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# Showcasing sepulchral heritage through cultural routes and activities: The views and opinions of the “audience” of the Anastasis Cemetery in Piraeus

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### Abstract:

**Purpose** - Cemeteries, intrinsically linked to the history of people and communities, are places of historical remembrance and significant witnesses to local history. However, their abundant written and artistic testimonies often remain obscure, primarily due to the association of these sites with death and decay. The Anastasis Cemetery (“Cemetery of Resurrection”) in the Evgenia Drapetsona area of Piraeus is a noteworthy case. Numerous funerary monuments attest to the presence of prominent families from Piraeus, who have contributed to the historical development and shaping of the city's identity. The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to highlight the “voices” of the cemetery audience regarding the sepulchral heritage of Piraeus, focusing on its preservation, enhancement, and utilisation; and second, to suggest ways for the transformation and cultural revitalisation of the burial site, primarily through cultural routes and various activities.

**Design/methodology/approach** - To study the attitudes and opinions of the audience at the Anastasis Cemetery, an online survey was conducted over approximately one year. This digital approach proved effective, resulting in a considerable number of completed questionnaires. Participants from municipalities in Attica were invited to engage, provided they had prior familiarity with the Cemetery and had visited it at least once. In total, the survey engaged 104 participants.

**Findings** - The research highlighted the participants' attitudes and opinions on issues related to the use of the burial site, as well as its educational and cultural utilisation through activities, art exhibitions, lectures, tours, and workshops, while always considering its primary function and users. Additionally, it identifies ways in which the audience could contribute to the management of the burial site.

**Originality/value** - This research introduces, for the first time, the issue of showcasing and utilizing Greek funerary heritage, examining the “voices” of the cemetery audience, which constitutes the users of the space.

**Index Terms** — Online audience research, The Anastasis Cemetery (“Cemetery of Resurrection”) of Piraeus, Funerary cultural heritage, Management of cultural heritage, Cultural routes, Cultural tourism.

## I. INTRODUCTION – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Cemeteries are spaces inextricably linked with local history and, as such, they serve as agents of memory and witnesses to historical continuity, carrying multifaceted information about the deceased and their era. Despite this, very few cemeteries in Greece receive attention commensurate with their cultural value. The vast wealth of historical testimonies found in cemeteries— whether on inscriptions or in representations such as busts— often languishes in obscurity due to the peculiar nature of these spaces.

For local residents, cemeteries are loci of the morbid and the macabre, or spaces to be generally avoided due to their association with death and decay. This attitude is demonstrated by the fact that cemeteries across Greece today are strictly delimited and contained within tall walls.

This article is a case study of the Anastasis Cemetery (Cemetery of Resurrection) in Piraeus [1], [2, pp. 121, 152, 252, 299], [3], [4], [5], which was the city's new cemetery at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the old cemetery and the graves were transferred from the churchyard of Saint Dionysios church. The Cemetery is situated in the area now known as Evgeneia in Drapetsona. In addition to their historical and aesthetic significance, the cemetery's sepulchral monuments offer valuable insights into the family histories of notable figures who lived and worked in Piraeus during the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. By examining these personal stories, we can delve deeper into the city's local history [6, pp. 1266-1270] and analyse the transformations of its character over time.

Inspired by the sepulchral heritage of Piraeus, this article outlines proposals for cultural routes and actions, as well as the participation of Piraeus in relevant networks. It develops an approach to this specific category of monuments, aiming to highlight them as part of the city's cultural heritage and leverage them to attract urban tourism. These proposals are primarily based on

international examples, but also incorporate the perspectives of the cemetery's "audience", as reflected in a survey partially presented in the article.

Until the end of the 19th century, the official cemetery for the city of Piraeus was located in a remote area called Vourla,<sup>1</sup> which at the time lay outside the city limits. There was also a second cemetery to the north of the Church of the Transfiguration of Christ [7, p. 39], in the area now known as Palaia Kokkinia.

In the final decades of the 19th century, Piraeus rose to prominence as Greece's leading industrial and commercial city. By the early 20th century, the number of factories in the region had increased exponentially, resulting in a dramatic rise in local employment rates and a significant increase in population density around the port area. This rapid growth led to the city's expansion and the incorporation of new areas into its zoning plan. Consequently, the cemetery of Saint Dionysios could only accommodate the church's parishioners [8, p. 68], highlighting the urgent need for a new burial site.<sup>2</sup>

In 1889, the Municipality resolved to purchase a large plot of land in the Evgeneia area to establish a municipal cemetery [3, p. 6]. By 1890, tenders were solicited for the construction of a surrounding wall and a road to connect the cemetery with the city. In 1892, the main entrance was constructed, and over the following two years, an autopsy room was added. The area was then cleaned, levelled, and the outer wall was finished. The cemetery was inaugurated in March 1904. The process of relocating graves from the Saint Dionysios cemetery to the new site extended from 1904 to 1909, with the New Cemetery officially commencing its operations in 1910. The Church of Anastasis, after which the cemetery was named, was situated at the centre of the cemetery, and its murals were painted by the religious artist Pantelis Zografos [9]. In subsequent years, modifications and expansions were made to the original design. A section was allocated to the Russians and, in 1922, another section was given to the French Catholics [3, p. 6],<sup>3</sup> where the graves from the old cemetery were also transferred.

