



Hochschule
Bremerhaven

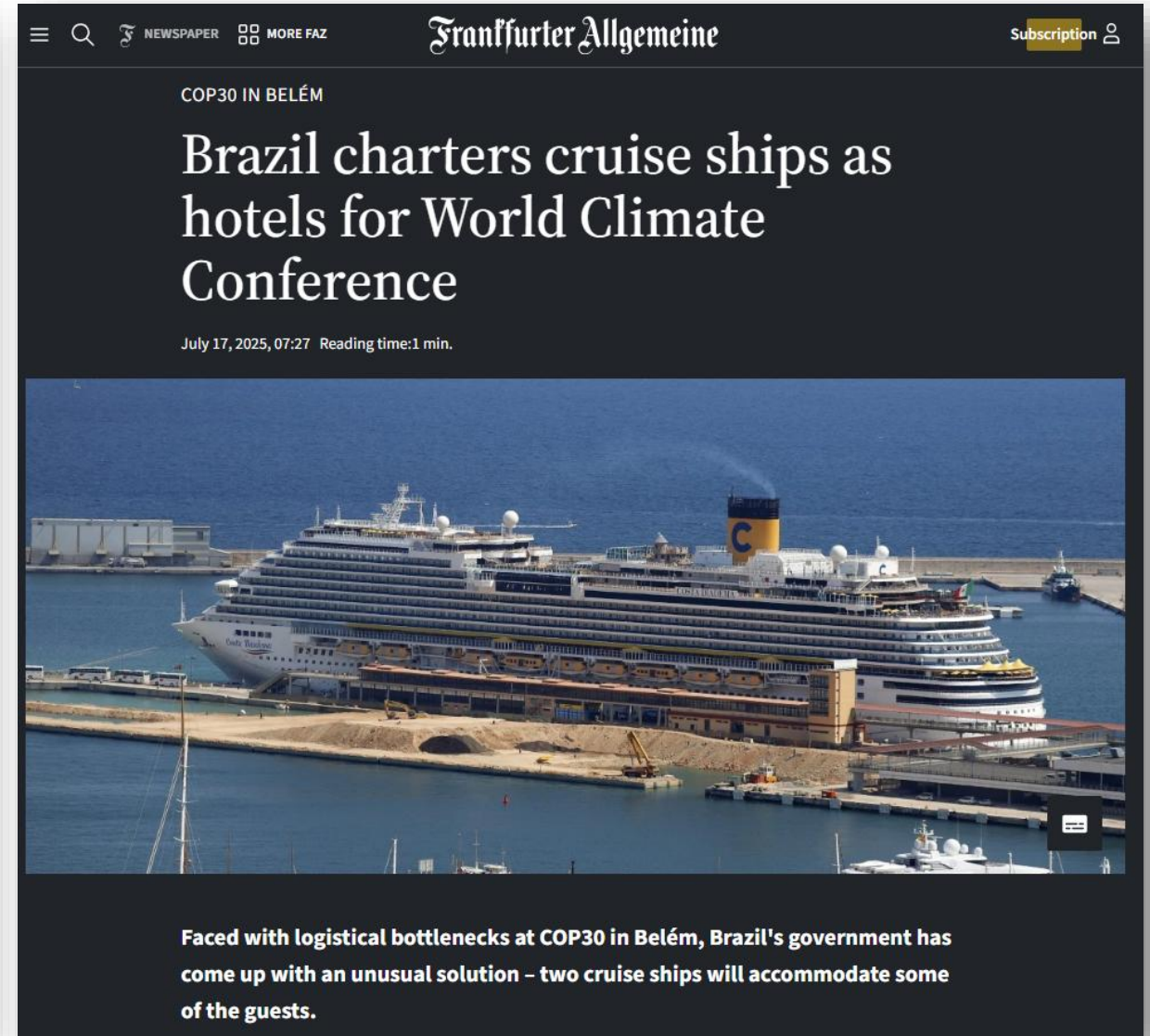
Prof.Dr.Dr.^{hc} Alexis Papathanassis

Regenerative Cruise Tourism: Backcasting a Vision for 2050

(Mediterranean Tourism Knowledge Exchange and Policy Conference - 27 November 2025)

Cruise ships for the COP30 Climate Summit Delegates...

