled hospitality, between the law of transport and the functional organisation of life on board a vessel (Todd 2013, pp. 6-8). Even where the legal regime ultimately draws a distinction between "marine risks" and "hotel risks," Todd recognises that the presence of persons on board inevitably makes the vessel more than an instrument of navigation, but a regulated human environment, in which the use, behaviour and control of the vessel will take on normative significance (Todd 2013, pp. 27-30). This is an insight which is transferable, by analogy, to crewed yacht chartering under a time charter

structure. While the charterer under the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025 is neither a "passenger" in the technical sense nor one of the beneficiaries of passenger protection conventions, the use of the yacht is, nevertheless, inseparable from organized human presence, interaction with crew and enjoyment of services going beyond mere navigation. Todd's analysis helps to explain why the charterer's obligations in respect of use cannot be reduced to the abstract employment of the vessel but need to be assessed in the light of conduct, comportment and interference with the operational and social order of the vessel. Accordingly, Todd's work is not relied upon as substantive passenger liability rules remain outside the scope of this article, but rather for its conceptual contribution in terms of understanding how maritime law frames the presence of persons on board as a legally relevant mode of use, even where the governing contract is neither a contract of carriage nor a passenger ticket (Todd 2013, pp. 30-33). This view is consistent with the methodological position taken in this article, that principles developed in wider carriage situations may, without any doctrinal conflict, serve in the interpretation of the charterer's obligations relating to the employment of a crewed yacht.

2.2 Review of sector specific review on use of vessel

The following sources constitute sector-specific materials on the yacht chartering industry. Each reference addresses the three research questions under examination. This section maintains a descriptive-analytical position, The contribution each source furnishes and articulates the significance of that contribution to the questions at hand, while reserving comprehensive doctrinal evaluation for the subsequent Analysis chapter (*infra*).

At the outset, the European Boating Association's (EBA) Yacht Chartering Guide (2011) provided for a user-oriented and safety-driven approach to yacht chartering; nevertheless, it is still relevant to the present inquiry to the extent that it mirrors how "use" is operationalised in practice in terms of expectations placed on the charterer and the charterer's party. Although the guide was not drafted in the form of a legal commentary, it always considered that the charterer's enjoyment of the yacht is a conditional liberty which is framed in accordance with rules governing navigation, local regulations, safety standards and acceptable behaviour on board. The guide reiterates several times that the charterer's choices regarding itineraries, the vessel handling (in bareboat contexts) and the behaviour of the crew and guests are subject to external legal constraints, port-state controls and the authority of maritime officials and so works to reinforce the conception that "use" is not an unfettered factual activity but rather a regulated mode by which people interact with a vessel operating in a dense environment of norms. For the purposes of this article, the EBA guide is instructive, not as a source of contractual doctrine, but as evidence of an industry wide understanding of charterer enjoyment is inseparable from compliance, safety consciousness and responsible conduct - an understanding that MYBA 2025 translates into explicit contractual obligations and enforcement mechanisms.

Filippo Lorenzon and Richard Coles in their seminal - first of its kind worldwide - monograph on the "Law of Yachts and Yachting" (2nd edition 2018) present a conceptual underpinning to the concept of "use" in crewed-yacht chartering. Rather than working out the charter as a simple transfer of possession or a pragmatic exercise of nautical command, they develop the charter as a structured kind of recreational enjoyment mediated through professional command and service. They characterise the yacht charter as a contract whereby the owner allows the charterer and the charterer's party the "use of the vessel for recreational purposes" for an agreed time. At the same time, they do emphasise that the mainstream - shipping analogue of the yacht charter (the time charterparty) serves only as a starting point. The superyacht is also in the eyes of her owners more a "hotel service" provided by crew. This framing is decisive for Research Question (i): it suggests that "use" is not just "movement" or "employment", but a composite entitlement, which can be described as a

sequence: First a schedule, then the enjoyment, ultimately an on-board experience. These main elements run through the scope of the charter *per se* and are inevitably indicative of the presumed intention of the parties. In the same context, the particulars of the use are inevitably going to be expressed through provisions for conduct, safety and authority rather than through a single definition clause (Lorenzon & Coles (2018) [8-001]). As regards the Research Question (ii), their account of standard-form discipline is no less salient: They account for why the relative rigidity and the low amendment-rate of the MYBA form make the contract itself, along with the practice of inserting "Special Conditions", the primary site where "use" is structured and policed (Lorenzon & Coles (2018) [8-002]- [8-004]). Finally, although outside of the scope of our article, their discussion of the "use and enjoyment rule" illustrates, at least at a regulatory rather than a contractual level, the notion that "use" is a legally operative concept with jurisdictionally contingent consequences, especially in Mediterranean practice. They identify Italy's distinctive approach as a practical example of how Member-State discretion can reconstruct the consequences that attach to "use" without changing the charter bargain of private law (Lorenzon & Coles (2018) [3-057]-[3-061]). In our article, that material will only be mentioned in passing, as a reminder that "use" has shadows of external law, even when the contractual analysis is limited to MYBA 2025 and English law.

Gianfranco Benelli (2022), in his 2022 seminal work "Il contratto di noleggio di unità da diporto" (The Chartering Contract of Recreational Vessels) - only the second monograph of its kind worldwide - classifies leisure boat chartering as a contract with distinct legal characteristics: The contract's foundation, Benelli argues, is not passenger carriage or transport obligations, but rather the legally conditioned enjoyment of a recreational asset within a defined risk framework. The charterer's concept of "use" is, therefore, built up on the premise of standard clauses and market formularies, as purpose bound and non-commercial. Accordingly, the charterer undertakes to employ the yacht for a strictly and solely recreational use (solo per una finalita diportistica (uso turistico - ricreativo) expressly without profit (senza alcuna finalita di lucro) and only within the agreed geographical limitations and between safe ports or anchorages (Benelli 2022, p.111). Through this cluster of formulations is where Benelli provides the doctrinal bridge to the methodological exclusion of carriage of goods and/or passenger regimes; hence, the stipulated use of the vessel, by the charterer, can be summarised as follows: "Charterer is not allowed the performance of activities relating to carriage of passengers and goods and a commercial-type activity" (non è consentito il trasporto di passeggeri e di merci (a titolo oneroso) (ne esercitare attività commerciali). That said, the "use" does not refer only to "what the charterer does onboard" but represents a contractual limit between an operation for leisure and a business transport operation or relevant commercial purposes (ibid). Benelli demonstrates that this boundary is operationalised by means of on-board governance and allocation of behavioural risk: Thus, the charterer must respect capacity limits (rispettare il numero massimo di ospiti a bordo), take on responsibility for the supervision of underaged persons (responsabilità per la vigilanza sugli eventuali minori) and only embark animals with the consent of the owner (animali...con il consenso espresso del noleggiatore); all of which makes "use" a structured entitlement conditioned by the way the charterer organises persons and behaves, rather than the intention to accomplish voyages to particular destinations (Benelli 2022 p. 111). Benelli then connects these conduct constraints to a clear indemnity architecture, like MYBA disputes that are recognised as "use disputes". In this context, the charterer promises to compensate out for damages occasioned by breach during use and for damage occasioned by the fault (malice, negligence, incl. omission) of the charterer or his guests (condotte dolose o colose; atto intenzionale o negligenza o omissione), protecting the owner from liability for illegality occurring inside the ship (Benelli 2022, p.111). In that respect Benelli's illustrative list is particularly valuable as it shows the way legality is treated as a use-condition and not as an external criminal law reflexion: Thus, any unlawful on board activity, such smuggling, illicit

activities, narcotics, immigration violations etc (e.g. contrabbando, detenzione di sostanze stupefacenti, armi ed esplosivi, inquinamento and favoreggiamento dell'immigrazione clandestina) emerges as strict breach contractual justification for termination. Benelli, in his monograph, covers several events, such as the occasional occurrence of duties owed by the charterer vis-à-vis his guests (i.e. undertakings to ensure fitness of guests for the purpose of the voyage: garantire la loro idonezza fisica), which is of analytic utility for the "hospitality element" of the legal nature of the yacht charterparty. On the one hand, his analysis confirms that the "use" of the yacht is mediated through a hosting people, not only via navigation (Benelli 2022, p.111). Then, Benelli immediately explains why it appears: it aligns with the charterer's position as a kind of informal carrier of the guests- what he calls a friendly/courtesy carrier (vettore "amichevole"; guests are "passeggeri a titolo amichevole o di cortesia"). In other words, the charterer is, functionally, an organiser and the host who invites people on board. Our view is that Benelli does not merely report the clause. He interprets it and argues it would be interesting to investigate its meaning (Sarebbe interessante indagare sul significato dell'obbligo di garanzia dell' idoneità fisica) and in this regard he offers a plausible explanation: it "probably" reveals an indemnity by the charterer towards the owner, in case -for instance- a guest may be unable to carry on with the cruise, because of health issues or physical impairments (probabilmente lascia intravvedere una sorta di manleva… per l'eventuale incapacità dell'ospite ad affrontare la navigazione per problemi di salute o menomazioni fisiche). We shall discuss this further at the Analysis Chapter (*infra*). As regards the KYC/AML, Benelli does not discuss an express *ex ante* contractual provision that exists within the modern MYBA 2025, but his contribution is in making visible the underlying structure in private law necessary for making conceptually intelligible such possibilities - namely, that "use" is a legally conditioned entitlement, delimited from purpose, safety, legality and it is enforced through indemnity and responsibility for guest conduct. Finally, Benelli's reinforces the idea the recreational period of enjoyment may be realised not only through navigation - *navigazione* but by the vessel as platform for onboard life and services "anche…da fermo". This dual modality of enjoyment, which is intrinsic to leisure yachting, disrupts the traditional analytical model that equates contractual performance at sea with carriage or transport. Where enjoyment is not exhausted by movement between ports but includes residence, hospitality and leisure activities on board, the attempt to force yacht chartering into carriage categories necessarily distorts its legal nature. (Benelli 2022 pp. 125-126).

The Charter Contracts for Yacht Captains guide, prepared by Martin Penny and Francesca Conn for Hill Dickinson and YPI Crew (2023), forms one of the most practically good analysis of the operation of the MYBA charter from an operational level standpoint, especially through the lens of authority and responsibility of the captain. While written more for captains and crew than for practitioners, the guide is a useful source of information on how the charterer's "use of the yacht" is understood and handled in day-to-day practice. It emphasises that the captain has a duty, under contract, to accept the reasonable orders of the charterer in the management, operation and movements of the yacht, whilst at the same time remaining responsible for overriding safety, legal and crew and vessel protection considerations. The guide naturally focuses on the charterers' use of Clause 13 of the MYBA form, setting out the use charterers make of behavioural limits, zero tolerance policies (around the use of drugs, weapons and harassment) and escalation mechanisms which may lead to termination. Also, the guide sees these constraints not as exceptional sanctions but as integral features of the charter relationship, reflecting professional consensus that "use" under a crewed yacht charter is continuously mediated by command authority, crew welfare, confidentiality and reputational risk. In this respect, the authors reinforce the central premise of this article: that the charterer's use of the yacht is a legally conditioned entitlement, set in a framework of authority and compliance rather than a free-standing right of enjoyment.

Francesca Conn (2025a) gives a small practitioner mapping of what the market itself sees as "pressure points" in yacht charter disputes: cancellations/nonpayment, state of yacht, standard of crew and service and - importantly - on board conduct: precisely the subject matter on which "use" becomes contentious rather than mechanical. Against that background, the key MYBA 2025 changes identified in this piece to most immediately impact Research Question (iii) are as follows: (1) explicit inclusion of KYC requirements and mutual exchange of required documentation; and (2) an expanded "Sanctioned Party" concept and mutual warranty extending to charterer guests; plus (3) charterer rights when the owner invokes force majeure due to breakdown/disablement; and (4) entire agreement clause excluding prior broker communications. The analysis value here is not doctrinal impositions in depth, but an acknowledgement about the industry: MYBA 2025 responds to "increased regulatory scrutiny" (AML and sanctions) by shifting compliance from the background expectation to an express contractual perimeter. That changes, in turn, the architecture of "use": the charterer's enjoyment is now conditional on the informational transparency and screening, not just on behaviour once on board (Conn 2025a). Likewise, Conn (2025b) develops the same theme with more normative clarity: she considers the 2025 terms mainly as improvements to the drafting but notes a few additions that make a tangible change of recalibration of the charterer's "use" perimeter. First, she notes the contractual recognition of sexual harassment onboard as a zero-tolerance incident leading to an owner's immediate right to terminate - this is quintessentially a "use" issue as it turns some forms of conduct into a charter ending incident rather than a mere breach managed through warnings. Second, she elucidates why KYC and sanctions clauses are not ornamental: due to the stakeholder's holding of the charter fee and its ability to transfer funds, the stakeholder needs to have complete KYC documentation for both parties; and due to the strict enforcement and increased policing of sanctions compliance, the MYBA form now includes warranties reaching the charterer's guests, whilst also warning of "straw man" scenarios where a principal charterer contracts for the ultimate benefit of a sanctioned guest. This analysis is to be directly usable in our literature review for motivation in Research Question (iii): which is that the 2025 revision does not merely add compliance language, it re-engineers the under what circumstances the charterer may lawfully enjoy the yacht; and it equips non-breaching parties with unilateral termination levers when those circumstances fail (Conn (2025b).

What emerges from the analysis clause is that the legal meaning of "use" is never exhausted by itinerary choice or physical enjoyment of the vessel; it is shaped at least as much by the governance of onboard conduct, the management of guests, as well as the preservation of safety, legality and reputational integrity. The literature therefore points to a structural feature of the MYBA charter relationship that has received limited systematic attention: use operates as a nodal concept, connecting enjoyment, authority and compliance, rather than as a residual notion ancillary to payment or technical performance. It is this structural role of "use" within the MYBA 2025 agreement that the following analysis seeks to unpack at clause level.

3. Analysis

For the purposes of analysis, the term "use" is considered as a right that encompasses both the right of enjoyment of the yacht according to the agreed leisure activities and the obligations that make such enjoyment possible in accordance with the law and viable performance of the charter. The analysis is done in four steps: Firstly, it specifies the conceptual frame of "use" as a special category of contract, which must distinguish it from plain financial and technical obligations. It then examines the distribution of obligations relating to discretion and the constraints imposed by professional command. Subsequently, the chapter focuses on the behavioural and social aspects of use including the management of guests and on-board behaviour before focusing on the role of legality and compliance as determining factors for the continued enjoyment under MYBA 2025. The chapter concludes with an examination of

the contractual consequences of breaches of use-related obligations, with a special focus on restrictions and termination.3.1 Preliminary analytical framing: “use” as contractual category

3.1 The use as a contractual concept

To this analysis, use of the yacht by the charterer is treated as a specialty area of contracts, analytically separable from the financial duties in respect of the charterer to the yacht and from the obligations of the owner in respect of seaworthiness and technical performance of the yacht. This separation is not merely expositive. It reflects the structure of MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025, which governs the enjoyment of the yacht using a dispersed set of provisions rather than one defining clause. The agreement does not give the charterer the right of general control or possession over the yacht but provides the charterer with an entitlement in time to benefit from the use of her, in accordance with an agreed leisure programme. In essence, the programme is subject to a series of conditions setting the parameters of how this entitlement may lawfully and practically be exercised.