Nowadays, the Anastasis Cemetery is situated within the urban fabric, but it is no longer in use, except for family graves. The Municipal Cemetery of Schisto has been operational since February 1998 to meet the burial needs of residents in the Municipalities of Piraeus and West Attica.

<sup>1</sup>The area was originally a swamp covered in bulrushes (known in Greek as "vourla"), which gave it its name. It encompassed the building block defined by the following streets: Ethnikis Antistaseos (formerly Agiou Dionysiou), Psaron, Doganis, and Sokratous (Evoias) [2, p. 299].

<sup>2</sup>See the relevant records of the Piraeus Municipal Council sessions from 1881 to 1909 [2, p. 121, note 456].

<sup>3</sup>According to Malikouti [2, p. 122, note 459], documents from as early as 1889-1895 reference the division of sections of the Anastasis Cemetery for Westerners and Russians.

## II. THE SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS OF THE ANASTASIS CEMETERY IN PIRAEUS

The Anastasis Cemetery hosts the gravesites of the most significant figures of the Piraeus society. Among the most prominent family names are Retsinas, Rallis, Dilaveris, Moutsopoulos, Afentoulis, Metaxas, John Mac Dowall, and many others. Their burial monuments testify to the existence of these individuals, who played a major role in the history of modern Piraeus, contributed to the city's evolution, and shaped its character. Moreover, the cemetery itself constitutes an open-air museum of modern Greek sculpture [4], [5], as the monuments selected by each family were intended not only to honour their deceased but also to highlight their financial status and social prestige.

The burial monuments encountered in the Cemetery belong to a variety of types and styles: columns with classical elements, reliefs and sculptures in the round that symbolise mourning (depicting the spirit grieving for the loss of loved ones), obelisks, and even a few columns featuring representations of the deceased. There are grand mausoleums constructed entirely of marble, as well as two of the five monuments in Greece inspired by the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates.<sup>4</sup> Analyzing these monuments from both aesthetic and historical perspectives can provide valuable insights into the families and their aesthetic choices.

The examination of these monuments reveals that affluent families in Piraeus commissioned the construction of their burial monuments from renowned sculptors of the time, reflecting their high aesthetic standards. At least 37 names of sculptors and specialised marble craftsmen can be identified at the Anastasis Cemetery [4]. These artists were active from the late 19th century until 1940, which is considered the heyday of Greek sepulchral sculpture. Most of these impressive monuments are concentrated along the cemetery's main street, but notable examples can also be found along the smaller streets that intersect within the Cemetery.

The historical value of the memorials is primarily derived from the connection between the monuments and the lives of the individuals they commemorate. Beyond the memorials themselves, language plays a crucial role in preserving memory. The inscriptions engraved on the memorials provide invaluable information about the lives, origins, professions, family relationships, and ancestry of those interred in the Cemetery.

Therefore, the Anastasis Cemetery serves as both a site of historical memory and an open-air museum of modern Greek art, offering visitors a wealth of insights. In addition, sepulchral art forms an integral part of the history of

<sup>4</sup>These are monuments in the style of the ancient Lysicrates Choragic Monument (335-334π.X.), the first of which was built in the Anastasis Cemetery. There is another such monument in the First Cemetery of Athens [see 10, pp. 23-24 / 55-57, fig. 42-43] and two more in the Saint Georgios Cemetery in Syros [11, pp. 489-506, 561-562, no. 413 and 415 respectively].

modern Greek sculpture, while also reflecting the ideological, economic, and social conditions prevalent in the modern Greek state.

### III. THE “AUDIENCE” OF THE ANASTASIS CEMETERY

The first part of the survey of the attitudes and opinions of the Anastasis Cemetery “audience” was conducted within the framework of the Operational Programme for the “Support of researchers with emphasis on young researchers” (project code: EDBM103).<sup>5</sup> The objective of the survey was to examine the multifaceted nature of cemeteries by recording, exploring, and interpreting the attitudes, relationships, and wishes of the cemetery “audience” –comprising users, visitors, and workers–.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that only a few similar studies have been conducted on cemeteries at an international level. Most of these studies were carried out over the past few decades, utilizing interviews or short questionnaires, and were quite limited in both scope and sample size.<sup>7</sup>

Although the study was initially designed to be conducted on the site of the Cemetery, the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a redesign, incorporating digital tools. Nevertheless, a preliminary trial of a pilot questionnaire was conducted on-site to evaluate the effectiveness of the questionnaire and to record participants' reactions to the research objectives. These observations proved to be extremely valuable in the process of formulating our final conclusions.

The questionnaires were emailed to the participants in two phases: The first one lasted for about three and a half months from 18 November 2020 to 13 March 2021, during the COVID-19 quarantine, while the second lasted from summer 2022 until February 2023. Overall, the questionnaire link remained active for approximately one year.