Irony or Transformation-in-Action?



Cruise Business Model



Thrill Island

Slide waterpark (6 waterslides)



Chill Island

Pool area (7 pools) ft largest pool at sea



Surfside

For young families, places to eat, drink, and play



Hideaway

Look and feel of a beach club, multilevel terrace, infinity pool



Aqua Dome

Theater, Tallest waterfall at sea



Central Park

Park with real plants, shops live ent/nt and restaurants



Royal Promenade

Ice arena, shops, catering venues



Suite Neighbourhood

Restaurant, sun deck, restaurants, pools

The Customers...

- Generational conflict and cruises as a symbol for 'Intergenerational Inequity'
- 'Hedonism' is losing appeal: "Tell me how you travel and I will tell you who you are". Modern (Cruise) Tourists distance themselves from Consumerism!

The Ports...

- Destinations and their residents are questioning the actual value-added contribution of cruise tourism: Is it worth the hassle?

Crew:

- COVID19 and staff shortages
- Reputation, CSR and high employee turnover

Prof.Dr.Dr.hc Alexis Papathanassis

Cruise Tourism Management
Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences

E: apapathanassis@hs-bremerhaven.de

T: +49 471 4823 100

M: +49 173 613 2565

Horizon 2050 and the Role of Scholarship

*Towards a paradigm of
inspired science and the
inclusion of
transformation impact*

Evolution of Cruise Research 1980-Today

Is the Applied Research Paradigm Sufficient?

1980-2010: 'Ship-Centricity' Era

- Research Focus: Market Segmentation and Trends, Customer Perceptions and Consumer Behaviour, Demand- and Supply Growth Dynamics

2010-2020: Ship-Shore and Sustainability' Era

- Research Focus: Destination Management and Economic Impacts/Contribution of Cruising, Cruise Tourism Sustainability (Economic, Environmental Social)

2020-2022: 'COVID19 Disruption and Sail Stop' Era

- Research Focus: Post-Pandemic Demand and Growth Dynamics, Post-Pandemic Market Trends, Pandemic-Impact on Consumer Behaviour

Applied Research Paradigm

- **Impact?**
- **Contribution?**
- **Relevance?**

Research Opportunism

- 'Self-serving' research motivation
- Facilitation of research-fragmentation

Ephemeral Impact

- Lack of transformational potential

Weak 'Research Front'

- Limited collaboration
- Lack of a dedicated publication landscape

Thematic Retrospectivity

- Descriptive, As-Is (or As-Was) focus
- Limited practical relevance and impact



Cruise Tourism Research “FOR” (instead of “IN”) the future... *Sounds Great! But How?*



SCAN ME

Cruise tourism research: a horizon 2050 paper

Alexis Papathanassis

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to empower cruise academia to assert their role as enablers, and potentially drivers, of sustainable, responsible and resilient cruise futures.

Design/methodology/approach – This contribution represents a synthesis and a critical reflection of cruise-related research-review literature over the last four decades, assessing its impact and potential in terms of influencing the evolution and future developments of cruise tourism.

Findings – Cruise research between the 1980s and the first decade of this century could be characterised as “ship-centric” and managerially focused. Over the last decade and up to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, cruise research has become increasingly “cruise-destination centric”, with sustainability emerging as a dominant theme. Diverging somewhat from the public and media emphasis on environmental concerns and risks, academic research tends to focus on the economic aspects of sustainability. Nonetheless, and despite aiming for practical relevance, cruise research tends to remain reactive and lags behind industry trends.

Research limitations/implications – This paper proposes a shift from a “applied” to an “applicable” research paradigm, inspiring researchers to proactively shape the industry’s future by embracing “what-ifs” in their thematic scope. Such a paradigm calls for a normativity-enriched methodological diversity, as well as the inclusion of transformational relevance as an indicator of research impact.

Originality/value – Public perceptions of cruise tourism have changed over the years, evolving from that of a promising holiday niche to a symbol of unsustainable mass tourism. In this context, cruise scholars are offered guidance for transcending the polarising debate of growth versus de-growth/limits while increasing the relevance and transformational impact of cruise scholarship.