“Use” is therefore not synonymous with navigation, movement, or operation control of the vessel; nor can it be reduced to the physical occupation of the vessel *per se*. In fact, under a crewed yacht charter, enjoyment is mediated through professional command and a continuously manned ship to deliver services associated with life on board. This is the essence of the contractual obligation of the owner. Against this promise, the exercise of a charterer’s entitlement is in this context and is throughout conditioned by safety considerations, ship captain’s authority and compliance with law. For both parties, the contractual meaning of “use” must accordingly be so derived from the way MYBA assigns discretion, responsibility and authority throughout the duration of the charter.

With reference to this approach to “use” that has been functional, MYBA defines enjoyment in an indirect way: Rather than setting out what might be permissible for the charterer in abstract terms, the agreement sets out permissible use by reference to programme limits, behavioural standards and legality thresholds. The freedom of the charterer in deciding the itinerary and activities is balanced against express obligations relating to its behaviour on board, respect for members of the crew and using the vessel and compliance with safety and legal requirements. In this sense, “use” is a composite construct, built up by interlocking clauses that together define with considerable precision the scope and limits of enjoyment. Thus, the concept of “use” used as a class of contracts serves two analytical purposes:

First, it enables the present chapter to frame a coherent subset of charterer’s obligations that are -admittedly- presented in a fragmented manner, despite their common function in shaping enjoyment. Second, it introduces explicit conditions relating to compliance, the violation of which entitles the owner to either anticipatory repudiation or unilaterally terminate the charter, depending on the clause. Hence, MYBA 2025 makes it more apparent that the charterer’s use of the yacht is not a residual liberty but a lawfully conditioned entitlement.

Against this background, the following sections explore how MYBA 2025 articulates the use of the yacht by the charterer through the exercise of programme discretion and command authority, behavioural and social governance on board and the fusion of legality and compliance as conditions for the suspension of pleasure.

3.2 Operational use: itinerary discretion, cruising limitations and the command of the captain

The MYBA 2025 form builds upon the charterer’s operational “use” of the yacht based on a calibrated division of functions: the charterer is the driving force behind the leisure programme, while the captain maintains professional command as the legal and practical mechanism by which programme choices are translated into navigation, movement and onboard operations. This is stated in the language of service and discretion of the contract and

not in the language of possession. The captain is to treat the charterer "as if" the charterer were the owner and must comply with "all reasonable orders" as regards "the management, operation and movement of the Vessel", subject to the wind, weather and other circumstances as they are (see more about captain's command, *infra* 3.3). Thus, charterer's liberty is therefore real, nonetheless it is not absolute or self-executing but exercised through the captain's judgement and within defined operational parameters, as they are presented below:

The first set of parameters is geographical and regulatory ones. Clause 4 imposes on the charterer the duty to limit cruising "to regions in the Cruising Area in which the Vessel is legally permitted to cruise". This is not merely a limitation: It works as a test of legality which ensures "use" is not interpreted as preference: the yacht can only be operrated where she is permitted by law, which in practice means importing flag state restrictions, local navigation rules and port entry limits. Alongside geography, Clause 4 also works to impose a temporal discipline by providing that the charterer only has permission to impose time under way during an average of six hours per day unless the captain at his sole discretion consents to have time under way for a longer period. The operational significance is inescapable: MYBA is an understanding of a crewed yacht charter as a leisure-platform use, where excessive passage-making is presumptively at variance with the contractual balance (crew rest, guest enjoyment etc).

The second and more doctrinally decisive set of parameters is found again in Clause 7. MYBA 2025 retains the charterer's right to give "reasonable orders" but then goes on to define express categories of orders with which the captain is not bound to follow, where (in the captain's reasonable opinion) compliance with that order would (i) take the vessel to an unsafe or improper port or place, (ii) place the vessel at risk of the charterer failing to re-deliver upon expiry or (iii) result in breach of Clause 13 and/or any other clause of the agreement. This is the internal constitutional rule of the contract as far as programme control is concerned. It does not just allow the captain to go against the wishes of the charterer, it requires the captain to do so when safety, contractual performance (redelivery) or legality/conduct constraints would otherwise be compromised. Importantly, the test is not objective in the strict evidential sense but grounded in the captain's "reasonable opinion", which is close to the traditional concept of Master's discretion.

Clause 7 (captain's authority and responsibilities) aligns with the concepts of English maritime common law principles as well as the corpus of the international maritime conventions, where the Master of a ship is entitled to make independent judgment residing in the best interests of all sea life. This privilege is appropriately codified in the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), in which the Master is given such prerogative that he may exercise an overriding authority in the face of any vessel owner, charterer or land-based management agency, to do anything to protect human life, the vessel or the marine environment. Such authority, for instance, includes the legal right to deviate to an agreed voyage plan or contractual duty in search of a port of refuge or to avoid imminent peril. The Master therefore acquires a role that goes beyond being just an employee; the Master becomes a fiduciary of law, the security of the voyage being the paramount concern that must take precedence over any commercial or personal interest.

Clause 7 makes another connection between operational authority and remedies. Where the captain reasonably considers that the charterer or guests are breaking Clause 13 and the infringement continues, after a due and specific written warning to the charterer and broker, the captain has to notify the owner, broker and stakeholder. The owner may then terminate forth and immediately or order the captain to return the vessel to the place of re-delivery, terminating the charter on delivery back without refund of charter fee. This remedial path is analytically central: it reveals that within MYBA, the charterer's "use" is conditional not only *ex ante* (through cruising area and time under way limits) but continuously (through conduct and legality) and that the captain's authority is the mechanism by which those

conditions are in real time enforced. The 2025 form also creates the operational governance about incidents, which requires the captain to inform broker and stakeholder of significant incidents.

3.3 Behavioural and social use: guests, conduct and on-board governance

Where Clause 4 and Clause 7 determine how far and under whose authority the yacht may be deployed, Clauses 5 and 13 determine how the yacht may be lived in. In MYBA 2025, "use" extends beyond mere consumption of leisure services. It constitutes a contractual entitlement subject to specific conditions: The charterer bears responsibility for the composition and conduct of the charter party, as well as for any legal and reputational consequences arising from onboard activities. Guest management obligations are therefore integral to the right of use itself - not merely advisory guidelines or matters of etiquette. In particular:

First, the charterer's use is limited in number and institutionally. Clause 5 limits the number of persons on board to not exceed the maximum sleeping or cruising capacity, subject only to the limited discretion of the captain to accept those additional visitors while in securely moored or anchored condition and as allowed by the port state and flag state rules. This is a definitional constraint: "use" cannot be used by enlarging the party of the charterer beyond the certified seaworthiness of the vessel. Clause 5 then ascribes responsibility for underaged persons directly to the charterer: if children are taken on board, the charterer is "fully responsible for their conduct and entertainment" and there is no one in the crew responsible for either. The point is not just to be convenient for supervision reason but is the contractual sharing of risk resulting from the presence of minors in an environment in which the primary function of the crew is not to protect but rather to navigate and service the vehicle. The same clause contains a warranty that, while frequently overlooked in practice, is doctrinally central to the concept of "use": Upon execution of the agreement, the charterer warrants that all members of the charterer's party are medically fit for the intended voyage and undertakes to ensure that the party possesses all necessary visas and vaccinations. From a contractual perspective, this warranty does not convert the arrangement into one of passenger carriage. Rather, it characterises the composition and readiness of the charterer's party as an element of the charterer's own contractual performance, thereby establishing these matters as conditions precedent to the uninterrupted enjoyment of the vessel.

Secondly, Clause 13 is expressly called "Use of the Vessel" and is the behavioural constitution of the agreement. It starts with a general duty of legality, that the charterer should comply and ensure their guests to also comply with the laws and regulations of any country into whose waters the vessel enters. It then sets out specific flashpoints of recurring difficulty in yacht charter disputes. For instance, it bans pets without permission from the owner in writing; it mandates ensuring that behaviour does not cause nuisance or bring the vessel into disrepute; it bans commercial photo or film shoots without permission in writing. The doctrinal significance is that "use" is characterised by negative delimitations (what must not be done) and by standards ("nuisance", "disrepute") that deliberately catch context sensitive conduct which cannot be exhaustively listed but is nevertheless contractually obliged. In particular:

The most notable upgrade in MYBA 2025 is its clear articulation of constraints based on dignity. Clause 13 requires the charterer and passengers to give the crew and the vessel "due respect" and prohibits harassment, "sexual or otherwise", by charterer or guests. This is not commenting on morality; it is a hard contractual limit to the charterer's enjoyment. The contractual technique is to make occupational and welfare a part of the framework of "use", which will convert what in the past may have been handled informally (through captaincy and market norms) into something that can be enforced and which could be the basis of contractual remedies. The same logic is evident in the clause's regulation of smoking

(restricted to designated exterior areas unless otherwise agreed) and restriction of diving to rendez-vous diving unless otherwise set out under special conditions.

Thirdly, MYBA 2025 operationalises behavioural control by means of the captain's enforcement role. As it is also analysed supra (3.2), Clause 13 obliges the captain to immediately draw the charterer's attention to the infringements and, if the behaviour continues, to notify the owner or stakeholder, hence allowing to terminate under Clause 7. In parallel with this, Clause 7 explicitly gives the captain the right to exclude the charterer or any guests from using water sports equipment (jet ski, water ski, surfs etc), if they are unsafe, irresponsible, under the influence of alcohol or failing to show due concern for persons or property. These provisions show that "use" is not only the right to access amenities but also the contractual acceptability to consume them in a fashion in which they are consumed, with the captain being the immediate compliance point of agreement.

Finally, Clause 13 contains two provisions that were designed to engender especially severe consequences and therefore define the outer limit of permissible use. Where an offence against the local laws, leading to crew detention or fines, or the detention, arrest, seizure or fining of the vessel, the charterer shall indemnify the owner for loss, damage and expense incurred. Moreover, MYBA 2025 dictate a "zero-tolerance" policy against physical or sexual assault and possession or use of illegal drugs or weapons (including firearms) and infringement is considered reason for termination without refund or recourse. MYBA 2025 then makes the hierarchy explicit: non-compliance with Clause 13 justifies termination in accordance with Clause 7; breach of the obligations corresponding with the offence/ indemnity and zero tolerance provisions is considered too serious to warrant anything less than immediate termination without the warning mechanism otherwise contemplated. In doctrinal terms, the agreement thus creates "use" as a ranked regime: Most infringements are addressed by warning and escalation; certain behaviours are detrimental to the contractual balance and thus addressed by immediate termination of contract.

This behavioural governance prepares the ground for the compliance mechanisms examined below, in which the same logic of conditional enjoyment is extended from onboard conduct to identity, funds, and sanctions exposure.

3.4 Legality and compliance as conditions of use: Public law considerations

The analysis - so far - provided an understanding of how MYBA 2025 incorporates legality in the ordinary meaning of use through the general duty to comply with local laws in Clause 13. The 2025 form, however, goes even further by introducing a distinct "compliance perimeter", which does not simply safeguard conduct *ex post*, but acts *ex ante* and continuing condition of contractual performance. While the agreement continues to be a private standard form, it internalises public law regulations, especially those relating to financial compliance and sanctions enforcement, by incorporating them into contractual conditions that have an impact on whether the charter can materialise and/or whether enjoyment may lawfully continue. In particular:

The most direct expression is the introduction of Clause 26 (Know Your Client).[6] It requires the owner and the charterer to provide banks and relevant authorities with

[6] Clause 26 reads: "KNOW YOUR CLIENT: The OWNER and the CHARTERER shall provide to the other Parties such recent documentary and other evidence as the Parties and/or their banks and/or relevant fiscal or other authorities may reasonably require to establish the OWNER or CHARTERERS identity, corporate status, nationality, place of domicile and residence, good standing, and in respect of the CHARTERER sources of wealth and funds and (in the case of an incorporated entity) the equivalent information for its shareholders, officers and ultimate beneficial owner. KYC Documents shall be provided promptly upon request. In the case of CHARTERER'S KYC Documents, this shall include any other entity or person remitting any funds payable by the CHARTERER. It is agreed by the Parties that the Broker and/or Stakeholder shall not be obliged to receive funds from the CHARTERER and/or make any payment to the OWNER until receipt and approval of the KYC Documents of such Party and provided such receipt and/or payment is permitted by the authorities/bodies

documentary evidence (as may reasonably be required by the parties), to establish identity, corporate status, nationality, domicile and good standing. Notably, in the case of the charterer, it is further extended to sources of wealth and funds; in the case of incorporated entities, to disclose equivalent information about the shareholders and officers and ultimate beneficial owner. The clause is also extended to any other entity or person remitting funds payable by the charterer. The drafting is not rhetorical but functional: In operational terms, MYBA 2025 sees KYC and AML sanctions checks as a pragmatic "ahead full" for the charter to proceed. The charter is subject to the receipt and the transfer of the money being received and transferred through the broker/stakeholder even when the charterer and the owner have signed the agreement. Clauses 26-27 are indicative of that fact, as they would enable the broker/stakeholder to put the proceedings on hold: they do not need to receive money or pay it before they are presented with the necessary KYC documents and approved. The influence is direct. Unless the paperwork is in order, the charter might not be able to proceed to a working holiday arrangement, whether the yacht is ready and the itinerary agreed. MYBA 2025 also provides parties with an exit strategy: Where the KYC documents cannot be completed (and the parties cannot agree another stakeholder to do so within the stipulated timeframe), the agreement is deemed unmaterialised (not just cancelled *ab initio*), and it would not be treated as an ordinary breach-and-damages dispute.[7]

Clause 29 (Sanctions) imports this logic from the domain of identity verification to that of prohibitions based on public law.[8] It is expressly operated "as a condition" of the agreement and requires the owner and charterer to warrant, as of the date and on a continuing basis, that they, the guests onboard and the vessel are not a party so that they are not a sanctioned party (or otherwise prohibited/restricted by sanctions) and the vessel will not be employed or any payment made in breach of sanctions. Here, compliance is not confined to the charterer as contracting party but is extended to the charterer's guests - precisely because the presence of guests and enjoyment on board are structurally central to the charterer's use of the yacht. The remedy is also immediate and non-compensatory in orientation: if one of the owners or charterers is in breach, any of the non-breaching parties can unilaterally terminate immediately. In practice, the sanctions' clause operates as: Failure to observe sanctions' clause, deprives charterer for present or further enjoyment of the yacht because it constitutes a legal risk. It is necessary to highlight again that such risk does not affect the charterer alone in

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regulating the Broker and/or Stakeholder. The OWNER and CHARTERER undertake to ensure continuing compliance with these KYC requirements, during the term of this Agreement, and to provide renewed KYC Documents immediately upon request. If the Broker and/or Stakeholder is/are unable, acting reasonably to satisfy itself/themselves with the KYC Documents, and as such is/are unable to receive funds, and if the OWNER and CHARTERER cannot agree a replacement Stakeholder to receive the funds within 7 (seven) Working Days of written confirmation from the Broker and/or Stakeholder, this Agreement shall be cancelled and, save as expressly provided herein, the Parties shall have no further obligation or cause of action hereunder."