<sup>5</sup> This part of the research is co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund - ESF) through the Operational Programme “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020” in the context of the project “The cemetery audience. The highlighting of elements of material and intangible culture of the burial sites through the ‘voices’ of their visitors: The cases of the Anastasis Cemetery of Piraeus and the Third cemetery of Athens” (MIS 5049029).

<sup>6</sup> For an initial approach to the results, see: [12].

<sup>7</sup> Indicatively, see the study conducted by Bradbury [13], which managed to shed light on the distinctly different perspectives of deathwork professionals and grieving relatives; the study by Francis, Kellaher and Neophytou [14], [15] on the “audience” of the London cemeteries; the study by Woodthorpe [16], [17] on East London Cemetery; the study by Nielsen and Groes [18] on the cemeteries of Copenhagen; the study by Jolly [19] on the management of historical cemeteries by leagues of friends; Pécssek’s [20] case study on the National Graveyard of Budapest; Paraskevopoulou’s [21], [22] study on the preservation and management of historical English cemeteries by leagues of friends; the study by Nordh, Evensen and Skår [23] on the Oslo cemetery, as well as the study by Nordh και Evensen [24] on urban cemeteries in the capital cities of Scandinavia, specifically in Oslo, Stockholm, and Copenhagen; the research published by Lai, Scott and Sun [25] on the re-use of two historical urban cemeteries in Edinburgh; Grabalov’s [26] case study on Norwegian and Russian cemeteries; the study by Grabalov and Nordh [27] on the public’s perception of cemeteries as “philosophical parks” focusing on the cemeteries of Oslo and Copenhagen; and the study by Jedan *et al.* [28] on a memorial cemetery in Maastricht.

The digital questionnaire was distributed via email to cemetery administration staff, as well as to families and individuals who are either familiar with the Cemetery, have a connection to it, or have visited it at least once in the past. The email accounts were sourced from both interactions with participants during the research and from a tour conducted on September 30, 2022, which aimed to introduce the “audience” to the Cemetery itself. Moreover, the questionnaire was shared on social media pages related to the Piraeus area and the Cemetery. The responses were completed anonymously, and all the necessary principles of research ethics for anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to throughout the study’s implementation.

At this point, it is important to clarify the concept of “audience” in the context of this study. This term refers here to the following three categories of people: a) all cemetery users, namely the bereaved who maintain the plots, graves, ossuaries or other memorials to their loved ones, b) visitors or tourists; individuals who are not normatively connected to the current circumscription of the space, but appear in it as external presences [20], and c) professionals, namely the people who provide administrative or other services associated with the Cemetery, including cemetery staff as well as researchers studying such spaces.

During the digital dissemination of the questionnaire, several important issues emerged. On the one hand, the Internet provides opportunities to broaden the sampling pool and collect more comprehensive data. On the other hand, it may lead to the conflation of the phenomena under observation. The physical distance from the Cemetery translates into a distance from the conditions present at the site, potentially resulting in a somewhat idealised depiction, which is a significant drawback of digital data collection. Additionally, although a digital questionnaire can theoretically be shared across various digital platforms, in practice, due to the prominence of certain social media platforms like *Facebook*, other, more specialised platforms receive limited traffic [29, p. 4198]. Moreover, the tone and purpose of each platform, as well as its targeted audience are important factors that, by definition, impede access to a truly diverse sample. Finally, although the remote dissemination of a questionnaire offers convenience, the medium is still not entirely democratic [29, p. 4199], as it excludes individuals who lack Internet access or are not sufficiently tech-savvy to participate in a scientific study. Nevertheless, we managed to gather a significant number of responses, which enabled us to draw certain conclusions and gain an overview of the opinions held by the “audience” of the specific cemetery.

In particular, 104 individuals participated in the survey, a satisfactory number considering the size of the Cemetery and the corresponding number of people and municipalities it serves or used to serve. In relation to the profile of the sample, most participants are residents of Piraeus and the greater area (Drapetsona, Keratsini, Agios Ioannis Rentis, Korydallos, Nikaia, Moschato and Paleo Faliro), but there is a number of respondents who live in

various municipalities across Athens (13 more municipalities of Attica) and are connected with the Cemetery in some way. The overwhelming majority of the participants (72) are women, while men constitute only 32. The age range of the participants extends from 31 to 83. Most respondents are between the ages of 33 and 41 (37 participants), while 20 participants are between 50 and 53.

Regarding religious beliefs, the overwhelming majority of participants identify as Christian or Christian Orthodox, with no mentions of other Christian denominations. One participant identifies as a skeptic, two as agnostics, four as atheists, four as non-religious, and one participant did not respond to this question.

Based on the participants' responses, most have visited the Cemetery to attend a funeral, pay their respects to the deceased, or maintain a spiritual connection with loved ones. A smaller group visits for other reasons, such as exploring the history of the site and admiring its monuments.