Keywords Sustainability, Knowledge transfer, Cruise tourism, Research paradigm
Transformational impact

Paper type General review

邮轮旅游研究：2050年展望视角

摘要

设计方法/途径：这篇论文是对过去四十年来与邮轮旅游相关的研究评论文献的综述和批判性反思，评估其在影响邮轮旅游的演变和未来发展方面的影响和潜力。

目的：总体目标是增强邮轮学术界的能力，使其能够在可持续、负责任和有弹性的邮轮未来发展发展中发挥促进和潜在推动作用。

研究结果：20世纪80年代至本世纪头十年的邮轮研究可以说是“以船为中心”，以管理为重点。在过去的十年中，直到COVID-19大流行之后，邮轮研究越来越“以邮轮目的地为中心”，可持续发展成为主导主题。与公众和媒体强调的问题和风险有些不同，学术研究往往侧重于可持续发展的经济方面。尽管如此，邮轮研究尽管以实际相关性为目标，但仍倾向于被动应对，落后于行业发展趋势。

研究局限性/影响：本文提出了从“应用”研究范式向“适用”研究范式的转变，激励研究人员通过在其主题范围内接受“假设”，积极探索行业的未来。这种范式要求在方法上丰富规范性，并将变革相关性作为衡量研究影响力的指标。

原创性/价：多年来，公众对邮轮旅游的看法发生了变化，从充满希望的度假小众旅游发展成为不可持续的大众旅游的象征。在此背景下，为邮轮学者提供了指导，以超越增长与去增长/限制的两极化争论，同时提高邮轮学术研究的相关性和变革性影响。

关键词 邮轮旅游、研究范式、知识转让、转型影响、可持续性
文章类型 般审查



Alexis Papathanassis is based at the Faculty of International Tourism Management, Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences, Bremerhaven, Germany.

Received 3 December 2023
Revised 7 January 2024
14 January 2024
Accepted 14 January 2024

DOI 10.1108/TR-12-2023-0629

© Emerald Publishing Limited, ISSN 1660-5373 | TOURISM REVIEW

Active Stance and Desired-Future Focus

- Normative-accent in scientific inquiry
- ‘Future-perfect’ research theming
- ‘Disciplined imagination’ and ‘speculative rigour’

Methodological Diversity

- **Action Research:** Consulting, Citizen Science
- **Design-Science Research:** Service / Product Co-creation, co-branding and Prototyping

‘Third Mission’ Objectives Integration

- Knowledge transfer through education: Problem- and Research-Based-Learning
- Bridging the academia-practice divide: Dual (Work-Study) degree programmes, further / continuing education



Prof.Dr.Dr.hc Alexis Papathanassis

Cruise Tourism Management
Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences

E: apapathanassis@hs-bremerhaven.de

T: +49 471 4823 100

M: +49 173 613 2565

Inspired Research Paradigm

...and its application in
Cruise Tourism



Beyond Sustainability:

Envisioning Regenerative Cruise Tourism by 2050

“By 2050, cruising is a sustainable and socially responsible form of tourism, benefiting the local communities the cruise ships visit; both socially and economically. Cruise tourism is also contributing to the ecological regeneration both on land and at sea. Now from this perspective imagine what this means for cruise ships, itineraries and ports.”



Delphi Process Results:

Ultimately a Question of Approach - Abolition or Reform?

Trigger: Initial statement and evaluation request (i.e. Evaluation of a regenerative cruise tourism scenario by 2050)

Consensus (C):

- Hybrid fleet strategy (mother ships + feeder vessels).

Infrastructure reforms and legal mechanisms needed; but which?

levies, precise community power mechanisms (e.g. veto rights), revenue Escrow Systems).

Aim is the obsolescence of extractive model; acceptability of co-existing models

Safeguards are necessary. Radicality of measures against transition failure

Round 1:
Paradigm Change

Synthesis A

Consensus (C):

- Shift from measurable
- Systemic change in economy

Technology is not the issue; governance is!

Key Tension (T):

- The main barrier is not technology, but the governance courage required for equitable community co-governance and revenue sharing.