[7] Clause 27 para 4 reads: "If the Broker and/or Stakeholder is/are unable, acting reasonably to receive funds and if the OWNER and CHARTERER cannot agree a replacement stakeholder to receive the funds within 7 (seven) Working Days shall have no further obligation or cause of action hereunder".

[8] Clause 29 reads: "SANCTIONS: As a condition of this Agreement, the OWNER and the CHARTERER warrant to each other and to the Broker and the Stakeholder as of the Date and on a continuing basis, that they, the guests on board and the Vessel are not a SANCTIONED PARTY or a party with or involving whom the arrangements envisaged by this Agreement are prohibited or restricted by SANCTIONS and that the Vessel will not be employed or any payment made in breach of SANCTIONS. Should either the OWNER or the CHARTERER be in breach of the foregoing, any of the parties not in breach may unilaterally terminate this Agreement forthwith. Such termination shall be dealt with as a termination of the Agreement in accordance with clause 11 (d) (in case of termination by the CHARTERER, the Broker, or the Stakeholder for OWNER'S breach of this Clause) clause 9 (d)(i) (in case of termination by the OWNER, the Broker or the Stakeholder for CHARTERER'S breach of this Clause). Should any restrictions on fund transfers, related to Sanctions, in accordance with the terms herein arise, such funds shall be held by the BROKER and/or STAKEHOLDER until such time as either the payment or return is confirmed to be lawful or until they are ordered to deal with that money in accordance with the instructions of any competent authority, whichever is the sooner".

the contract but extends to all guests and the utilisation of the charter funds as well as the yacht. The sanctions clause does not provide any warning, cure, or any loss and such an omission must not be interpreted as an oversight, but this is a purposeful juridical choice. Once a risk is identified, the legal consequences may follow at a very rapid rate and cannot be mitigated using the traditional contractual tools. In this regard, MYBA 2025 places the concept of sanctions compliance among the *essentialia* for the actual performance of the charter. The clause allows the termination of the charter - when a risk of sanctions occurs - regardless of the worthiness and arrival of the vessel and the lack of pre-existing damage. This provision aims to protect, in an anticipatory manner, the stakeholders such as the owners, brokers, financiers and crew members against potential criminal liability *inter alia*. It is on those grounds that the provision has a preventive, not a penal purpose: By terminating the charter relationship before the legal risk materialises (*ex ante*), it prevents any need to deal with its effects (*ex post*): MYBA 2025 recognises that breaches of sanctions involve regulatory and criminal consequences which cannot be mitigated by any traditional contractual remedies and therefore, it deprives the yacht of use as soon as the risk has materialised.

Overall, the point is that compliance nowadays is a serious matter and should be based not only on the behaviour on board, but the possibility of the precontractual due diligence during the stage of documentation and payments.

MYBA 2025 goes on to recognise the role financial institutions play as the de facto regulator of performance. Clause 30 provides that the broker and/or stakeholder is not liable for delays and failures in the transfer of amounts since banks need to comply with the regulations about anti-money laundering, corruption and terrorist-financing or related internal procedures. This clause is not simply protective drafting on behalf of the intermediaries. It validates the structural change: regulatory compliance (including bank risk decisions) is regarded as a genuine component of the performance environment of the charter, consequently affecting the prospects of the charterer's enjoyment.

Within the conceptual frame of this article, the significance of these clauses lies in the way that they define "use" to something that is not only constrained by the conduct and safety but also conditioned by the charterer's proof of compliance and the legal permissibility of the persons and funds linked to the charter. MYBA 2025 therefore incorporates into the use regime an explicit "permission" logic: lawful enjoyment is conditional on lawful identity, lawful funds and lawful counterparties, which is not just assessed by the parties - it is also assessed through the broker/stakeholder infrastructure that facilitates the transaction.

3.5 Consequences of breach: restriction, suspension, cancellation and termination

A central feature of MYBA 2025 is that breach of use-related obligations does not have to be accompanied by measurable physical damage, to have decisive consequences under the contract. The contract is organised around the protection of the contractual equilibrium and safe enjoyment, crew welfare, legality and timely redelivery, such that certain breaches of the contract are treated as use detrimental events rather the compensable wrongs. Accordingly, the remedial provisions distinguish among (i) managed breaches (subject to warning and escalation), (ii) breaches considered inherently serious and thus justifying immediate termination and (iii) compliance failures precluding performance; hence treated as cancellation events.

The general escalation mechanism is contained in Clause 7. Where, in the captain's reasonable opinion, the charterer or guests fail to observe Clause 13 and that failure is continued upon a due and specific warning to the charterer and broker in writing, the captain shall notify the owner, broker and stakeholder and the (escalating) owner may terminate the charter thereinafter or order the captain to direct the vessel to the place of re-delivery, whereupon the charter shall be terminated - constructively - by the disembarking captain and

without any return of charter fee. This mechanism holds doctrinal significance for two principal reasons: First, it elevates the captain's role beyond that of a mere witness to the breach. Rather, the captain operates as the enforcement officer of the contractual agreement, vested with professional discretion subject to a reasonableness standard. This framework ensures that the captain may exercise informed judgment while simultaneously providing safeguards against arbitrary decision-making (see *supra* 3.2). Second, the mechanism renders the charter fee non-refundable upon termination for continuing breach. This consequence fundamentally re-characterises the nature of termination itself, transforming it from a punitive measure into a protective remedy. The owner's right to terminate operates primarily to regain possession and control of the vessel, rather than as a predicate to pursuing judicial remedies such as arrest proceedings before an admiralty court. This distinction is both practically and theoretically significant, as it positions contractual termination as a self-help remedy that obviates the need for immediate recourse to maritime litigation.

MYBA 2025 moreover provides for a category of breaches that does not require a warning: Clause 13 includes an indemnity trigger in which illegal behaviour results in detention of the crew or detention/arrest/seizure/fine of the ship and a zero tolerance to physical or sexual assault and the possession/usage of illegal drugs/weapons. Breach of those duties are deemed as fundamental as to entitle the owner to terminate immediately without any warning notice, in each case without refund or recourse against owner, stakeholder or broker. The wording is effectively one of contractual classification: though in English law, termination would be analysed more typically by the condition/innominate terms scheme, the agreement intends to provide a statement that certain conduct is inherently breaching the core of the contract and will be so dealt with by agreement. Nothing in this analysis suggests that MYBA 2025 displaces the general English law classification of contractual terms. Rather, the agreement operates by contractually pre-allocating the consequences of certain breaches, identifying categories of conduct that are treated, by design, as incompatible with the continuation of the charter.

The compliance perimeter generates a different remedial path. Under Clause 26, the broker and/or stakeholder is not bound to receive funds or make payments until the receipt and approval of the KYC documents. The agreement further provides that, if the broker and/or stakeholder is unable, acting reasonably, to be satisfied with the KYC documents and therefore no funds can be received and if owner and charterer are unable to reach an agreement on a replacement stakeholder within seven working days of the day it received written confirmation, the agreement shall be cancelled and the parties (save as expressly provided) have no further obligation or cause of action.

Sanctions are dealt with even more severely. Clause 29 works "as a condition" and sets out for unilateral termination immediately by any non-breaching party if either the owner or charterer is in breach of the sanctions' warranties (including the guest-related component). In addition, the clause considers that restrictions on the transfer of funds, related to sanctions, may foresee holding of funds until the payment or return is confirmed lawful or on the intervention of competent authority instructions. Here the agreement reflects an irreducible public - law constraint: "use" cannot continue where the charter is tainted by sanctions risk, because the consequences go beyond the bilateral relationship, into tortious, criminal and public law domains.

Within this remedial landscape, it is better, both doctrinally and for drafting clarity, to refer to MYBA 2025 operating by way of contractual termination/cancellation mechanisms, as opposed to by way of "rescission." In this case, the agreement is not framed around undoing of a contract *ab initio* - it is framed around stopping performance and enjoyment prospectively, in order to protect safety, legality and the owner's exposure with collateral consequences (including non-refund) that are expressly stipulated as part of the risk allocation of the charter bargain.

3.6 Analytical synthesis

The proposition advanced in the above sections is thus summed up: Under MYBA 2025, the "use" of the yacht by the charterer is neither a free-standing liberty nor a proxy for possession. It is a time bounded entitlement to enjoyment built on interlocked rules on programme discretion, professional command, behavioural governance and legality/compliance conditions. Operationally the captain serves as the agreement's officer among pleasure want and the limits of safety, redelivery discipline and legal behaviour. Normally, the enjoyment of the charterer is defined by the obligations attaching to the charterer's party, i.e. the numbers, the minors, the medical fitness and the conduct because in crewed yachting, the main risk vectors of "use" are as much to do with people and behaviour as they are with navigation.

The MYBA 2025 revision provides imposes compliance considerations, such as the KYC / AML and sanctions clauses that do not just provide anticipatory protection for intermediaries. These clauses are prerequisites for the charter to materialise and may lawfully continue, extending compliance scrutiny to guests and flows of funds. Finally, the remedial design ensures that "use" is protected by graded enforcement: Warning - and - escalation for ordinary misconduct; immediate termination for conduct deemed fundamental; cancellation/termination mechanisms for failures to comply which make performance unlawful or impracticable.

4. Conclusion

This article has been an analysis of the charterer's obligations in relation to the use of a crewed yacht, under the MYBA Yacht Charter Agreement 2025; "use" here understood as an analytically different category of obligations, excluding financial obligations, bareboat and demise arrangements as well as the direct application of cargo and passenger conventions:

With reference to the first research question, the analysis shows that 'use of the yacht' under MYBA 2025 does not constitute a synonym for 'possession' or 'operational control' of the yacht. It is a time-limited right to the enjoyment of the leisure pursuits as described, through the professional command structure of the yacht, with contractual limits imposed on the enjoyment throughout in accordance with safety, legal requirements and the realities of crewed hospitality environment. MYBA opted not to define "use" in one clause, but rather to construct use indirectly through a combination of programme discretion and a continuing supervisory interface (predominantly the captain's authority) to ensure that enjoyment would be compatible with safe navigation, lawful operation and the timely redelivery.

The second research question reveals that MYBA 2025 does not regulate the charterer's use through a single "use clause." Instead, it establishes a network of interrelated obligations across three dimensions. First, operational use is governed by sea voyage issues, such as cruising limits, time-underway restrictions and the captain's authority (and duty) to refuse unsafe, improper, or contractually inconsistent instructions. Second, onboard conduct is regulated through detailed provisions: limits on guest numbers, responsibility for minors, warranties concerning guests, and - critically- Clause 13, which prescribes standards of behaviour, mandates respect for crew, restricts certain activities, and provides for graduated enforcement, including termination. Third, legality is integral to the concept of use. The charterer must comply with local law, indemnify the owner for breaches, and--in zero-tolerance situations--faces immediate loss of charter rights.

Regarding the third research question, the "use" becomes synonymous with compliance with public law regulations as an express condition of enjoyment. condition of enjoyment. KYC and sanctions provisions are no mere add-ons to the regulatory cloud but work as contractual obligations that could bar charter from proceeding, as well as cut it short without having technical failure or quantifiable damage. The compliance architecture is particularly significant because it extends beyond the contracting parties to encompass the

charterer's guests and payment flows. This framework links the charterer's use of the yacht to documentary transparency and the legal authorization of all persons and transactions involved. In doing so, MYBA 2025 shifts certain compliance obligations from *ex post* remedies for unlawful conduct to *ex ante* and ongoing conditions for lawful participation in the charter.

Two implications follow: Doctrinally "use" under MYBA 2025 is a nodal concept providing the link between enjoyment, authority, behaviour and compliance. It is the law mechanism by which the agreement manages the unique risk profile of crewed leisure chartering where disputes are often generated by people and conduct as much as by navigation or performance. Practically, the 2025 form provides a more obvious enforcement structure by separating - on the one hand - between misconduct managed by way of warning and - on the other - escalation and classes of behaviour or non-compliance that are managed as fundamental breach and therefore justify termination without previous notice.

Future disputes under MYBA 2025 are therefore likely to turn less on technical performance and more on whether the charterer's use of the yacht remains compatible with the agreement's integrated framework of authority, conduct and compliance.

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Natural History and Culture in Greece. The Petralona Paleontological Cave in Chalcidice, Greece

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Abstract:
Cultural capital contributes to the transformation of local socio-political dynamics, while it supports communal social cohesion. Here, we explore the Petralona Cave dramatic discovery, described as one of the most important paleontological findings in Greece that aids our understanding of the evolution of hominids.The dramatic issues surrounding this bring to the surface trials and tribulations regarding knowledge acceptance and establishment as there is a battle for control of the evidence which works via extra scientific channels to impact upon the research process and suspend it. The issues are complex as, besides cultural and tourist development, scientific accommodation is subject to extra conditions not easily apparent but only through their effective outcome. The Petralona Cave discovery has been a monumental case for Greece, as it defines issues of cultural scientific policy and the general status of natural history research and recognition of international importance for the country. It also pertains to the origin of the Greeks and the status of the territory (Chalcidice) in the origins of Humankind. Under a different prism and political administration, the Petralona Cave could have allowed Greek Paleontology to come of age and have its first UNESCO Paleontology World Heritage Site.

Key-Words: Petralona Cave, Culture, Cultural capital, World Heritage.

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1. Introduction

Cultural capital contributes substantially to the transformation of local political and economic forces and to social cohesion. The relationship of the individual with the spaces associated with culture is not exclusively, or better, not unchanged, and one-dimensional. This relationship is influenced by several factors, which in turn determine not only the behaviour of different social groups towards culture but also the social function of the spaces of culture. Those in charge of culture must take this reality into account, regardless of the region in which they operate. Cultural venues can be considered: *museums, cultural institutions, art galleries, music venues, theatres, municipal cultural centres, festivals, multipurpose areas.*

The formation of cultural capital takes place through the whole of the cultural potential. Ioannidis (2002) categorizes the cultural sources into three categories, i.e. (a) heritage (morals, customs, timeless traditions, dances and any other intangible cultural heritage); b) resource capital or cultural capital , archaeological sites, traditional buildings, places of activity) and c) production capital (goods and services resulting from art). So each cultural system of the above, in order to achieve its objectives, converts the inflows of the various funds it brings into specific productions of quantitative or qualitative data in order to generate outflows for the cultural production of either goods or services (Ioannidis, 2002).

The concept of cultural development is interdependent with the concept of sustainability, endogenous economic development, which represents global and interdisciplinary local institutions, traditions and relevant knowledge that can play a catalytic role in the co-operation of local and supra-local actors.

Economic sustainability is inextricably linked to social sustainability and integration through work in the community (Tsobanoglou, 2007).

2. Petralona Cave- Historical Context

We would like to present the research that took place in 2015-2016 and concerns a well-known example of the Petralona Cave of Chalcidice, Greece. This example is a highly complex one as it characterizes the formation and development of a very important project concerning the institutional framework for the organization and operation of an internationally recognized natural history site. This example is a critical point that allows to see the organization and the constitution of national cultural and scientific policy in Greece. The great political controversies that we will see in the following pages show inadequacies of public administration in handling the organization and operation of cultural and scientific units. The following presentation, which gives us the evidence of this practice, allows us to see an obscure aspect in the relationship between political and cultural development. It allows us to see that the lack of coordination and communication, over time, in the chain linking a cognitive science subject, such as Natural History, and Palaeontology, with its local function and expression, a natural history monument, such as the Petralona Cave and Museum and the relationship and interaction between political scientific and local bodies. The above must be in co-operation, otherwise we do not have the opportunity to highlight strategic monuments of our natural history and culture which are inactive.