#### **IV. THE VOICES OF THE ANASTASIS CEMETERY AUDIENCE: THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY**

The views of the audience are influenced by a range of factors, including personal experiences, cultural and religious beliefs, and reasons for using the space, as most participants have a connection to the Cemetery through loved ones buried there.

The majority of the audience views these spaces as sacred, which justifies their demands for respect and maintenance of the area (see **Table I**). This perspective also explains their reluctance towards any alternative use of what is intended to be a peaceful resting place for the deceased. Indeed, some members of the audience are opposed to any re-evaluation of the burial site. This opposition can be attributed to several factors –religious beliefs, funerary and memorial traditions, and the condition of the Cemetery– that significantly shape the views of Greek society. It is also worth noting that the audience associates the neglect of the Cemetery with a lack of respect for the deceased.

In reference to the historical and aesthetic merits of the Anastasis Cemetery, the audience notes that the space has not been utilised, especially since it ceased its operations. The importance of the Cemetery to history and art is evidenced not just by the existence of majestic burial monuments, but also by the personalities which are interred there. The audience acknowledges the historical and cultural value of the Cemetery and even proposes initiatives to highlight its cultural heritage through educational programmes and guided tours. In this context, the audience suggests that special attention should be given to the organisation and management of the Cemetery. Specifically, the Municipality and the State should be mobilised to inform and raise public awareness through various actions, improve and enhance the cemetery area, and preserve and promote its historical and cultural heritage.

In an open-ended question regarding their suggestions for enhancing the area, the majority of participants recommend improving the surrounding environment and the burial monuments, as well as restoring the landscape to "create a sense of tranquillity for every visitor to the Cemetery". One participant expressed the desire for "memory to be more prominently featured in relation to death". Another participant suggests producing printed materials containing information about the monuments, while yet another proposes the inclusion of the Cemetery in the Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe. Furthermore, there is a proposal to enhance infrastructure and pathways, as well as to expand green spaces through tree planting and the conversion of vacant areas into landscaped zones for relaxation, featuring benches. The aim is for the Cemetery to "acquire the appearance of a park and to be utilised as a historical promenade". Additionally, one participant recommends that the currently unused areas of the Cemetery be designated for alternative purposes, while another suggests these areas "be allocated to the city for other uses". There is also a proposal for the Cemetery to permanently cease functioning as a burial site (even for family plots), to establish a crematorium, and to be "organically integrated into the life of the city through cultural activities", as indicated in the questionnaire.

As for the role the audience itself is willing to play in the administration of the Cemetery, opinions vary significantly. Some participants express doubts or negative views, while others underline the importance of contributing to the various tasks aimed at maintaining and showcasing the Cemetery. Specific actions are suggested to encourage the audience's involvement, such as forming maintenance groups, gardening teams, organizing tours, and holding memorial days. It appears that the desire to preserve the memory and historical character of the space serves as an incentive for some members of the audience to engage in revitalisation efforts.

With regard to the ways in which the audience could contribute to the cemetery's administration (**Table II**), we draw the following conclusions: The majority of the respondents express considerable interest in the Cemetery, indicating that they could make significant contributions towards maintaining its cleanliness and greenery. However, opinions are more divided concerning the representation of the Cemetery in the municipal council, though a notable number of participants are still willing to get involved. There is also considerable interest in fundraising and obtaining sponsorships to enhance the cemetery's image and infrastructure, as well as in organizing cultural events at the Cemetery. Nonetheless, the audience feels that its ability to assist visitors to the cemetery is limited to a moderate extent.

Among the proposed actions for the Cemetery (**Table III**), the workshop for marble sculpting and maintenance was the most favoured, with 70% of respondents either partially or fully supporting it. A significant proportion of the

audience also supports the introduction of grief counselling services at the Cemetery, although there is also some representation of opposing views among the respondents. The proposal to organise history lectures at the Cemetery has received approval from the respondents, with over 60% of participants either partially or fully supporting it. The same level of support is evident for organizing educational programmes at the Cemetery; however, a portion of the sample also expresses disagreement with this proposal. On the other hand, the respondents are not particularly

supportive of photography and painting exhibitions being held at the Cemetery, with a significant portion of the audience disagreeing with this proposal. Similarly, the suggestion for a gardening workshop received disapproval from approximately 40% of the respondents. Overall, the majority of the proposed actions receive considerable support from the cemetery’s audience, with workshops and grief counselling services being the most favoured, followed closely by history lectures and tours.