Round 2:
Structural Reforms

Synthesis B

Consensus (C):

- Requirement for market and
- Enabler: An infrastructure

Regulatory separation between cruise business models; but how?

Key Tension (T):

- Enforcement governance communities

Round 3:
Enforcement Mechanisms

Synthesis C

Round 4:
Intensity of Enforcement

Synthesis D

Consensus (C):

- Beyond final legal shift re
- Progressive

Transition yes... At what pace? Gradual phase-out vs. cut-over approach

Key Tension (T):

- Industry participation
- Dilemma: N (Subsidising

Round 5:
Transition Approach

Synthesis E

Round 6:
Transition Philosophy

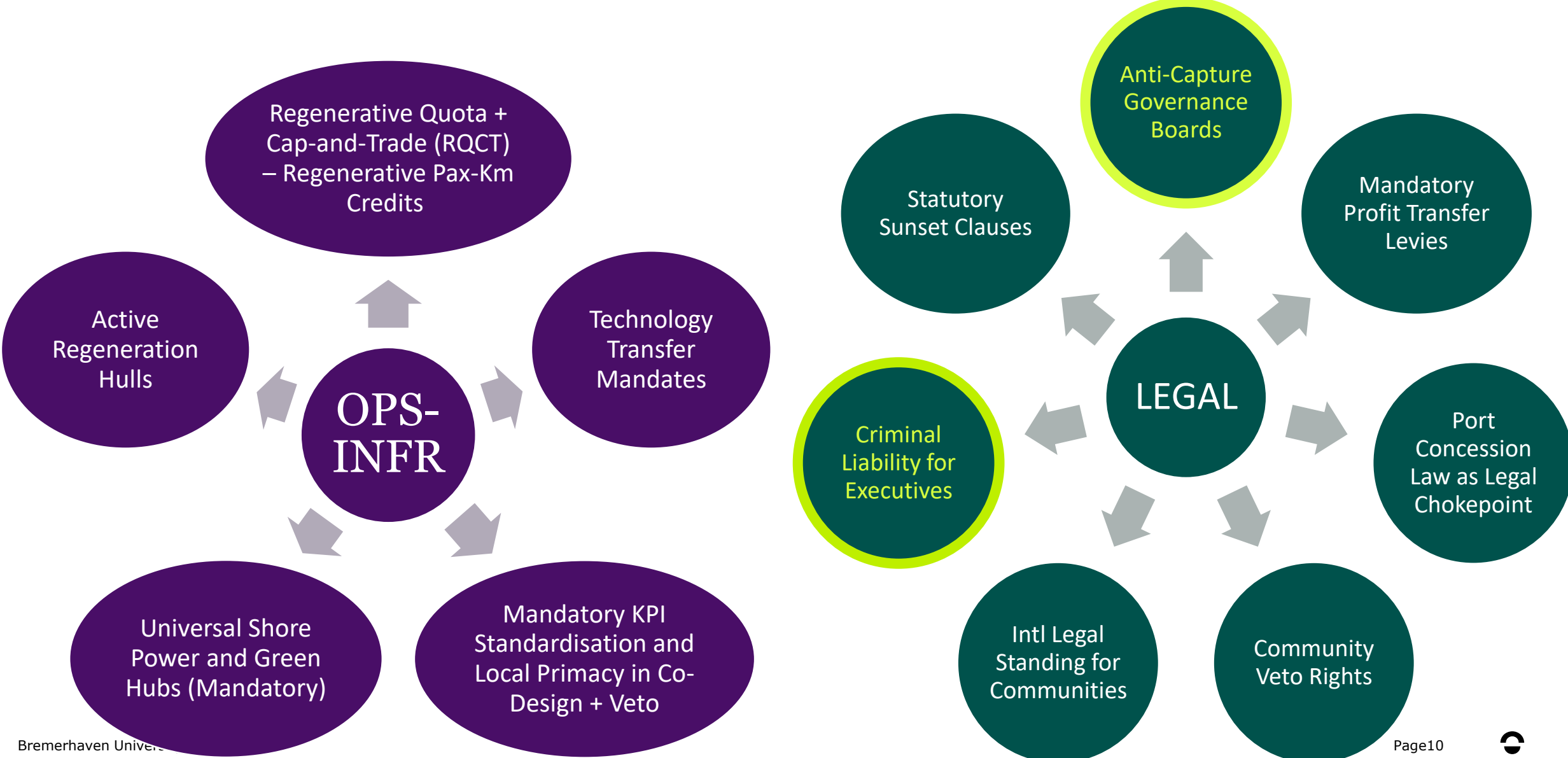
Synthesis F

Saturation Point: Full convergence of views unlikely due to two fundamentally different, and likely irreconcilable, theories of change (Abolish vs. Reform).