Petralona Cave is located about 800 meters northeast of the homonymous village of Chalcidice, the municipality of “Nea Propontida”, at the western foot of Mount “Katsika”. The Cave was discovered in 1959 by Petralona residents and in particular by Mr. F. Hadzaridis, while they were looking for water to supply the village. The underground crest was impressive and important for its large size, as well as for its stunning lithospheric decoration. Also, the floor was strewn with fossilized bones. On 16 September 1960 a human skull was discovered during an amateur exploration in an exceptional state covered with stalagmite material, which has since been preserved with other fossils in the collections of the Laboratory and Museum of Geology and Palaeontology of the Aristotle University of

Thessaloniki[3] (AUTH). The skull of "Petralona Man" is the oldest human relic that has been found in Greece today, but also one of the most important paleoanthropological remains of Europe. It caused the interest of anthropologist's world widely. It was the field of research of the AUTH and the Anthropological Society of Greece. Researchers from the University carried out the collection of palaeontological remains of the floor, while A. Poulianos, on behalf of the Hellenic Speleological Society, conducted long-term excavations[4]. The identity and scientific value of the Cave was developed for many years a controversy which has as its theme "basically the age of the skull, which resulted that most of the archaeological and paleontological findings have been neglected[5]", as Mr A. Darlas argues. (head of the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology - Speleology, Ministry of Culture) which he gave us on 20/5/2016).

Photo 1: Petralona Cave

Credit: Eleni Grompanopoulou, 2016

The precise location of the skull and the age according to geology professor Mr. G. Koufos (2004) is not known until today, because stratigraphy is not known. Thus, researchers are confined to morphological characteristics and comparisons with other known and dated skulls (Koufos, 2004). On the contrary, according to professor of anthropology Dr. A. Poulianos, research has shown that the skull is about 700,000 years old, making it the oldest European (Arhanthropus). This age was based on the detailed analysis of stratigraphy and the study of the primitive Palaeolithic tools and the species of the old man, discovered in almost all layers. An important factor in verifying age is the contribution of archaeometry. The materials that were dated were bones, stalagmites and traces of fire[6].

According to the investigations carried out by the university students, it was argued that the Cave operated in Pleistocene as a carnivore shelter and is of pure palaeontological interest without any trace of human activity. Regarding the location that the skull was found

[3] The skull is currently located in the Museum of Geology and Palaeontology of the AUTH in the Department of Geology.

[4] At that time specialists in palaeoanthropology in Greece were not present and thus the AUTh took care of the skull. They carried out superficial animal bones meditations and invited two German scientists from the outside, the anthropologist E. Breitinger and the palaeontologist O. Sickenberg. At the same time they came in contact with the doctorate anthropologist Aris Poulianos of the University of Moscow, known from his work "The Origin of the Greeks" (first edition 1961), which was based on cranio-anthropometric studies of contemporary Greek populations from the Crimea to the Lower Italy. With these studies, Aris Poulianos showed that the Greek people are indigenous and their roots are common with those of the Ancient Greeks, contradicting the past and widespread positions, mainly of German science, which ranked Greeks in Slavic and other peoples. http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/40years/40years.html

[5] A. Poulianos does not agree with this approach and considers it superficial because it is evident from the abundance of bibliographic sources that archaeological and paleontological findings have not only been neglected but attributed the relative importance. We cite literature sources such as: 1) Fortelius M. & N.A.Poulianos (1979), 2) Horacek I. & N.A. Poulianos (1988), 3) Kurten B.(1988), 4) Kretzoi M. (1977), 5) Poulianos A. N. (1971), 6) Poulianos N. A. (2008) et al. See the extended bibliography on the case at the end.

[6] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/introduction/introduction.gr.html

they claim to have been transported from the animals. The excavation of stone artists, which prove the presence of human activity in the Cave, is absent. The dating of the skull by European Anthropological Association (EAA) was challenged by organizations such as the AUTH and the Ministry of Culture and its chronological placement was proposed at 300,000-150,000 years. It is undoubtedly the most important find of the Cave, originally attributed to a Neanderthal man, then to Homo Erectus, and today it is believed to belong to Homo Heidelbergensis[7], an early transition between the two previous ones (Darlas, 2014).

Photo 2: Petralona Cave

Photo Credit: Anthropological Society of Greece

The current entrance of the Cave is artificial[8] and is at an altitude of about 300m. The internal temperature remains constant at around 17 degrees Celsius in winter and summer. The visitor, after crossing the 66m long horizontal tunnel, with a height of 1.90m. and a width of 2.50 m to 1.80 m. arrives at the Cave where it follows an arranged route of about 300m. On either side there are some showcases, which contain stone and bone tools, as well as bones, jaws and teeth of various animals. The bulk of the finds is displayed in the Anthropological Museum Hall, which will be discussed below. Then the visitor passes through the main chambers[9] and chambers of the cave, where he is given the opportunity to admire the masterpiece of nature[10]. The lack of maintenance of the Cave is evident as the guardrails are worn, the electrical infrastructure exposed, and in some cases also the use of light tubes, which give a negative effect to the natural environment of the Cave. Some attempts to reconstruct the image of Cave are attempted by using the representation of a small group of people next to the entrance of the cave and two bears inside it during its period of use either by animals or by humans.

The Cave develops horizontally and covers an area of approximately 10,000 m². It is a labyrinth, with large halls, richly Lightstone decoration, from stalactite and stalagmite

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[7] N. Poulianos, the only Palaeoanthropologist of the Ministry of Culture, who is an elected member of the Council of European Anthropologists, although A. Darlas is his supervisor, does not agree that he belongs to Homoheidelbergensis, but confirms the view that he is the Petralonian man . http://www.archaiologia.gr/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/101-10.pdf
http://eaa.elte.hu/administration_council.html European Anthropological Association

[8] A hundred yards south of the current artificial entrance (behind the Museum), there is a slit of the roof rock, from where fellow villagers Philippa descended with ropes and saw the stalactites and stalagmites in the backyard instead of some source of water they were waiting to find. The world became known in 1960, when another resident of the Petralona community, Christos Sarigiannidis, found the famous skull of Arhanthropos. http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/cave_tour/cave_tour.html.

[9] 1) Hall of the Anthropological Society of Greece, 2) Passage of Heraklion Columns, 3) Aristotle's Hall, 4) Rooms dedicated to Diana Fossei and Anaxagora, 5) Mediterranean Hall and 6) Mausoleum. http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/cave_tour/cave_tour.html

[10] http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/2/gh251.jsp?obj_id=1406

formations. Its height helped in the formation of large barges, which open between huge fallen boulders. Characteristic is the red colour of many formations due to iron oxides, which are dissolved in water and transferred as they pass through the supernatant deposits. The numerous bones' remains found in the cave proved to have been a refuge for various species of small vertebrates and large mammals (Darlas, 2014). According to Kretzoi and N. Poulianos, the remains of small vertebrates belong to fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, rodents. Large mammals include carnivorous, proboscides, corncrake and arthrodactyla (Kurten B., Poulianos N., 1977).

According to Mr. G. Koufos (2004), the fauna of the Petralona Cave is very rich as it includes micro- and macro- mammals. Facts about the Fauna of Cave gave a collection located at the University of Thessaloniki and after being studied, the experts concluded with absolute clarity that the oldest fauna is dated a little younger than 700,000 years, while the second fauna is newer and includes the forms of A. Pleistocene. Regarding the fauna and man of the Petralona Cave, Breitinger and Sickenberg (1964) concluded that it is about 50,000 years old and that it is related to the African findings (Rhodesia), from an anthropological point of view. The Geological Department of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki took the view and even concluded that the skull slid inside the Cave from rain or other waters and that there is no palaeontological or stratigraphic arrangement.

Since 1965, the anthropologist Dr A. Poulianos was studying the skull and the Petralona Cave. Contrary to Breitinger, he argued and expressed the view that the Petralona man was a European ancestral form, which was developed in South Africa. Europe. Then in 1968 Sickenberg complained that he had no comparative osteological material during his first fossil study (1964) in Thessaloniki, asked for the findings to be sent back to him, many of which unfortunately never returned. His next study (published in 1975), although not mentioned in the 1968 excavations, resulted in, as he called, a "revision of Petralona fauna" and came to agree with the age identified by A. Poulianos in 1968- 71[11].

Phote 3 : Skeleton and scull covered by stalagmite in Petralona Cave

Source: aristorelisguidegr.wordpress.com

[11] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/40years/40years.html

Photo 4: Petralona bear and views of the cave

Source: P. Palmer showcaves.gr

It is worth noting that in the search of the second excavation period on behalf of the Anthropological Society of Greece, 46 specialists from 12 states participated in the scientific team that was formed for solving the individual excavation problems. Among these were Professors: B. Kurten, Palaeontologist (Finnish), M. Kretzoi, Palaeontologist (Hungarian), M. Ikeya, Nuclear Physician (Japanese), I. Horacek, Palaeontologist, G. Belluomini, Archimether Italian), A. Moigne, Palaeontologist (French), R. Murrill, Anthropologist (USA), selected by the Anthropological Society of Greece to conduct research. The Greek side should also mention G. Maniatis, of "Dimokritos" Greek Centre for Nuclear Research, Athens, Greece, Prof. G. Lyritzis, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece, S. Papamarinopoulos, University of Patras, Patras, Greece and C. Papastefanou, University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

In the Petralona Cave, the nutritional remains of the Palaeolithic villagers give us information about their hunting practices, eating habits, and the stone tools they used, testimonies important to their technology and culture. The animals transported their prey to the Cave when people left the Cave, leaving bones of herbivorous animals in it. Also, many carnivores died in the Cave and so many bones were found, which are valuable sources of information about the fauna and environment of those periods[12].

In conclusion, the Petralona Cave has rescued the most ancient testimonies about the presence of man in our country. The skull of Arhanthropos, the earliest paleontological heritage in our country, is the comparative advantage that makes the Petralona Cave unique. The finding of this skull in the natural life of Arhanthropos is the most important paleontological find of international significance for the Natural History of mankind.

3. **The Petralona Museum: The institutional framework. Organization-Operation of a Museum of Natural History**.

In 1975, although the Hellenic Tourism Organization becomes the owner of the cave (by expropriating public space for the Petralona community, amounting to 3 million drachmas), the research of the Anthropological Society of Greece -A.E.E. (thereafter as A.E.E.) is overseen by the competent Ministry Culture. For the needs of the research and the promotion of the findings, during the period 1977 - 1983, the Anthropological Society of Greece[13] raised, at its own expense, an Anthropological Museum (with a library, workshops, conference space, storage spaces etc) and three unfinished - unfortunately to date - buildings with the aim of creating an Anthropological Research Centre. On 8-4-1981, a contract was

[12] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/40years/40years.html
[13] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/3aee/statutes/statutes.html

signed between the Hellenic Tourism Organization and the Anthropological Society of Greece, according to which the use of the Cave and the facilities was granted. The responsibilities of the Anthropological Society of Greece include the preservation, maintenance, study of Cave and finds, as well as revenue management under the supervision of the State. The liabilities of the Hellenic Tourism Organization include the coverage of potential deficits and the payment of 5% of revenue to the Petralona community. The concession was for while the Hellenic Tourism Organization retained the right to unilaterally terminate the contract (if it no longer contributed the State for any reason)[14].

Photo 5: Marble slab at the entrance of the Museum

Source: www.aee.gr

Dr. A. Poulianos reported the following dramatic fact: “after many years of legal disputes with the GNTO, A.E.E was expelled from the archaeological site on April 4, 2011, following a strong political background, in a context detrimental to the Greek public and the international scientific community". Throughout its presence in the area (half a century ago), dozens of scientists from around the world participated in an informal formation: "The International Petralona Cave Research Team". At the same time, thirteen employees from the area, trained by the Anthropological Society of Greece, worked in the field. There were interpreters in at least five European languages, not to mention those used by tour guides as they accompanied the group. Following the expulsion of the Anthropological Society of Greece, the employees were dismissed, and 3-4 guarantors of primary education graduates came to their place[15].

The Europeans showed their solidarity, which was expressed through publications, protests or decisions of various Pan-European Conferences of Anthropology which testify to the importance and scientific interest in the investigations carried out in Petralona (Chiarelli, 1981, Bielitski et al., 1983, Gerassimova et al., 1983, Gray et al., 1988, Susanne et al., 1988, Henenberg, 1988 -see the extended bibliography on the subject at the end of the chapter)[16].

Although the Anthropological Society of Greece does not have an active role at the Museum and the Cave, it has a rich scientific literature, Greek and foreign, which is available on its website listing the titles of the books that exist[17]. It should be noted that in the search for bibliographic sources in University libraries (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University of Macedonia), for the needs of our research, in the library of the Department of Geology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, only a book by Anthropologist N. Poulianos, 1989 was found.

3.1 The Museum today.

For the current state of the museum the information we are quoting comes from our own field research and the interviews we received by a) Mr. A. Darlas, Head of the Ephorate of

[14] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/exc_history/041031%20Letter%20to%20parl.html
[15] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/gen_information/gen_information.html
[16] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/exc_history/exc_history.html
[17] http://www.aee.gr/hellenic/6petrlona/bibliography/bibliography.html

Palaeoanthropology-Speleology and b) Professor Anthropologist and founder of the Anthropological Society of Greece Mr. A. Poulianos.

The Museum is a two-storey building, 1000 square meters, where the map of the cave is represented in the northern stone wall along with the touristic route inside the P. Polydropopoulos design. On the ground floor are the warehouse of finds, the maintenance and recording workshops and in the separate room the library of the Museum. On the upper floor is, besides the Exhibition Hall, a spacious decorated Anteroom, the Lecture Room (above the library) and the Office of the Directorate.

The current Minister of Culture's responsible for the Petralona Museum and Cave, Mr. A. Darlas, told us that since 2011 "the Museum belongs to the Ministry of Culture, which has been designated as an archaeological museum and operates like all public archaeological museums, and the Cave today it is an ancient monument and works like all the visiting ancient monuments. Studies have been prepared and submitted by specialists (museography study) to upgrade the Museum, checking whether it can be included in co-financed NSRF programs. The studies have been approved for one and a half years". Mr. A. Darlas stresses that "over the years there have been several damages to the Museum's premises, which were not restored by the Anthropological Society of Greece, although there were large revenues at that time. In addition, interventions have been made to remove the inaccuracies that have been found for various findings which have not been available at the Museum. Nowadays no one (except Mr. A. Poulianos) admits that the skull dates to 700,000 years. The rest of the findings, however, are much younger, 300,000-600,000 years, without excluding any revision. What is very important and irreversible is the great age of the findings, what they represent, the information they give us about the climate for the environment, about human life at that time. The visitor does not have to go into a war that has to do with the age of the Cave and the finds. Instead, the aim and purpose of the Museum is to make the visitor take advantage of his educational and pedagogical role "(20/5/2016, A. Darlas).