**Table I.** Audience perspectives on specific issues regarding space utilisation (percentage distribution of preference levels)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Participants (in absolute numbers) who responded: Don't know/No opinion
<i>The Cemetery is available for guided tours and lessons in history and art</i>	10,6%	13,5%	21,2%	24,0%	29,8%	1
<i>Within the Cemetery, educational tours can be conducted for high school students (ages 15 to 18)</i>	10,6%	12,5%	18,3%	31,7%	26,0%	1
<i>Within the Cemetery, educational tours can be conducted for students (aged 18 and older)</i>	4,8%	11,5%	15,4%	29,8%	37,5%	1
<i>It is essential to establish an exhibition space within the Cemetery focused on history, funerary art, and customs</i>	5,8%	9,6%	12,5%	24,0%	47,1%	1
<i>The utilisation of the Cemetery for cultural purposes can lead to an enhancement of its image and technical infrastructure</i>	2,9%	8,7%	11,5%	23,0%	52,9%	1
<i>The Cemetery is designated exclusively for burials and memorial services, and not for any other cultural activities</i>	55,8%	18,3%	11,5%	5,8%	7,7%	1
<i>The inclusion of the Cemetery in European cultural tourism routes may lead to a distortion of its character</i>	39,4%	27,9%	14,4%	5,8%	11,5%	1

**Table II.** Ways in which the audience could contribute to the management of the cemetery (percentage distribution of preference levels)

	Strongly disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Participants (in absolute numbers) who responded: Don't know/No opinion
<i>In the maintenance of the area's cleanliness</i>	0,0%	20,2%	78,8%	1
<i>Conservation of green spaces</i>	1,0%	27,9%	68,3%	3
<i>Representation of the Cemetery in the City Council</i>	7,7%	40,4%	51,9%	-
<i>Raising funds and obtaining sponsorships for the improvement of the area and monuments</i>	16,3%	33,7%	47,1%	3
<i>To the research of the cemetery's history</i>	4,8%	32,7%	62,5%	-
<i>In supporting the organisation of cultural events</i>	13,5%	32,7%	53,8%	-
<i>In providing service to visitors</i>	24,0%	51,0%	24,0%	1

**Table III.** Audience perspectives on the proposed actions and the degree to which they believe these could be implemented in the Cemetery (percentage distribution of preference levels)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Participants (in absolute numbers) who responded: Don't know/No opinion
<i>Guided tour</i>	6,7%	19,2%	15,4%	27,9%	30,8%	-
<i>History lecture</i>	7,7%	11,5%	21,2%	25,0%	34,6%	-
<i>Marble sculpting and conservation workshop of stone</i>	5,8%	14,4%	10,6%	25,0%	44,2%	-
<i>Educational programmes</i>	7,7%	14,4%	17,3%	27,9%	31,7%	1
<i>Musical concert (e.g. ecclesiastical music)</i>	22,1%	20,2%	21,2%	17,3%	18,3%	1
<i>Photography exhibition</i>	24,0%	17,3%	21,2%	25,0%	11,5%	1
<i>Painting exhibition</i>	24,0%	24,0%	19,2%	20,2%	11,5%	1
<i>Gardening workshop</i>	26,0%	20,2%	21,2%	16,3%	15,4%	1
<i>Bereavement counseling (e.g. psychologist)</i>	5,8%	17,3%	19,2%	19,2%	36,5%	2

**V. REIMAGINING BURIAL SITES**

Nowadays, the Greek public is increasingly exposed to cemeteries abroad through travel and tourism. This exposure helps them gain a fresh perspective on burial sites, viewing them more as memorial gardens integrated into the modern city's public realm rather than as isolated spaces exclusively meant for the interment of the dead. As highlighted in other studies and in the oral interviews conducted during the trial run of this survey, some visitors use cemeteries for recreational purposes, such as taking a walk, resting, or enjoying moments of quiet reflection [30], [31]. In a study carried out at a cemetery in Oslo, Norway

[23], the visitors' descriptions suggest that the combination of nature, culture and history, as well as a sense of respect for the dead, differentiate the cemetery from other green spaces in the city. This allows the visitors not only to unwind and relax, but also to dedicate some time to contemplation.

The Anastasis Cemetery possesses all the necessary elements to be transformed into a green space and upgraded into a memorial park, akin to the romantic-rural cemeteries or memorial gardens of the 19th century, such as Père Lachaise in Paris and other cemeteries in London

and the USA.<sup>8</sup>

Another cemetery that could serve as a model for the rejuvenation of the Anastasis Cemetery is the Fiumei Road Cemetery in Budapest (Hungary).<sup>9</sup> An examination of the map of the Hungarian capital reveals that, like most modern cities, it too suffers from a lack of green spaces. However, the Cemetery is not merely a park in the traditional sense of the public green space; it is also an open-air museum featuring the sculptures and architectural monuments of historical and artistic importance. Furthermore, it serves as a space of national memory, constituting the final resting place of a national pantheon, housing the graves of significant national figures associated with the modern and contemporary history of Hungary. The mausoleums, the statues and the gravestone inscriptions narrate a story about the past. Viewed from this perspective, the cemetery becomes a widely accessible open-air “history book” [34, pp. 4-5].

In Greece, a cemetery that follows the model of the rural cemetery is the British cemetery in the city of Corfu, which has been in operation since 1814, when the island came under British rule [35, pp. 239-241]. The Cemetery is also a garden with lush vegetation and specimens of botanical interest, where visitors can experience moments of serenity and contemplation away from the hustle and bustle of the modern city. The absence of complaints about the Cemetery among local residents is indicative of how well-integrated it is into the urban fabric.