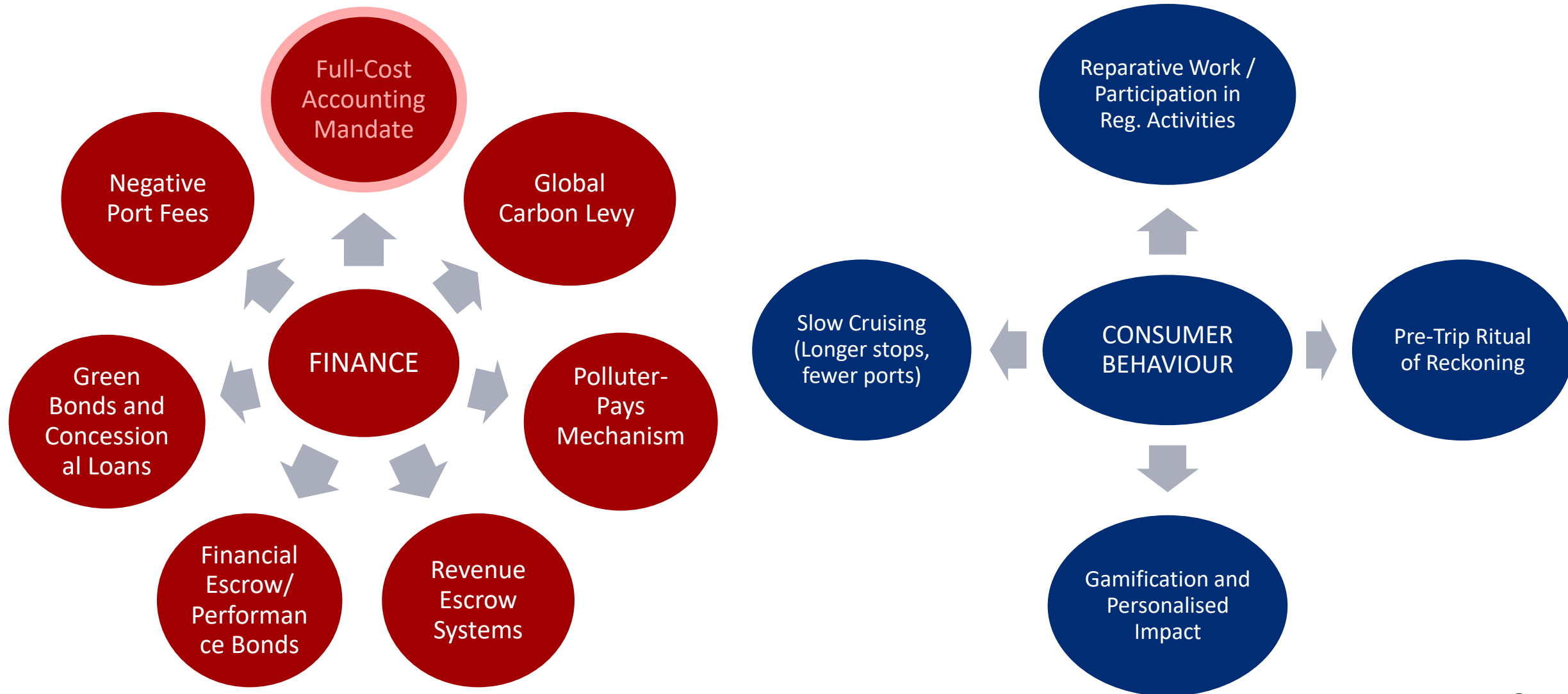
Governance and Legal Enforcement Measures