3.2. Educational programs

The terms "educational programs", "museum education programs", and others are some of the terms used at a global level "for the educational actions that museums organize within their physical space for various groups of visitors and especially for the school community" (Tziaferi, 2005).

In our question to Mr. A. Darla whether educational programs are being carried out at the Museum? he replied that "unfortunately, only educational programs are dedicated to culture and cultural heritage, such as green cultural routes, museum days, monuments, etc. The aim of the Museum is to carry out educational programs in the primary education of the Prefecture of Chalcidice. The immediate plans of the Museum include the creation of a space for educational programs, a multi-purpose room, as well as the exploitation of the external environment. It is planned to create an outdoor activity area that includes a pattern, a pattern of excavation, a space that will preheat fire, make hooves, bake tools, etc. The museum's staff have submitted studies for approval to the Ministry of Culture, but for purely administrative reasons they have not yet been approved. Also, the service cannot unfortunately leave museologists (museum experts) to support similar educational programs. The realization of the studies that have been prepared and submitted is unknown how they will be implemented with the staff. This will depend on the flexibility of the state, where it could possibly co-operate with the municipality or other entities, under the supervision of the Ephorate of Antiquities. Unfortunately, the current civil servants are not enough to carry out such actions "(20/5/2016, A. Darlas).

The position of the current manager of the Museum and Cave does not mention the fact of the significant absence of the Anthropological Society of Greece, which had never raised ownership issues, but managed the scientific research and development of its area by

presenting the findings in the museum's exhibition space. Along with its removal, international cooperation with recognized palaeontologists from all over the world was halted, thus ending the visibility and promotion of the region. At the same time, the identity of the Museum and, more generally, its image was altered because, according to Dr. A. Poulianos. The following shocking events occurred. Similar events take places in all cases where a civilization imposes its way to another with force "after the removal of the GNI, the museum's representations were covered with tarpaulins and only through a virtual tour at http:/www.petralona-cave.gr can see them. Outdoors, animal models adorned and inhaled the visitor "(18/6/2016, A. Poulianos).

2.3. Reports

The exhibition of the Museum, which includes a linear quote of paleontological and anthropogenic exhibits, is located on the floor in the central hall. The explanation is rudimentary, the display cases are outdated, without generating the interest of the visitor in order to be able to lead him to a journey of knowledge of distant prehistory. Under no circumstances can the presentation of the findings be describing as a modern museum conceptualization. Other spaces, maintenance workshops, warehouses, library are not accessible. In the frescoes of the Antelope is depicted in the first, the evolution of life according to Aristotle, in another evolution of the Anthropoids according to Dr. Aris Poulianos "this particular wall-painting is covered with canvas and the visitor cannot see it", while the rest of the three depicts the interior of the Cave. The paintings are by the folk painter Christos Kagaras and his son Nikos. Also, the frescoes of the high-rise Exhibition Hall, which are decorated with life-style paintings that cover the last 4.5 billion years, are covered and not accessible to the visitor. In the Exhibition Hall, about 2,000 finds are housed respectively in 370 showcases, divided into ten sections.

Photo 6: Train, Special Municipal Vehicle- Credit : E. Grobanopoulou

Access to the archaeological site (Cave - Petralona Museum) is very easy because every day a bus runs from Thessaloniki to Petralona. The distance is 50 km, the road network is not particularly difficult and the time it takes is about 60 minutes. The marking of the area is relatively adequate, with signs that help the tourist to locate the archaeological site.

When visiting the archaeological site, the visitor must park his car in a specially designed area and head for the Cave or the Museum on foot. In 2004 during the Olympic Games, the then Town Hall of Triglia (now Municipality of New Propontida) placed a bar on the outskirts of the settlement, 700m. from the Cave, forcing tourists to get off the buses either with the heat or the cold and go hiking to the Cave or use (against 2 euros per person) the special municipal vehicle. It is a train like a train, which is operated by a private individual following the concession of the municipal authority. Despite all the appeals made by the Union of Chalcidice Hotels and the General Directorate of Antiquities for the withdrawal of the bar (for obvious tourist reasons), they were not heard by the then Municipality who apparently wanted to receive the proceeds.

Access to people with mobility problems is also not possible. Dr. A. Poulianos reported that "in 1998/99 he had set up at his own expense for the AME a" fugitive "path that

started from the car park in front of the "Dafni" Theatre, right of the main stairway and ended at the entrance of the Cave. The Archaeological Service has sued us for having done work without her permission. In 2005, after having been acquitted by a double court order, the construction of a cement route continued through a side door that ended within the Museum. This corridor had been used by people with disabilities. After 2011 the access corridor was disused "(18/6/2016, A. Poulianos).

The opening hours of the Cave and the Museum during the winter months are 09: 00-15: 00 and during the summer months 08: 00-20: 00. All days of the week are available outside Mondays during the winter months. The ticket price increased from April 2016 from 5 to 8 euros and from 3 euros to 4 the concession ticket, respectively. Reduced entry or free for teachers, parents' escorts, free card holders, senior citizens, students, young people up to 18 years old, museum members, relevant ministry officials, etc[18]. Hours of operation and days of access to archaeological time are satisfactory because it is not excluded, for example, workers who cannot visit a museum during the week, as the museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays.

Photo 7: Newsletter in Greek and English. Credit: E. Grobanopoulou

It is worth noting that there is no tour of the Cave and the Museum, which is done with the presence of a seasonal employee, lacking the necessary or necessary knowledge of the subject, but only the basic information that is included in the brochure shared[19] by the visitors at the ticket office . The booklet contains selected photos from inside the Cave and from the skull. The informational and promotional material of a cultural space is a bridge of communication not only with the visitors but also with the audience that is not able to contact the area. However, Mr. A. Darlas says that "in the archaeological site, specialized personnel (the responsible archaeologist) is four days a week, without this being mandatory. The Ephorate of Antiquities has specialized personnel, but it is not exclusive to the museum. "

Photo 8: Surrounding area. Credit: E. Grobanopoulou

[18] http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/2/gh255.jsp?obj_id=1406

[19] Two-paged coloured illustration in Greek and English. The texts are by A. Darla, the custody of the Archaeological Resources Fund.

The Anthropological Society of Greece developed the surrounding area, and an administration of an Anthropological Society of Greece operated a refreshment room next to the Cave where it served visitors. Today, in the car park as mentioned above, there is a private refreshment bar with coffee, refreshments and more. There are also pre-built retail outlets rented by the municipality in private commemorative products, local souvenirs, travel guides mostly in English and Italian. It is worth noting that when we visited the Museum, in April (2016), there were no guides in Greek. We could claim the obvious indifference to the promotion of the cultural product, and consequently the development of the local community.

Regarding the existence of a vendor, today there is no auction shop in the archaeological site. An Anthropological Society of Greece, as Dr. A. Poulianos was working. "In the box office there were cards, books that were bought by visitors. Specifically, Russian visitors bought his book "The Archangel of the Petralona Cave" (1974) and waited patiently for them to sign it. The book existed in Greek, French, English, and German. The vendor worked very positively on the operation of the museum but also on its outward appearance "(18/6/2016, A. Poulianos).

From 2011, the immediate plans for the implementation of the Ephorate of Antiquities, which includes the cave and the museum, is the creation of a sale shop in the archaeological site.

2.4. **Contact - Views - Traffic**

The Museum and the Petralona Cave have been displayed on the website of the Ministry of Culture (http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/2/gh251.jsp?obj_id=1406) as well as on the pages of the Anthropological Society of Greece (http://www.aee.gr) (http://www.petralona-cave.gr/) or from the social network of the Anthropological Society of Greece, f / b[20].

By 2011, according to the President of the Anthropological Society of Greece, Dr. A. Poulianos “The cultural policy of the Cave was planned by the management of the Anthropological Society of Greece, organizing and conducting cultural events such as concerts, theatrical performances, dancing cultural clubs, and the 3rd Pan-European Anthropology Conference, which took place during the first three days at Museum space and the other three in a hotel in the area "(18/6/2017, A. Poulianos).

According to Mr. A. Darlas after 2011, we are witnessing a new situation, according to which "the Museum does not have a specialized Department of Communication and Public Relations. The museum's immediate plans for the upgrading and renewal of the archaeological site are also the social networking of the Museum. Unfortunately, this museum does not have the possibility of autonomous planning of its cultural policy due to the institutional framework it belongs to. The museums that can arrange their own policy are: The Acropolis Museum, Archaeological Thessaloniki, Byzantine Thessaloniki, the Byzantine Christian Museum of Athens, the National Archaeological Museum and the Heraklion Museum, as these are the special regional offices of the Ministry of Culture Lustration. Everything else, like the Petralona Museum, belongs to the Committees of Antiquities "(20/5/2016, A. Darlas).

[20] https://www.facebook.com/Anthropological.Association.Of.Greece/?fref=ts

The data provided by the Greek Statistical Authority from 2012 to February 2016 on trafficking are as follows:

Table 1. Number of tickets at the Petralona Cave

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016/2
26.198	50.135	51.965	53.574	1645

source: http://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SCI21

Table 2. Earnings of the Petralona Museum

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016/2
76.921 euros	128.207 euros	135.732 euros	134.849 euros	2.442 ευρώ

source: http://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SCI21

The bulk of the visitors are organized groups of travel agencies (tourists, schools, foreigners, CAMP), smaller percentage of the individual audience. Also, there is no other monument in the area that competes in traffic to this Museum. It is the earliest archaeological site of Greece.

The Greek Statistical Authority does not provide data on the Petralona Cave from 1998 to 2011 to be able to compare the site's traffic when the Anthropological Society of Greece was run by the Hellenic Tourism Organization. In our question to Dr. A. Poulianos about visiting the cave told us "how visitors exceeded the 100,000 to 120,000 per year. Falling occurred in 2004, when the bar came at the entrance of the archaeological site from the municipality of Triglia ". We also asked the GNTO data, but we have not had an answer until now.

2.5. Benefits for the local community.

The Museum and the Cave are interesting scientific and tourist. Scientific because the skull of the prehistoric man was found but also a very large number of fossilized bones that give us information about at least 22 species of mammals, 500.00-200.000 years from today. It is one of the most beautiful caves in Greece with a special rich decoration, stalactites, stalagmites, columns, trays, curtains, eccentricities, roots with predominant red colour, so its oldest name was "Cave of the Red Stone".

Petralona is a semi-mountainous village in N. Chalcidice and belongs to the municipality of Nea Propontida. The inhabitants are engaged in agriculture and livestock farming. The Cave and the Petralona Museum are the most powerful cultural and natural attraction for the region. However, the tourist development of the area is minimal to nonexistent. The archaeological site, although highly trafficked, occupies the second position after the Vergina Museum, visitors to the archaeological site unfortunately do not visit the surrounding area as well.

In our question to Dr. A. Poulianos on the contribution of the Museum to the economic development of the region, he said that "it certainly contributes to economic local development. He proposed to create a rustic zoo with animals that lived in the cave (bears, wolves, foxes, etc.). This would have the effect of increasing the revenue of the Museum and creating new jobs. The tourist who visits Petralona may also go to ancient Olynthus or combine religious tourism on Mount Athos. If the local authority creates the right conditions, the local community will only have benefits. "

The site of the municipality hosts the Petralona Cave with two - three paragraphs references[21]. Also, in the f / b social network of the Municipality there is no mention of the great archaeological site of the area[22].

21 http://www.nea-propontida.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=876&Itemid=113

2.6. Funding sources

Dr. A. Poulianos stated that "as long as the Cave and the Museum were managed and managed, the only source of funding was the tickets. From the proceeds of the tickets paid wages, PPC, water and telephones. They were never funded "(18/6/2016, A. Poulianos). Although they were under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture.

The transition to the new regime under the Ministry of Culture has resulted in the Museum being included in the state budget. Mr. A. Darlas told us that "The revenue from tourists' travel goes like all the proceeds of the archaeological sites to the Archaeological Resources Fund, which has these revenues through the regular budget of the Ministry of Culture and its political leadership regulates how they will be used "(20/5/2016, A. Darlas).

3. Conclusions

The problem that has been dealt with by paleontologist Aris Poulianos and the scientific and organizational action that results in the emergence of the international importance of the Petralona area as an emblematic space of our natural history, highlight a series of dynamic currents that constitute the emergence and consolidating the national past of the natural history of our country. Particularly in our country the case of the monument of nature and the Petralona Cave is one of the most important findings in the international literature but which, in order to be able to develop and function, needs to be recognized and agreed on a timeless level of political and scientific interests in the political and scientific stance of our country.

Each country has a cultural identity and an inheritance, which can only be achieved if there is synergy between political and scientific forces. In our case, the stakes are the formation of the past of natural history in our country. This involves the organization of the sciences related to natural history, namely paleontology, archaeometry, caving, etc. The formation of these sciences cannot be outside the field of higher education. In our case, we have a very interesting political, cultural and scientific example of unsynchronized relations and actions. Professor A. Poulianos was invited by a prime minister at that time to organize scientifically this place in Greece. It is known that Dr. A. Poulianos dealt extensively with the issue of the origin of the Greeks[23]. This effort was not de facto successful but what has been achieved is the establishment and foundation of the Anthropological Society of Greece and the establishment of cooperation with the Hellenic Ministry of Culture in order to research and record the findings of the Petralona Cave, development of the Museum and its auxiliary areas: the workshops, the library, the conference room, the theater and the associated auxiliary structures such as the shop, the refreshment room, the park with the dummy for the children, and in general the infrastructure to physical accessibility to the sites.

The emergence of this complex reality, thanks to the private benevolence of Dr. A. Poulianos and the scientific team of the International Science Group, because this natural monument is not only of national importance but also of international scope. The local scientific community, although "hosting" the Arhanthropos's skull, which is the most important paleontological find of the Petralona Cave, has not been operating in the relevant Museum of Aristotle, but has developed positive activity at least at a level, if not cooperation with the Anthropological Society of Greece, but at least as successive scientific potential. The removal of the Anthropological Society of Greece did not have a relative replenishment the scientific gap that exists at this moment in this area with what this means for the state of Paleoanthropology in Greece.

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[22]https://www.facebook.com/pages/%CE%94%CE%AE%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%82-%CE%9D%CE%AD%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%A0%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%B1%CF%82/685004134854515

[23] See footnote 3

The efforts and the work of the company combined with the establishment and operation of the workshops have constituted until 2011 a unique relationship for the Greek data because we had for the first time a scientific company related to the site a monument of nature of international interest, its national scientific parchments were open to the international scientific community. We want to emphasize the international interest in the region of which EAE was a member. Public intervention that expressed other interests has not succeeded in attracting a corresponding international scientific interest in demonstrating what it regards as continuity. Of course, the culmination of the whole effort is to literally "cover" our Paleoanthropology and Natural History with something that is important, but it is another field, that of ... archeology. As a result, the evolution of ... species in Greece as a subject of scientific research is not only in atrophy, but also in a few other contexts related to our relationship with the environment, the knowledge of our origin, etc. Is it important to recognize the need for epistemological constitution of the paleontology as another field from archaeology in Greece and to see the Petralona-site differently from Olynthus a nearby classical site. And secondly, because a cave is also a matter of tourist preference, we cannot recognize the specificity of the organization, the emergence and the formation of this space, which is the meeting place of many sciences and must have the lead.