Another notable example of cemetery renewal worth examining is the case of four cemeteries in England, which have been preserved and maintained through citizen action [21], [22]. These are the Highgate Cemetery in London,<sup>10</sup> the Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol,<sup>11</sup> the York Cemetery,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Some examples of “memorial gardens” are the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris (established in 1804. For a digital tour, visit <http://www.pere-lachaise.com>), which was one of the most influential models for the organisation of burial sites at the time; the Low Hill General Cemetery in Liverpool (1825), the first “rural” cemetery in Auburn Cambridge, Massachusetts in the USA (established in 1831, [see 32]; Also, visit: <http://mountauburn.org>); Kensal Green Cemetery in London (1833), Laurel Hill in Philadelphia (1836, [see 33]), Greenwood in Brooklyn (1838), Highgate in London (1839), the cemetery of Allegheny in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1844), the Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati (1845), the Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia (1849, see <http://www.hollywoodcemetery.org>), the Vyšehradský Cemetery in Prague (see <https://www.praha-vysehrad.cz/en/stranky/145/buildings-and-places/the-vysehrad-cemetery>) and others.

<sup>9</sup> The cemetery is also known by its former name, Kerepesi Cemetery. See <https://fiumeiutisirkert.nori.gov.hu/en/home> and <https://en.nori.gov.hu>. See also the official guide to the cemetery: [34].

<sup>10</sup> Highgate Cemetery (London), established in 1839: <https://highgatecemetery.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Arnos Vale Cemetery (Bristol), established in 1836: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/residents/museums-parks-sports-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-and-estates/arnos-vale-cemetery> and <https://arnosvale.org.uk/discover/site-info> (including information about the Cemetery, the events organised, the educational programmes offered, and the wedding facilities available).

<sup>12</sup> York Cemetery, established in 1837: <https://www.yorkcemetery.org.uk>. Digital database for grave search: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2219259/york-cemetery>. The Cemetery's Genealogy Department: <https://www.yorkcemeterygenealogy.org.uk>.

and the Ford Park Cemetery in Plymouth.<sup>13</sup> These cemeteries were established during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by limited liability companies and are still operating independently to this day. When the social and economic conditions in England deteriorated and the companies managing these cemeteries went bankrupt, there was a risk of their total abandonment. However, their operation and administration were subsequently taken over by non-profit organisations, such as “leagues of friends” and charity trusts<sup>14</sup>. These organisations were committed to reinforcing and promoting the value of these spaces for the public, in collaboration with dedicated volunteers who took on various duties. Essentially, the solution to the problem of the cemeteries’ viability was to “open” the burial sites to a wider audience by organising cultural events and activities and creating recreational areas and facilities.

More specifically, the Arnos Vale and Ford Park cemeteries began organising tours, lectures, anniversary events, volunteer days, concerts, exhibitions, and workshops, as well as operating souvenir shops, cafeterias and visitor centres. The Arnos Vale Cemetery even hosts weddings. In York, in addition to offering tours and organizing events, the association “Friends of York Cemetery” also manages the landscaping and preserves the monuments by maintaining the graves, with the owners paying maintenance fees directly to the Cemetery. All these activities were offered to attract a wider public. They not only contributed to the cemeteries raising necessary funds but also allowed them to save on payroll costs through volunteer work. Additionally, the cemetery trusts activated capital raising mechanisms by utilising every aspect of the cemetery’s cultural heritage, which also generated the revenue needed for the preservation and maintenance of the cemetery.

It becomes evident that, as old cemeteries face space shortages and are gradually decommissioned and left to decay, there remain opportunities for their reinvention and reimagining through modern management policies. Such policies can focus on utilizing the space in innovative ways, increasing revenue, preserving cultural heritage long-term, and upgrading infrastructure. This can be achieved by redefining cemeteries not only as final resting places for the deceased but also as parks, recreational areas, and spaces for culture, memory, and history. As mentioned in the guide to the Fiumei Road Cemetery, one effective way to counterbalance the negative emotions commonly associated with cemeteries is to establish new mental connections. Instead of identifying cemeteries solely with “those who are dead”, it is beneficial to associate them with “those who once lived”, emphasizing their lives,

<sup>13</sup> Ford Park Cemetery (Plymouth), established in 1848: <https://www.ford-park-cemetery.org>. Digital database for grave search: <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/1974110/ford-park-cemetery>.

<sup>14</sup> Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust, York Cemetery Trust, and Ford Park Cemetery Trust are organisations that functioned as “trusts”. This arrangement implies that the ownership of the cemeteries was transferred to citizen-managers, contingent upon their commitment to fulfilling specific obligations for the public benefit.



deeds, and the preservation of their memory [34, p. 4].

Finally, the aesthetic enhancement of the Cemetery could also contribute to improving hygienic conditions for local residents, revitalizing the surrounding area, and optimizing the use of the entire land associated with the Cemetery [6, pp. 1270-1272]. Furthermore, the proper maintenance of the Cemetery is a sign of respect for the deceased.