Irreversible Commitment and Governance Firewalls

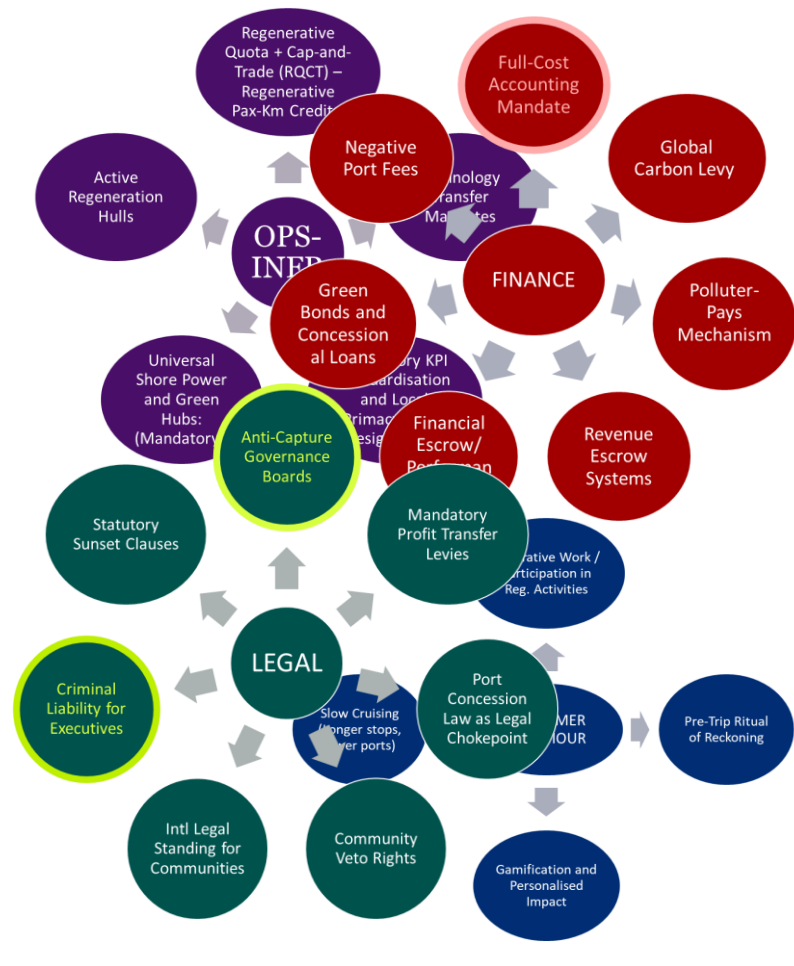


Economic Policy and Behavioural Measures:

Economic Disincentives and Narrative Reframing



From a 'Flower Bouquet' of Measures and Mandates to a Transition Roadmap: *The Next 5 Years are Crucial!!*



Category	Phase 1: Foundation & Mandate (Immediate Start – 2030)	Phase 2: Hybrid Transition & Infrastructure Scale (2030 – 2045)	Phase 3: Obsolescence & Regeneration (2045 – 2050)
Financial & Economic	Full-Cost Accounting Mandate / Global Carbon Levy	Polluter-Pays Mechanism	Negative Fees (Ship as Utility Exporter)
Legal & Governance	Anti-Capture Governance Boards	Criminal Liability for Executives/Masters	Statutory Sunset Clauses
Operational & Infrastructure	Technology Transfer Mandates	Active Regeneration Hulls	Mandatory KPI Standardisation and Local Primacy
Behavioral & Narrative	Narrative Reframing (Tourist to Temporary Steward)	Mandatory Participation in Regenerative Activities	Reparative Labour (e.g. 1 restoration activity/day)

Full Cost Accounting
Mandate / Global Carbon
Levy (Critical Path)

Anti-Capture Governance
Boards (Critical Path)

Criminal Liability for
Executives / Masters
(Critical Path)



Now to 2030 - Phase 1:

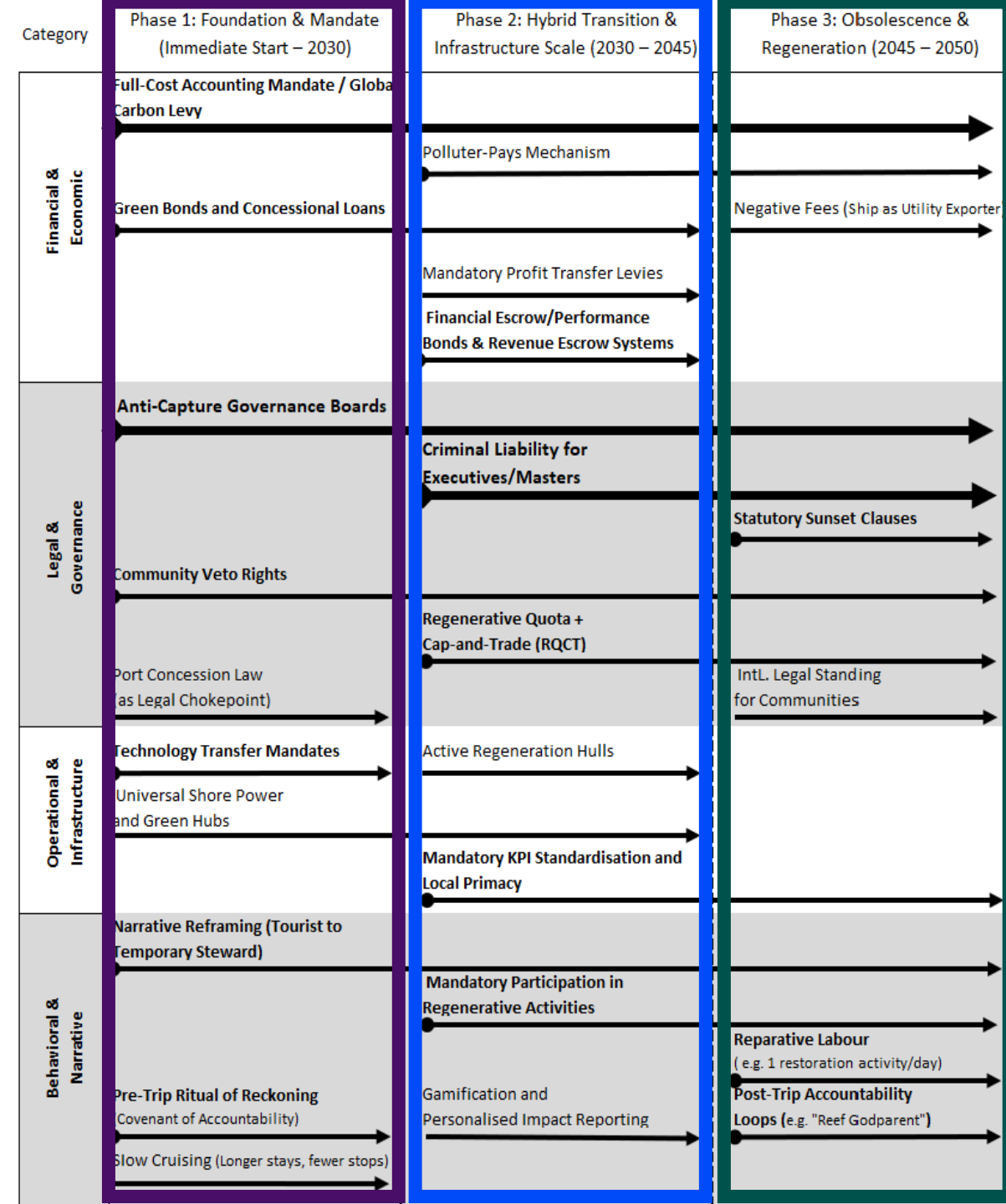
- Mandatory toll booths (carbon taxes, full-cost accounting).
- Foundation for green infrastructure.
- Non-compliant ships face risk of increasing costs, mandatory divestment penalties, port access bans.
- Desired state: Irreversible commitment.

2030 to 2045 - Phase 2:

- Managed transition.
- Sailing requires purchasing "clean sailing permits" (RQCT credits) and is subject to strict new safety rules (punitive enforcement).
- Desired State: New vessels are zero-emission and feature hulls that support marine biodiversity.