The tourist organization should have the floor, such as access, promotion of scientific data but also other areas related to recreation, the learning of visitors. Along with the inability of the university that is neighboring Petralona, to develop research and to use the Cave area for the further learning of students and researchers, we have noticed through the interesting interview of his former associate, Dr. A. Poulianos who told us their views on the course of the Museum and its spaces after the eviction of the Anthropological Society of Greece.

As we have said above, according to Tsobanoglou (2007), "the concept of growth must be characterized by durability and sustainability. The concept of economic growth marks the endogenous development, which in turn is based on local. When talking about local development, we refer to residents, local institutions, and traditions. The development of a place will be based on local particularities, the identity of the region and the mechanisms that can hold and renew economic activities in their own country. "

Natural cultural heritage is the epitome of cultural development and of community development. However, for this to take place cooperation between the scientific (knowledge) community and the local and regional political forces is needed in order this to succeed. Economic sustainability largely depends on this cooperation for the local cultural institutions to develop for the benefit of the community. The Petralona Cave case is a case in point that shows that if there is an acute disagreement between various local and national interests (some of them may operate by proxy) a suspension of work done may be effected by judicial order blocking the international scientific community from its area of study. In this instance one of the earliest humanoid sites in Europe. Our conclusion is that this blockage of the exploration of the site of Petralona represents a dark act leaving also Europe responsible for it as European Culture itself seems to have lost its general directions.

Under a different view the political administration, in cooperation with the scientific community in place could have been able to establish its first UNESCO Paleontology World Heritage Site in Greece developing at the same time Paleontology as a discreet scientific field, that is as separate from Classics.

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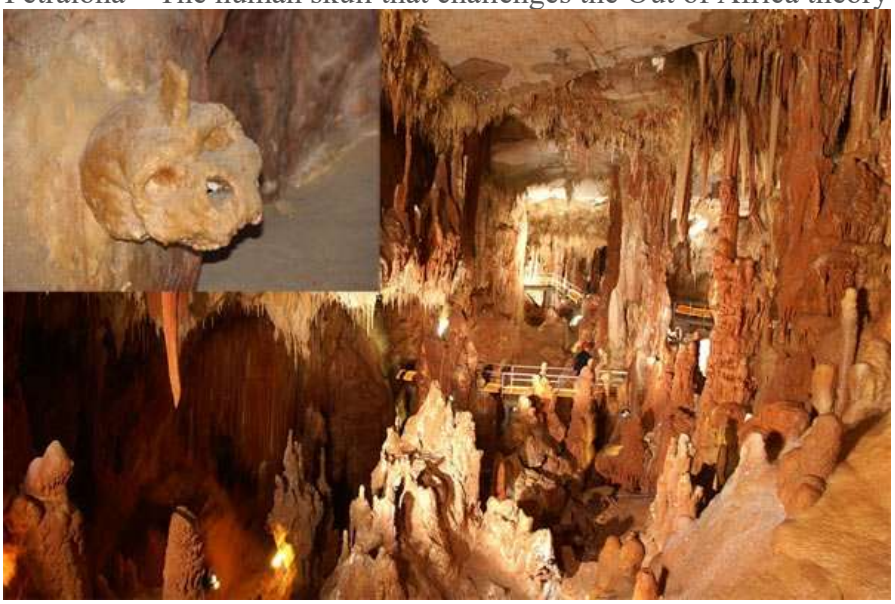
ADDENDUM

Petralona – The human skull that challenges the Out of Africa theory



By John Black – 2018 Dec 31

This is the account of the discovery of a skull that has the potential to change what we know about human evolution, and a suppression and cover-up which followed.

In 1959, in an area called Chalkidiki in Petralona, Northern Greece, a shepherd came across a small opening to a cave, which became visible when a thick covering of snow finally melted. He gathered a group of villagers to help him clear the entrance so they could go inside and explore. They found a cave rich in stalactites and stalagmites. But they also found something surprising – a human skull embedded in the wall (later research also uncovered a huge number of fossils including pre-human species, animal hair, fossilized wood, and stone and bone tools).

The skull was given to the University of Thessaloniki in Greece by the President of the Petralona Community. The agreement was that once the research was done, a museum would be opened featuring the findings from the Petralona cave, and the skull would be returned to be displayed in the museum – something that never happened.

Dr Aris Poulianos, member of the UNESCO's IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences), later founder of the Anthropological Association of Greece , and an expert anthropologist who was working at the University of Moscow at the time, was invited by the Prime Minister of Greece to return to Greece to take a position of a University Chair in Athens. This was due to the publication of his book, 'The Origins of the Greeks', which provides excellent research showing that Greek people didn't originate from the Slavic nations but were indigenous to Greece. Upon his return to Greece, Dr Poulianos was made aware of the discovery of the skull at Petralona, and immediately started studying the Petralona cave and skull.

The 'Petralona man', or Archanthropus of Petralona, as it has since been called, was found to be 700,000 years old, making it the oldest human europeoid (presenting European traits) of that age ever discovered in Europe. Dr Poulianos' research showed that the Petralona man evolved separately in Europe and was [neither a descendant nor] an ancestor of a species that came out of Africa.

In 1964, independent German researchers, Breitinger and Sickenberg, tried to dismiss Dr Poulianos' findings, arguing that the skull was only 50,000 years old and was indeed [a descendant] that came from Africa. However, research published in the US in 1971 in the

prestigious Archaeology magazine, backed up the findings that the skull was indeed 700,000 years old. This was based on an analysis of the cave's stratigraphy and the sediment in which the skull was embedded. Further research in the cave discovered isolated teeth and two pre-human skeletons dating back 800,000 years, as well as other fossils of various species.

Today, most academics who have analyzed the Petralona remains say that the cranium of the Archanthropus of Petralona belongs to an archaic hominid distinguished from Homo erectus, and from both the classic Neanderthals and anatomically modern humans, but showing characteristics of all those species and presenting strong European traits. A skull dating back 700,000 which is either Homo sapiens or part Homo sapiens is in direct conflict with the Out of Africa theory of human evolution.

The Petralona Man. Petralona Museum Anthropological Society of Greece (A.E.E.)

Further excavations continued in the cave of Petralona with the participation of international researchers (46 specialists from 12 separate countries), which provided further proof of Dr Poulianos' claims, including remarkable findings like fossilized pieces of wood, an oak leaf, animal hair and coprolites, which enabled accurate dating, as well as the almost continuous presence of stone and bone tools of the Archanthropus evolutionary stage, from the lower (750,000 years) to the upper (550,000 years) layers of sediment within the cave.

The research, after an interruption due to the dictatorship in Greece, continued up to 1983. It was then ordered by the government that all excavations at the site were forbidden to anyone, including the original archaeological team, and for 15 years nobody had access to the site or to the findings – no reason was provided by the government. Was this denial of access to prevent the extraction of whatever new scientific conclusions remained hidden within the incredible fossils embedded within the layers of the caves' walls?

After the Anthropological Society of Greece took the case to the courts, 15 years later they were again allowed access to the cave. Since then the Ministry of Culture is trying in any way to overcome the Courts decision and further trials proceed.

Dr Poulianos' findings contradicted conventional views regarding human evolution and his research was suppressed. Dr Poulianos and his wife were physically attacked and injured in their home in 2012 and the culprits were never found. He and his team have been denied further access to the cave to complete their research and study, and the whereabouts of the skull is now unknown. [The skull of Petralona is now, apparently, in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki.]

Today a sign sits outside the cave of Petralona stating that the skull found in the cave was 300,000 years old, and on Wikipedia today you will see references dismissing the evidence and trying to date the Petralona skull within acceptable parameters – between 160,000 and 240,000 years old.

Recently, Professor C.G. Nicholas Mascie-Taylor of the University of Cambridge sent a letter to the Ministry of Culture in Greece saying that the correct date of the skull is 700,000 years old and not 300,000. He has also challenged the government's suppression of information regarding this incredible discovery.

The Greek Ministry of Education, Religions, Culture and Sports,
Bouboulinas 20-22,
Athens 106 82,
Greece
5 September 2012
Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the European Anthropological Association, which is the umbrella professional and academic association linking all of the national European biological anthropology and human biology societies, to express our concerns about the conservation of the Petralona Cave and Skull, the misinformation of the dating of the skull, as well as the treatment of personnel associated with the conservation of the Cave.

The bases of our concerns are that the skull has been damaged through many scratches and the crown of a tooth (1st molar) cut off. As requested by Anthropological Association of Greece what is required is a detailed description of the present status of the skull, so that no one in future can arbitrarily damage it further. There is also the problem of dating which has been scientifically dated at about 700,000 years ago not 300,000 as is given at the information desk. There is a very detailed record of the excavations and findings which need to receive further public presentation, but which have never been catalogued so as to prevent specimens going missing.

It is very unfortunate that the Greek Archaeological Department stopped Dr Aris Poulianos from further work in the Cave without any explanation. It is also very worrying that Dr Poulianos and his wife were physically attacked and injured in their home earlier this year and the culprits have not been found. He was also verbally abused when attempting to give an invited presentation to teachers and school children.

Senior anthropologists and geologists have also been denied access to the Cave and the specimens for further study on a number of occasions without substantive reasons. Earlier this year there has also been misinformation given to the Greek Parliament concerning financial aspects of the Cave.
I look forward to receiving answers to these questions.
Yours faithfully
Professor C G N Mascie-Taylor MA, PhD, ScD (all Cambridge), FSB, FNAS (Hungary)
Professor of Human Population Biology and Health and President of the European Anthropological Association
(Reference)

The most important conclusion of Dr Poulianos' research regards the co-existence of all main anthropological types (African – Kobi, Asian – Beijing and European – Petralona) at almost the same period (700,000, 500,000 and 750,000 respectively). That means: the appearance of the today human main populations (races or even better phyllae – from the Greek language and that's why polyphyletic etc) is tending to almost 1,000,000 m.y.a. and not to only 10,000 or 30,000 years as currently considered worldwide.

However, independently if there is a scientific dispute on the above, it is only sad to become aware that research is not allowed to those who are not coordinated to the "standard" knowledge, risking even their lives in front of gun shooters.

Is this a cover up of an incredible discovery that the powers-that-be do not want us to have access to? You be the judge.

Update from editor 31 December, 2018: Dr Poulianos wrote to Ancient Origins to state that unfortunately the suppression of information regarding the Petralona skull has continued:

"Experiencing the above I am asserting that the prohibition of research regarding human history is due to the following (most obvious, i.e. not exposing political) reasons:

> Various (Worldwide) Universities and their state allied forums have the power to influence all the small range national institutions in order to achieve the aforementioned prohibition. In turn, this is most probably due to the fact that such research is allowed only to some "confidential" persons. Thus, re-righting chapters of human history is only their "right". Whoever does not belong to such clubs and / or forums has to be stopped by all existing means, even by falsifying the truth against well documented evidence (i.e. without providing any scientific contradicting argument). Obviously, I am asserting that knowledge is under control, especially what concerns human history. Therefore, I agree with Lenie Reedijk's description regarding the "Cover Up", as well as the following comments to her article."

By John Black

Parent-Teacher Communication and Conflict Management in Early Childhood and Primary Education: A Review of Theory and Practice

Dr Agni Viki
School Counselor, PE60 Early Childhood Sector, Eastern Attica

Abstract:
This paper has its origins in an observation that recurs with striking regularity in the course of advisory work across the early childhood settings of Eastern Attica: those teachers who struggle most in their relationships with parents are not necessarily those with the weakest pedagogical skills, but often those who have never received any preparation in how to speak with adults under pressure. That observation provides the starting point for this systematic literature review, which examines the dynamics of the parent-teacher relationship in early childhood education, with particular attention to the management of interpersonal conflict. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979, 2006) and Epstein's framework of overlapping spheres of influence (2001), the review analyses the factors that generate conflict, among them divergent expectations, role ambiguity, and cultural difference, and identifies empirically grounded strategies for its resolution, including active listening, cognitive reframing, and the proactive cultivation of trust. The paper argues for the incorporation of adult communication and crisis management training into initial teacher education programmes, acknowledges the transformative role of digital media and artificial intelligence in reshaping contemporary home-school communication, and concludes with a critical account of the review's limitations and directions for future research.

Keywords: early childhood education, parent-teacher communication, conflict management, bioecological model, parental involvement, systemic approach, digital communication.

1. Introduction

Early childhood represents a critical developmental period during which the child undergoes its first substantive transition from the protected environment of the family into the institutional setting of the school. Within a systemic theoretical framework, this transition is not solely a matter for the child: it generates a new field of interaction between two central microsystems, the family and the nursery school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The quality of that interaction has been closely linked to school readiness, socio-emotional development, and academic achievement in the early years (Pianta, 1999).

Conflicts between parents and teachers, while inevitable in any human relationship, can, when left unresolved, fracture the mesosystem and create a dysfunctional environment for the child. Children who experience contradictory messages or sustained tension between their principal adult figures frequently exhibit elevated levels of anxiety, behavioural difficulties, and problems of school adjustment (Lasky, 2000). Understanding the factors that generate conflict and identifying the strategies capable of preventing or resolving it effectively, must therefore be regarded as a central priority for both educational practice and research.

In the contemporary multicultural school, families arrive from widely differing cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds, circumstances that appreciably increase the likelihood of misunderstanding and tension. Differing cultural assumptions about the teacher's role, about what schooling should deliver, and about appropriate modes of communication can place serious obstacles in the way of productive partnership (Turnbull et al., 2015). Cultural competence, the capacity to recognise, respect, and engage constructively with difference, accordingly, emerges as a critical preventive resource, and yet it remains one of the most consistently neglected elements of initial teacher preparation.

For the purposes of this paper, conflict is defined as a disagreement or confrontation that acquires sufficient interpersonal intensity to impair the functioning of the home-school relationship; crisis, by contrast, designates the acute phase of conflict, in which trust and workable communication are themselves at stake. The distinction matters analytically, because it allows for the design of preventive interventions at low-intensity stages, as well as restorative interventions once conflict has escalated.

The aim of the present review is to examine, through a systematic survey of the relevant literature, the structural, psychological, and cultural factors that precipitate communicative breakdown, and the empirically supported methods available for managing the resulting conflicts. The paper also considers, with a critical eye, the role that digital media and artificial intelligence tools are playing in reshaping the contemporary landscape of home-school communication.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

The analysis rests principally on Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development (1979), as subsequently revised into its bioecological form in the early 1990s (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The model holds that child development is shaped by interactions occurring across a series of nested environmental levels: the microsystem, comprising the child's immediate settings , family, school, and peers; the mesosystem, which describes the relationships between two or more microsystems; the exosystem, encompassing structures that affect the child indirectly, such as the parents' workplace; the macrosystem, consisting of cultural values, laws, and policy; and finally the chronosystem, which captures changes over time and across the historical context of the child's life.