#### VI. SHOWCASING THE CULTURAL VALUE OF THE CEMETERY THROUGH CULTURAL ACTIONS AND INTEGRATION IN INTERNATIONAL CEMETERY NETWORKS

At the beginning of the 1980s, UNESCO recognised culture as a source of inspiration and a social regulator of the efforts towards comprehensive and sustainable local development [36, pp. 4-6]. Moreover, creating cultural routes is a dynamic process which lends itself to groundbreaking research and interdisciplinary innovation.

One of the objectives of cemetery rejuvenation is to attract urban tourism [6, pp. 1272-1274]. This can be achieved by integrating the Anastasis Cemetery into a local and national network of cemeteries with historical and cultural significance. At the European level, the Cemetery could become a member of the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE),<sup>15</sup> a development that would aid in the promotion and visibility of the Cemetery and potentially attract funding from private entities interested in supporting the renewal efforts.

Another advantage of the Anastasis Cemetery is that, rather than being on the outskirts of the city, it is situated within the urban fabric and is directly connected to it,<sup>16</sup> thereby ensuring that the space is easily accessible. Repurposing the Cemetery for various uses will prevent an occupied piece of urban land from becoming another "urban void".<sup>17</sup> It could gradually alter the public perception of cemeteries as macabre and unapproachable spaces. Furthermore, by utilizing the sculptures within the Cemetery, the space could eventually transform from merely an urban refuge, ideal for strolling and quiet reflection, into a centre of scientific and educational activity.

Within this context, it is imperative that a topographic

map of the Cemetery be produced, highlighting the most significant sepulchral monuments. It is also necessary to map out different routes through the Cemetery based on specific parameters and themes.<sup>18</sup> For example, one route could focus on the sculptures themselves, their aesthetic value, and the typology of the various burial monuments. Another route could illuminate the semiology of the monuments, track changes in social attitudes towards death, and interpret the symbols found on the sepulchral monuments in the Cemetery.<sup>19</sup> Finally, a third route could be a historical tour of the cemetery, which explores the history of the city through the personal stories of those buried on its grounds. This route would utilise the Cemetery's monuments to highlight some of the most significant moments in the history of Piraeus.

Another proposal to promote and facilitate the use of the Anastasis Cemetery for historical and cultural tours is to add signs containing local historical and environmental information. These signs could provide details about the families interred in the Cemetery's monuments, relating to the local economic and political history, as well as information about the sculptors whose work can be found in the Cemetery and how their creations reflect the broader aesthetic and artistic values of each era. Topographic maps could assist visitors in navigating the Cemetery by indicating their location. These straightforward practical interventions could transform the Cemetery into an open-air museum.

An initiative that would aid in establishing networks of cultural routes at both local and national levels could be the digital or printed publication of a leaflet, short guide, or even a book. This publication would include fundamental information about similar cemeteries across the country, references to the sculptures present in each cemetery, and an index that organises the artworks by sculptor. In this way, essential information is visualised, access to knowledge is facilitated, and a diverse network of cultural routes in the capital and across the country is leveraged. Thus, this could encourage and promote urban tourism in Greece.

The Anastasis Cemetery could also be integrated into a cultural route focused on the modern history of the Piraeus port, aligning with a new and emerging trend in tourism: the *city break*, which refers to a short holiday (2-3 days) in an urban environment [39, pp. 282-283]. City breaks to capitals and other cities, whether large or small, historical or industrial, coastal or inland, have been steadily growing in popularity, showcasing each city through cultural or historical perspectives. Some objectives of this emerging tourism trend include highlighting local cultural heritage,

<sup>15</sup> Association of Significant Cemeteries of Europe (<http://www.significantcemeteries.org>).

<sup>16</sup> Contemporary "landscape urbanism" views urban gardens as spaces that transcend the boundaries separating them from the built environment, leading to more complex forms. Gardens are transformed from mere areas of recreation and aesthetic enjoyment into "transitional spaces between urban and peri-urban, as well as natural environments" [37].

<sup>17</sup> The urban void is a discontinuity in the fabric of the city. It is a liminal urban space oscillating between the concepts of "space" and "non-space". Particularly in the case of cemeteries, "the relationship between the cemeteries' memorial monuments and their peri-urban nature constitutes a major theme in cemetery design", emphasising the "monumentality" of nature [38, pp. 32-33]. However, accepting the new principles of burial site design and organisation also results in changes in the collective attitudes and meaning-making processes surrounding death. "The private grave has been transformed into the primary memorial of 'modern' death" [38, p. 30].

<sup>18</sup> Similar tours are available at the Montjuic Cemetery in Barcelona (<https://www.barcelona.de/en/barcelona-cemetery-montjuic.html>) and the Central Cemetery of Vienna (*Zentralfriedhof*) (<https://www.friedhofewien.at/zentralfriedhof>). The latter also offers visitors an audio guide, allowing them to choose among three different routes based on the time available for their visit.

<sup>19</sup> Koumariou [35] makes similar recommendations for the First Cemetery of Athens and the British Cemetery of Corfu.

attracting experienced travellers, supporting and enhancing lesser-known cities with untapped tourism potential, and, in the long term, upgrading local infrastructure. The notion of a city break presents a particular challenge for cities with limited tourist development, such as Piraeus.<sup>20</sup> As the natural harbour of Athens and a major Mediterranean port, Piraeus can contribute to a more comprehensive image of the Greek capital and can thus be utilised as a *Unique Selling Proposition* (USP) through the development and implementation of cultural routes [39, pp. 282-283].

Naturally, this process of showcasing the city's cultural heritage is closely linked with the existing infrastructure, which is continually being upgraded and modernised.<sup>21</sup>

Disseminating information about the Cemetery's cultural value, as well as raising awareness about it among the local community, can be achieved through a variety of activities organised by the municipal government<sup>22</sup> and local cultural entities, including tours, lectures, and seminars.

Preserving and showcasing an area's cultural heritage can help transform the city into a tourist destination. Following the example of other major cemeteries, such as Père Lachaise in Paris,<sup>23</sup> it is proposed to provide digital tours for the Anastasis Cemetery, a suggestion that can be easily implemented given the relatively small size of the Cemetery.

There are also more economical digital solutions, including digital platforms providing open access databases, photographic material, and historical information, such as those developed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)<sup>24</sup> and other British cemeteries.<sup>25</sup> The former even offers photographs and information from cemeteries located in Greece, such as the one in Faliro. Cataloguing the monuments and disseminating relevant information through the Internet are powerful tools not

only for researchers but also for the interested public.

Finally, students could explore the history of their city in a more experiential manner through educational initiatives that focus on local history lessons,<sup>26</sup> informed by the information available at the Cemetery. Alternatively, these lessons could focus on modern Greek burial sculpture and its aesthetics, and could be conducted either in situ or in the classroom. The material provided by the Anastasis Cemetery could stimulate discussions and educational sessions on various topics, contributing to both standard education and lifelong learning.

The personal and family stories of those buried in the Cemetery can be interconnected with broader local and even national history when viewed through various lenses such as economy, industry, politics, culture, immigration, and professional activity. The history of Greek funerary art, the aesthetic value of burial monuments, the iconographic themes, symbols, and their allegorical meanings are additional topics that can be studied by utilising the Cemetery's sculptures.

## VII. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that sepulchral art should be regarded as an integral part of our cultural heritage, deserving of attention and preservation. It reflects the evolution of modern Greek sculpture and simultaneously embodies the ideological, economic, and social conditions prevailing in Greece and its cities from the country's inception to the present day. Consequently, the burial monuments at the Anastasis Cemetery of Piraeus must be utilised, not only for their artistic value but also as significant historical resources for scholars studying the modern history of the city. These sepulchral monuments and the information they provide can serve as a foundation for constructing a historical narrative that presents the local history of the port in engaging and accessible ways for the general public. In addition, numerous European examples can serve as models for the rejuvenation and transformation of the Cemetery into a memorial garden. We propose a series of steps to achieve this goal: mapping potential routes, integrating the Cemetery into European networks, introducing an open-access digital platform, soliciting further renewal proposals, suggesting local actions, and utilizing the rich repository of information available at the Cemetery for educational purposes as part of local history lessons. In conclusion, there are various ways to utilise and showcase the Anastasis Cemetery, offering multiple benefits for the local economy and society.

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<sup>20</sup> According to the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), city breaks are a significant tool in the effort to enhance the country's tourist demand and revenue.

<sup>21</sup> This infrastructure includes the new “Agios Nikolaos” cruise terminal, the ISAP railway, which connects the city of Athens with the port, the construction of a light rail system (tram), the completed connection of the city with the Athens Metro Network, and the existing accommodation facilities extending along the city's coastal front up to the ISAP Metro station in the northwest [39, p. 285].

<sup>22</sup> So far, the Municipality of Piraeus has organised public tours of the Anastasis Cemetery on only a few occasions: International Museum Day on May 18, 2012; European Heritage Days on September 24, 2017, and September 30, 2022; and a tour on April 20, 2024, as part of an international conference on Cemetery Studies, organised by Harokopio University of Athens and the Cemetery Research Group at the University of York, UK, with support from the Municipality of Piraeus. These tours were immensely popular with the public. Their purpose was to highlight the significance and historical value of the Cemetery and to present the history of the families and individuals who contributed to shaping modern Piraeus by showcasing a selection of burial monuments.

<sup>23</sup> Digital tour of the Père Lachaise Cemetery: <http://www.pere-lachaise.com>.

<sup>24</sup> Website of Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC): <http://www.cwgc.org>.

<sup>25</sup> See examples of internet databases for grave searches provided by York Cemetery:

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2219259/york-cemetery>;

Ford Park Cemetery, Plymouth:

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/1974110/ford-park-cemetery>.

<sup>26</sup> See also the proposal for a new approach to studying history through the First World War military cemeteries located in the Macedonia region. This proposal suggests actions, routes, and the utilisation of these cemeteries for educational purposes [40].

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