Central to the theory is the argument that development is neither the product of individual characteristics alone nor the outcome of unidirectional environmental influences, but emerges from the dynamic, reciprocal interaction between the developing person and the

multiple systems that surround them (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Within early childhood education, the mesosystem carries particular analytical weight, since it is precisely the quality of the connection between the child's two principal microsystems that is at issue. When that connection is characterised by coherence, consistency, and bidirectional communication, the child inhabits a supportive developmental environment. When conflict prevails, the cost falls primarily on the child, and it is worth stating that plainly.

2.2 A Systemic Reading of Conflict

Interpreting parent-teacher conflict through the lens of General Systems Theory moves the analysis well beyond the search for individual blame, directing attention instead towards the dynamic interaction of subsystems. Within this framework, conflict is understood in terms of circular causality: the behaviour of parents and teachers functions simultaneously as stimulus and response, generating feedback loops that can become self-reinforcing. A school's sharp criticism of a pupil's performance may, for instance, provoke a defensive withdrawal on the family's part, which the school in turn misreads as indifference, prompting yet more intense pressure. The two systems find themselves locked in a cycle of dysfunctional communication whose disruption requires a deliberate intervention from at least one of the parties involved.

From the perspective of family therapy, a further dimension of this dynamic lies in the concepts of boundaries and homeostasis. When the boundaries between the two systems are dysfunctional, whether excessively rigid, blocking any productive exchange, or diffuse, producing confusion about roles, conflict frequently operates as a mechanism for preserving imbalance rather than resolving it. A family confronting internal crisis, whether divorce, bereavement, or financial difficulty, may displace tension outward onto the school, precisely in order to avoid the painful internal reorganisation that resolution would require.

At the centre of this systemic tension, the pupil is frequently positioned through the process of triangulation. When relational rupture between adults runs deep, the child is drawn, consciously or otherwise, into managing the conflict by aligning with one party against the other. In such circumstances, the child's symptomatic behaviour, a sudden decline in attainment, school refusal, or disruptive conduct, acquires a functional character within the system: it absorbs tension and allows the adults to avoid confronting the deeper structural deficits in their collaboration. Intervention, accordingly, cannot limit itself to managing the symptom; it must aim at de-triangulation and at releasing the pupil from a role that properly belongs to the adults.

2.3 Epstein's Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Joyce Epstein's framework (2001) provides the operational basis for understanding parental involvement and complements the bioecological model with a practical, applied dimension. Epstein proposes that family, school, and community may interact in one of two ways: either as separate and independent spheres of influence, in which case the child's developmental opportunities are constrained, or as overlapping spheres working towards shared goals, in which case the possibilities for learning multiply. The degree of overlap is determined by the practices schools adopt in reaching out to families, by families' own prior experiences of the educational system, by the extent of community engagement with the school, and by the child's age and stage of development.

Epstein (2001) argues that only genuinely bidirectional communication can produce a true partnership between family and school. Her typology of six forms of parental involvement assigns particular significance to the second , communication , as the most directly relevant to conflict prevention, since it concerns the exchange of information about the child's progress and the school's programmes. The model supports the view that conflict commonly rests not on fundamental value differences but on failures of communication and

co-ordination, pointing towards the need for structured interventions capable of building overlap rather than allowing the spheres to drift apart.

3. Methodology

This paper follows the methodology of the narrative systematic review. Searches were conducted across the databases ERIC, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar, covering a three-decade span (1994-2024) with particular emphasis on the period 2014-2024. The following search terms were used, singly and in combination: parent-teacher communication, early childhood education, conflict management, preschool, family-school partnerships, teacher-parent relationships, parental involvement, and home-school relations. The search was conducted initially in English, with a subsequent check for relevant Greek-language literature.

Inclusion criteria required a focus on early childhood or primary education, publication in a peer-reviewed journal or recognised academic press, and the presence of either empirical data , quantitative or qualitative , or substantiated theoretical analysis bearing on parent-teacher communication or conflict. Studies without explicit specification of educational level were excluded, as were unpublished dissertations and grey literature of low methodological rigour. Where duplicates were identified, the more recent or more analytically detailed version was retained. In total, over one hundred studies were assessed at initial title-and-abstract screening stage, of which approximately forty were selected for full-text reading. The resulting data were organised into thematic categories corresponding to the aetiology of conflicts and strategies for their management, following a process of thematic coding conducted without the assistance of qualitative data analysis software.

4. The Aetiology of Conflict

4.1 Role Ambiguity and Divergent Expectations

One of the most frequent sources of conflict is the divergent understanding that parents and teachers hold regarding their respective roles in a child's education, a divergence that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) analysed within a psychological model of parental involvement. Their framework identifies three constructs central to parents' involvement decisions: their construction of the parental role, their sense of efficacy in engaging with the school, and their perception of invitations or barriers to involvement. When parents feel that their authority as the child's primary educators is being questioned, they react defensively, a dynamic that Lau et al. (2011) confirm across a range of cultural contexts.

Parents characteristically view their child as a unique individual whose particular qualities and needs they know intimately; teachers approach the same child through the lens of developmental norms and pedagogical standards, with the needs of the whole group in view (Lasky, 2000; Pianta, 1999). This asymmetry of knowledge is not in itself problematic , indeed, it is necessary and, at its best, complementary. Difficulties arise when neither party recognises the value of the other's perspective, producing a mutual depreciation that expresses itself as conflict over matters of assessment or behavior management. Compounding this, parents frequently conceive of the nursery school either as a care facility or as an arena of strict academic preparation for the next educational stage, while teachers emphasize socialization and learning through play, a philosophical divergence that demands open dialogue rather than parallel monologue.

4.2 Cultural Difference and Language Barriers

In contemporary multicultural early childhood settings, differing cultural assumptions about the teacher's authority and about appropriate modes of communication can pose significant obstacles to productive partnership. A particularly instructive example is the varying understanding of parental involvement itself: in many Western cultural contexts, active parental participation in school life is read as a marker of responsible parenting, while in

numerous Asian and African traditions , and indeed in older patterns of practice in Greece , deferring to the teacher's professional authority, and refraining from direct interference in their work, expresses respect rather than disengagement (Turnbull et al., 2015). Teachers who lack this cultural understanding are liable to misread such restraint as indifference, thereby generating unnecessary tension.

Language barriers compound these difficulties, restricting the meaningful participation of families with limited proficiency in the language of instruction and making written communications, letters, newsletters, assessments, effectively inaccessible. Cultural competence, understood as the capacity to recognise, respect, and draw productively on difference, emerges here as an indispensable professional skill (Turnbull et al., 2015).

4.3 Communicative Dysfunction

A further dimension of conflict concerns the quality and structure of communication between the two parties. Communication between schools and families characteristically assumes a one-directional character, with the school confining itself to the transmission of information or instructions while discouraging substantive dialogue (Graham-Clay, 2005). The use of specialised pedagogical terminology exacerbates this problem by creating feelings of exclusion or inadequacy in parents, thus undermining the trust on which genuine collaboration depends. Graham-Clay (2005) argues that effective communication requires not only a variety of channels, telephone contact, communication diaries, scheduled meetings, open days, but also an active responsiveness to the different needs and capacities of individual families.

There is, however, a deeper dimension to this dysfunction that the technical literature tends to understate: the one-directional flow of information is not simply an organisational problem, nor a matter of underdeveloped interpersonal skills. It is also a question of power. Information moves from the institutional centre to the periphery, and families are afforded little genuine agency in shaping the educational process. This asymmetric structure of authority may well constitute the deepest root of many conflicts that present, on the surface, as disagreements about specific incidents. To name it as such is not to demonise the institution; it is to understand what needs to change.

4.4 Structural and Socio-Economic Constraints

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) demonstrate that barriers to parental involvement operate across four levels, factors relating to the parent and family, to the child, to the parent-teacher relationship, and to the wider social context, and resist any reduction to a single cause. At the level of the relationship, the heightened occupational demands on parents and the inflexibility of working schedules frequently conflict with the institutional timetable of the nursery school. The resulting temporal incompatibility is commonly misread by teachers as parental indifference, when it is more accurately understood as the effect of external pressures originating in the exosystem (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This misattribution generates guilt in parents and frustration in teachers and so damages the relationship further. Families with low socio-economic resources, those belonging to minority ethnic communities, or those with limited proficiency in the language of instruction, face multiple and often mutually reinforcing barriers to involvement; teachers are obliged to recognise these structural inequalities rather than attribute them to lack of interest.

4.5 Psychological Projection and Intersubjective Interference

Conflicts are often rooted in the personal educational histories that parents carry into the relationship. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) describes, in what she terms 'ghosts in the classroom', the way in which parents bring to the school their own memories, fears, and experiences from their years as pupils. Through the mechanism of psychological projection, a

parent whose schooling was marked by failure or rejection may approach the teacher with suspicion or hostility, perceiving in them a critic rather than a partner (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). These intersubjective interferences distort present reality and generate reactions disproportionate to the incidents that provoke them. It is equally worth noting that teachers are not immune to analogous projections, which may derive from their own educational experiences or from the occupational culture into which they have been socialised. This bilateral dimension of intersubjective interference underlines the importance of reflective practice as a constitutive element of ongoing professional development.

4.6 Strategies for Managing and Resolving Conflict

The literature converges on the need to move from adversarial models of conflict management towards collaborative models of conflict resolution, prioritising the cultivation of trust before any crisis arises. This shift is not merely a matter of technique; it reflects a fundamental change in the philosophy governing the home-school relationship, a transition from the logic of service provider and user to that of partners with a shared purpose.

4.7 Bidirectional Communication

Effective communication must be dialogic, not merely informational. Unlike the traditional model of one-directional information transmission, bidirectional communication requires the active participation of both parties, the articulation of views, concerns, and proposals, and the construction of shared understandings and common goals. Tools such as communication diaries, regularly scheduled meetings, and digital platforms, when used with respect for appropriate institutional limits, reduce uncertainty and strengthen the sense of participation (Graham-Clay, 2005).

In the context of digital communication, effectiveness depends on the clear definition of response-time expectations, on avoiding contact during periods of heightened emotional tension, and on prioritising face-to-face meeting when the matter at issue involves relational conflict. Written communication has real value for sharing information and recording agreed steps; the restoration of trust, however, frequently requires dialogic co-presence, in which empathy and non-verbal communication can operate.

4.8 Active Listening and Empathic Engagement

In situations of acute conflict, techniques of active listening are critical. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) proposes a five-stage framework for defusing tension, commonly referred to in the international literature as L.E.A.S.T., Listen, Empathise, Apologise/Acknowledge, Solve, Thank. The teacher listens without interruption, recognises the parent's emotional state, and accepts the significance of the issue before proposing any solution. Crucial here is the distinction between acknowledging feeling and accepting a position: the teacher can validate a parent's distress without conceding to every demand. This balance of empathic responsiveness and professional steadiness is de-escalatory in its effect. Empirical evidence supports the value of this approach: teachers trained in active listening techniques report higher levels of professional efficacy in their interactions with parents, while parents themselves rate their relationships with schools more positively when they feel genuinely heard (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

4.9 Cognitive Reframing

Reframing is a cognitive-communicative technique that shifts attention from the problem to the possibility of resolution. It involves the re-description of a negatively charged behaviour or situation within a framework of functional interpretation, not by denying the facts, but by illuminating a different perspective on them. In educational settings, reframing allows teachers to transform adversarial exchanges into opportunities for mutual understanding,

while preserving professional boundaries and a constructive tone. A parent who reacts with anger to an assessment, for example, can be reframed as expressing deep concern and care for the child, a reinterpretation that opens the way to more productive dialogue than any defensive response would permit.

4.10 A Systemic Approach: The School as Community

The cultivation of trust before conflict emerges is the single most effective preventive strategy the literature identifies. Symeou (2002), whose research examined home-school relations extensively within the Cypriot educational system, found that when schools invest in informal modes of communication, community events, parenting workshops, open days, social distance diminishes and conflicts are more readily resolved because a prior capital of trust already exists. The systemic orientation that underpins this approach places its emphasis on building a coherent educational ecosystem in which all those involved feel themselves to be members of a community with shared goals, rather than standing by for crises to which they then react.

4.11 Digital Tools and Artificial Intelligence in Home-School Communication

The emergence of artificial intelligence is reshaping the practices of parent-teacher communication not only in terms of the channels available, but also in terms of the expectations around immediacy, availability, and accountability that those channels carry. The shift from paper-based communication diaries to digital platforms and automated information flows increases the frequency of contact, but simultaneously raises the likelihood of misunderstanding: written language lacks the paralinguistic cues that give face-to-face communication its texture, while speed of response is readily taken as an index of interest or indifference (Graham-Clay, 2005).

Artificial intelligence tools may function as genuinely supportive aids to communication, provided they are used with pedagogical responsibility and clear ethical limits. Applications that help practitioners formulate clear messages, simplify specialist terminology, or facilitate communication with families whose first language differs from the school's language of instruction can meaningfully reduce the burden of misunderstanding. Excessive standardisation, however, risks evacuating the relational dimension of communication and reinforcing the very sense of impersonal treatment that erodes trust. Every digital communication channel that incorporates automation or text-processing functions must be grounded in the principles of data minimisation, informed consent, and institutional accountability, since home-school communication routinely involves sensitive information about a child's development, behaviour, and family circumstances, the protection of which is at once a legal and an ethical obligation.

4.12 Practical Implications for Teachers

The most effective preventive measure available to individual teachers is the establishment of structured channels of bidirectional communication from the opening week of the school year. Communication diaries and digital platforms should record not only difficulties and concerns but also positive moments and developmental achievements, so that parents come to feel that their child is seen as an individual rather than as one of a group. The L.E.A.S.T. framework, applied in moments of tension, permits de-escalation and a return to productive dialogue. Brief thematic workshops for parents at the start of the year, explaining in accessible language the pedagogical rationale for play-based learning and clarifying the boundaries between home and school roles, can substantially reduce the incidence of conflict rooted in divergent expectations. Flexibility in scheduling meetings, including the offer of telephone appointments to parents whose working patterns make attendance impossible, prevents the systematic misreading of absence as disengagement.

4.13 Practical Implications for Parents

Communication is a bilateral process, and the reorientation under discussion is one in which parents are equally implicated. Sharing positive observations with the teacher, rather than making contact only when problems arise, creates a climate of mutual appreciation. Using first-person formulations, 'I am concerned because I have noticed that' rather than second-person accusations, dramatically reduces the interlocutor's defensive response. Coming to meetings with specific questions, and with the recognition that parents and teachers observe the same child in quite different social contexts, allows for the synthesis of complementary perspectives and supports the early identification of difficulty before it becomes entrenched.

5. Conclusions

The evidence reviewed here suggests that conflict in the early childhood setting is not inherently destructive: it can function as an occasion for the renegotiation of roles and the deepening of understanding, provided the necessary conditions of skill and psychological readiness exist on both sides. This is a significant conceptual shift. To recognise that conflict can serve as a catalyst for better collaboration is not to minimise the real difficulties it creates, but to refuse the fatalism that treats it as mere breakdown.

At the same time, the literature is unambiguous about the systemic gaps in teacher preparation. Programmes of initial teacher education typically give extensive coverage to pedagogy, teaching methodology, and developmental psychology, while consistently neglecting the development of skills in communicating with adults, managing conflict, and working across cultural difference (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004). This gap leaves teachers structurally unprepared for the complex and emotionally demanding situations that their relationships with families routinely produce.

The consistent message of the literature is that transparency, respect for difference, and timely bidirectional communication constitute the foundations of conflict prevention. Initial teacher education programmes must incorporate training in parental guidance and conflict management; schools and local authorities must develop structured family communication programmes and provide ongoing continuing professional development in intercultural communication. In the Greek context, the absence of any systematic institutional support for conflict management in early childhood settings makes the case for purposefully designed initiatives, at both initial and in-service levels, still more urgent.

In the current moment, conflicts in the home-school relationship are generated not only by divergent expectations and role ambiguity but also by new forms of digital friction. The educational community is called upon to cultivate a form of digital pedagogical competence that encompasses professional ethics, boundary-setting, data protection, and empathy in written communication, so that artificial intelligence and digital tools strengthen the home-school relationship rather than replacing the human substance at its core.

5.1 Limitations of the Review

Several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting the findings of this review. First, the literature surveyed is predominantly Anglophone, and does not fully capture the specific institutional, cultural, and structural features of the Greek educational context. Second, the studies included display considerable heterogeneity in their methodologies, samples, and measures, making systematic quantitative synthesis inadvisable. Third, the majority of the research base concerns Western educational systems, and the conclusions reached here do not constitute automatic universal generalisations. Fourth, as a narrative review rather than a fully systematic one, this paper does not employ a formal risk-of-bias protocol of the kind prescribed by PRISMA, a limitation that is acknowledged, and that points towards more rigorously structured future work.

The rapid evolution of digital communication technologies and artificial intelligence tools means, further, that those aspects of the conclusions that bear on communication channels are subject to accelerating obsolescence and require continuous updating. Future research would benefit from examining specifically how digital practices affect trust, misunderstanding, and the dynamics of conflict, with particular attention to questions of privacy, equity of access, and digital pedagogical competence. The generation of Greek primary empirical research on conflict management in the early childhood setting remains an open challenge, and one that the international literature cannot substitute for.

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Gerontology in 21st Century Greece: Policies, Challenges and Social Inequalities in Elderly Care

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Abstract:
Demographic aging in Greece constitutes a major social and political challenge, with direct implications for health, welfare and social cohesion systems. This article examines the situation of the elderly through the lens of Gerontology and Social Policy, focusing on the multidimensional challenges that accompany the aging of the population. At the health level, the lack of coordinated primary care, the absence of specialized geriatricians and the increased incidence of chronic diseases and mental disorders are highlighted. At the social level, the weakening of family ties, limited participation in communities and increasing loneliness increase the risk of social exclusion. At the economic level, poverty and insecurity limit the possibilities of a dignified life. Despite existing state interventions and structures, such as the KAPI, the "Help at Home" program and the Elderly Care Units, deficits in the provision of comprehensive care remain evident, while digital exclusion adds a new dimension of marginalization. The article supports the need to adopt an intersectoral and people-centered policy model, which will promote active aging, social inclusion and the assurance of dignity. The integration of Gerontology in the formulation of public policies is considered a critical prerequisite for the development of a society that views aging not as a burden, but as an opportunity for social empowerment and solidarity. The article examines the aging population in Greece through the lens of Gerontology and Social Policy, analyzing the main challenges faced by older people in terms of health, social inclusion and economic security. Particular emphasis is given to inequalities, social isolation and digital exclusion, as well as existing care structures. The article supports the need for a holistic, cross-sectoral approach to active aging and social inclusion, aiming to ensure the dignity and participation of older people in Greek society.

Keywords: gerontology, old age, Greece, social policy, care, vulnerable groups, inequalities.

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1. Introduction

Demographic aging is one of the most important social and health issues of the 21st century. Globally, the increase in life expectancy combined with the decline in birth rates has led to an unprecedented expansion of the elderly population (United Nations, 2019). Greece is ranked among the countries with the highest aging index in Europe. According to Eurostat data (2025), almost one fifth of the Greek population is over 65 years old, while forecasts show that by 2050 citizens in this age group will constitute approximately one third of the total population.

The systematic study of aging processes is part of the field of Gerontology, which is defined as the science that investigates the biological, psychological and social dimensions of aging, seeking a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Birren&Schroots, 2001). Gerontology is differentiated from Geriatrics, which focuses mainly on the medical dimension, namely the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases associated with advanced age (Pathy et al., 2006). While Geriatrics is clearly clinical in nature, Gerontology examines more broadly the social and psychological implications of aging.

The elderly constitute a social group that is often at risk of social exclusion. The combination of factors such as deteriorating health, limited economic opportunities, loneliness and changes in family ties increase the risk of marginalization. Social isolation not only affects quality of life but also mental and physical health, as it is associated with increased mortality and a greater burden on the health system (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

2. The situation in Greece: Real data

Demographic aging in Greece is now socially and politically visible. According to a recent ELSTAT report, the percentage of people aged 65 and over amounts to 22.8% of the population, representing approximately 2.39 million citizens (Capital.gr., 2025). Estimates predict that by 2050, this percentage will likely reach 1/3 of the total population. There is also an increase in life expectancy: from approximately 79.3 years in 2003, today it has increased further (Michailidis, 2025). Specifically, based on Eurostat data for 2021, total life expectancy amounts to approximately 80.2 years, with women living an average of 82.9 years and men 77.4 years (Imerisias, 2025). However, healthy life expectancy is not increasing correspondingly. According to 2020 data, Greek women are expected to live 66.8 years of healthy life, while Greek men are expected to live about 65 years (Kathimerini, 2022). Other sources present even higher figures: up to 67.8 years for women and 66.2 years for men, ranking the country in the third highest position in the European Union in this indicator (Karagyorgos, 2024). Nevertheless, the overall impact on quality of life remains limited.

Regarding social welfare structures for the elderly, Greece has a network of services that includes the Open Elderly Protection Centers (KAPI), the “Home Help” program, which offers care in the familiar environment of the elderly, Social Welfare Information, as well as the Elderly Care Units, private and non-profit, which provide closed care to elderly people without adequate family support (Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, 2025). Despite the availability of these structures, many elderly people continue to experience additional risks such as poverty, loneliness, digital exclusion and even abuse. According to the most recent data, 18.8% of people aged 65 and over are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (KEDE, 2025). This concerns vulnerable age groups that need further support.

3. Main challenges

3.1. Healthcare and chronic diseases

The aging of the population is accompanied by an increase in the burden on health systems, mainly due to chronic diseases that occur with greater frequency in the elderly (WHO, 2015).

In Greece, the absence of a coordinated and functional primary health care system remains evident, which often leads to fragmented care and hospital overload (Economou, 2010).

Furthermore, there is a shortage of specialized geriatricians, as Geriatrics is not a recognized medical specialty in Greece, unlike other European countries (European Union Geriatric Medicine Society, 2022). This limits the possibilities for comprehensive treatment of the complex health problems that occur in old age.

The mental health of the elderly is another critical aspect. Depression is estimated to affect approximately 15-20% of people over 65 years of age, often without diagnosis and treatment, resulting in serious impacts on quality of life and an increased risk of mortality (WHO, 2017).

Depression in the elderly is multifactorial: biological (inflammation, vascular damage, neurotrophic mechanisms), medical comorbidities (e.g. cardiovascular, pain, diabetes mellitus), role losses/bereavement, social isolation/loneliness, financial insecurity and low access to services. WHO (2021) has highlighted that isolation/loneliness is a major determinant of mental health in old age, with measurable impacts on quality of life and longevity. A large study (Zhang et al., 2023) showed that moderate–severe depressive symptoms are associated with increased total, HF and coronary mortality in adults, an association that is particularly significant in the elderly.

3.2. Social isolation and loneliness

Although in several European data the highest rates of reported loneliness occur in younger groups, older people experience more objective isolation (e.g. widowhood, single-person households, deteriorating health). In 2024 the old-age dependency ratio in the EU reached 33.9% (≈3 people of working age for every 65+), systemically increasing the risks of isolation.

Social isolation is one of the most important risks faced by older people. Broken family structures, reduced participation in collective activities and the absence of community ties contribute to the phenomenon (Phillipson, 2013). In Greece, where the family has traditionally played a central role in caring for the elderly, social and economic changes have weakened this safety net.

Lack of accessibility to infrastructure, public transport and services further hinders social participation. The problem is exacerbated in rural areas, where opportunities for movement and social activity are limited (Eurostat, 2020).More specifically, the effects of loneliness and social isolation concern both health and society:

Mortality: A meta-analysis (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015) showed an increased risk of death: social isolation OR 1.29, loneliness OR 1.26, living alone OR 1.32. The magnitude of the risk is comparable to established factors.

Mental health & behavior: Loneliness is strongly associated with depression/anxiety and unhealthy behaviors (e.g. smoking, poor diet) (European Commission, 2025).

Cognitive function/dementia: Systematic reviews link isolation/loneliness to poorer cognitive performance and increased risk of dementia. Recent evidence suggests that interventions for hearing loss may reduce isolation/loneliness over 3 years (Guarnera et al., 2023).

Social cohesion: Loneliness is associated with lower trust and reduced willingness to participate/vote, with negative consequences for democratic participation and social capital (European Commission, 2025).

3.3. Digital exclusion

The digital transformation has made access to and use of digital technologies a prerequisite for social participation. However, the older age group (65+) still shows systematically lower levels of access, skills and use, resulting in digital exclusion, a form of social inequality that interacts with education, income, health and geography. At EU level, in 2023 only 55–56% of

the population aged 16–74 had at least basic digital skills, while for those aged 65–74 this percentage drops to around 28%. The distance to the Digital Decade 2030 target remains significant (Eurostat, 2024).

Van Dijk's classic scheme conceives of digital inequality as successive stages of access: (a) motivation, (b) material/technical access, (c) skills and (d) uses/outcomes. Research shows that as material access improves, inequality shifts to skills and, more importantly, to uses (e.g., banking, health, public services) and outcomes (van Dijk, 2006; Kuhn et al., 2023). This framework is particularly useful for older adults, who often experience lower motivation ("what am I getting?"), specific ergonomic/accessibility needs, and higher cognitive load on critical tasks (e.g., authentication).

Although household coverage with internet access is increasing, persistent gaps persist: in 2024 Greece is among the countries with the lowest household access (87%), while at the EU regional level, "pockets" of non-use are identified, e.g. Central Greece with 17.3% of people aged 16–74 who have never used the internet (2023). Geography, age and educational level interact, widening exclusion (Eurostat, 2024).

The transition of public services and the banking system to electronic platforms (such as gov.gr) has strongly highlighted the digital exclusion experienced by older people. According to Eurostat (2021), only 46% of Greeks aged 65-74 used the internet in the last year, a percentage significantly lower than the European average.

Telehealth and digital health tools offer potential (monitoring, access to services), but unequal access/skills lead to health inequities. Systematic reviews show that these technologies are feasible and acceptable for older people under supportive conditions, while factors such as hearing/communication difficulties remain barriers (Zou et al., 2023; WHO, 2021).

The limited use is related to both the low level of digital skills and the absence of targeted training programs. The need for "digital empowerment" and support is becoming imperative, so that older people can access critical services and not be further marginalized (OECD, 2021).

4. Good practices and suggestions

Demographic ageing is not only a challenge but also an opportunity for the reshaping of social inclusion and health care policies. Here are some key directions, with an emphasis on internationally recognized standards and good practices.

Development of local active ageing centres: The creation of community centres offering cultural, sports and lifelong learning activities enhances the participation of older people and reduces social isolation (WHO, 2015). Similar models are already operating in many European countries, while Greece could build on the existing KAPI network by expanding their services.

"Digital Age Education" programmes: Initiatives such as Universities of the Third Age or "Digital Ambassadors" can act as levers for reducing digital exclusion. The experience of EU countries shows that systematic training of older people in digital skills significantly improves their access to services and increases their autonomy (European Commission, 2020).

Institutionalization of professional gerontologists in public structures: The presence of gerontologists in hospitals, health centers and social services could fill the gap created by the absence of a geriatric specialty in Greece. Gerontologists, with their holistic approach, could bridge the gap between health and social care (EUGMS, 2022).

Support for caregivers: Care for older people is often left to family members or professionals with minimal support. The development of education, psychological support and financial incentives for caregivers is crucial to ensure the sustainability of care (OECD, 2021).

Creating "age-friendly cities": The World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities framework offers guidelines for adapting urban environments: from accessibility to public

spaces and transportation to health services and social participation (WHO, 2007). Adopting such standards in Greece could improve the daily lives of older people at the local level.
Intergenerational connection: Developing programs that bring young and older people together, such as joint activities in schools, cultural centers or volunteering, has been shown to reduce stereotypes, promote solidarity and strengthen community cohesion (Generations United, 2018).

5. Conclusions

The aging of the population is perhaps the most important social challenge of the coming decades. The increase in life expectancy, combined with the decline in birth rates, is shaping a new reality that requires a radical readjustment of policies at all levels. It is not just a demographic issue, but a factor that affects the health system, social cohesion, the economy and, ultimately, the very identity of society.

In this context, the elderly cannot be treated as passive recipients of care, but as active members of society. Their respect, dignity and meaningful participation are not privileges, but fundamental rights. Strengthening their presence in work, culture, education and public life contributes not only to their personal quality of life, but also to the empowerment of society as a whole.

Greece needs a coherent national strategy for active aging. This strategy must aim to prevent social exclusion, provide comprehensive health and care services, strengthen community structures, and create age-friendly environments. Planning cannot be limited to piecemeal measures. Coordination, long-term planning, and cooperation between the state, local government, civil society, and the private sector are required.

At the same time, Gerontology must be integrated as a scientific background at multiple levels of public policy. In health, to provide services that understand the specificities of aging. In education, to develop lifelong learning and intergenerational education programs. In technology, with the aim of bridging the digital divide. In work, through policies that recognize the value of experience and active participation. In culture, through actions that highlight the contribution of older people to collective memory and social creation.

Successfully managing demographic ageing is not just an administrative task. It is a test of humanity, respect and social foresight. The challenge is great, but it is also an opportunity to build a society that is fairer, more inclusive and better prepared for the future.

Although this article focuses on the Greek case, the challenges analyzed are also highly relevant for other societies with rapidly aging populations, such as China. China is experiencing one of the most rapid demographic transitions in the world, with a rapidly growing elderly population and increasing pressure on family care networks, health systems and social services. As in Greece, issues such as the management of chronic diseases, inequalities between urban and rural areas, social isolation and digital exclusion are becoming central to the quality of life of older people. At the same time, China has developed innovative models of community care and digital health, which offer useful lessons for other countries. A comparative approach between Greece and China could, therefore, contribute substantially to the design of comprehensive and people-centered aging policies that promote social inclusion, active aging and intergenerational solidarity.

Abbreviations

ELSTAT- Hellenic Statistical Authority
EU- European Union
EUGMS- European Geriatric Medicine Society
HF- Heart Failure
KAPI- Open Care Centers for the Elderly (Κέντρα Ανοικτής Προστασίας Ηλικιωμένων)
KEDE- Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (Κεντρική Ένωση Δήμων Ελλάδας)

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WHO- World Health Organization

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