2045 to 2050 - Phase 3:

- A cruise holiday is redefined as a spiritual and ethical identity transformation (pilgrimage).
- Extraction-based cruising is phased out, potentially defined as illegal (e.g., criminalised after 2053 or defined as "marine dumping").
- Desired end-state: Regenerative cruising is the only legal form of operation.



Some Practical Questions...

What about "Regenerative Maritime Zones (RMZ)"?



Where will the funding come from?

- Global Maritime Climate Fund (GMCF) - proposed by the IMO (\$11-12B/year)
- Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and institutional investors (Impact Funding ≈ 2024: €1.45T)



Who is to enact legal and structural reforms?

- Port Authorities and Local/Host Governments (e.g. Port Concession as legal chokepoint)
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- International Maritime Court (IMC)
- European Union (EU) and Regional Port Coalitions

Regenerative
Cruise Tourism
Scenario success
estimates:

30%-80%
(according to the Delphi
sources)



Prof.Dr.Dr.hc Alexis Papathanassis

Cruise Tourism Management
Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences

E: apapathanassis@hs-bremerhaven.de

T: +49 471 4823 100

M: +49 173 613 2565

Inspired Research By-Products Cruise Ship Futures



REGENERATIVE HYBRID CRUISE FLEET



AI-generated image



AI-generated image



AI-generated image

Hybrid Cruise Fleet:

The 'Cruise Mothership' Interiors



AI-generated image

Hybrid Cruise Fleet:

The 'Cruise Mothership's Passenger Accommodation



AI-generated image



AI-generated image

Hybrid Cruise Fleet:

The 'Cruise Nodship's Facilities



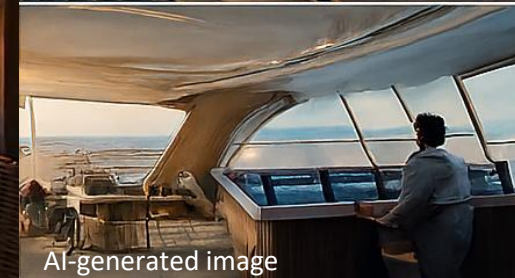
AI-generated image



AI-generated image



AI-generated image



AI-generated image

AI-generated image

Hybrid Cruise Fleet:

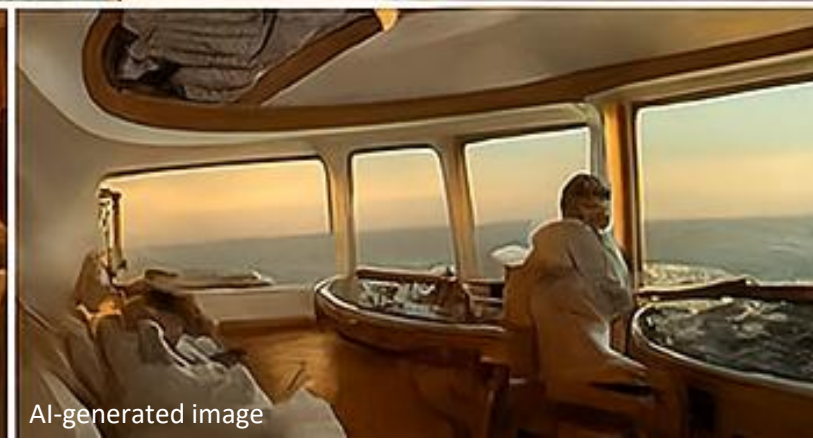
The 'Cruise Nodeship's Facilities



AI-generated image



AI-generated image



AI-generated image



AI-generated image

Prof.Dr.Dr.hc Alexis Papathanassis

Cruise Tourism Management
Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences

E: apapathanassis@hs-bremerhaven.de

T: +49 471 4823 100

M: +49 173 613 2565

**A Roadmap has
been drafted and
Measures have
been proposed...**

... Will cruise ship
accommodation for the
UN COP55 still cause
negative headlines?

My proposition for today is:

“Instead of researching the past and present to repair a forecasted gloomy future, **tourism scholarship** could be a **co-creator** of a **backcasted desired future.**”



"You see things, and you say 'Why?'
But I dream things that never were, and I say
'Why not?'"

(George Bernard Shaw)

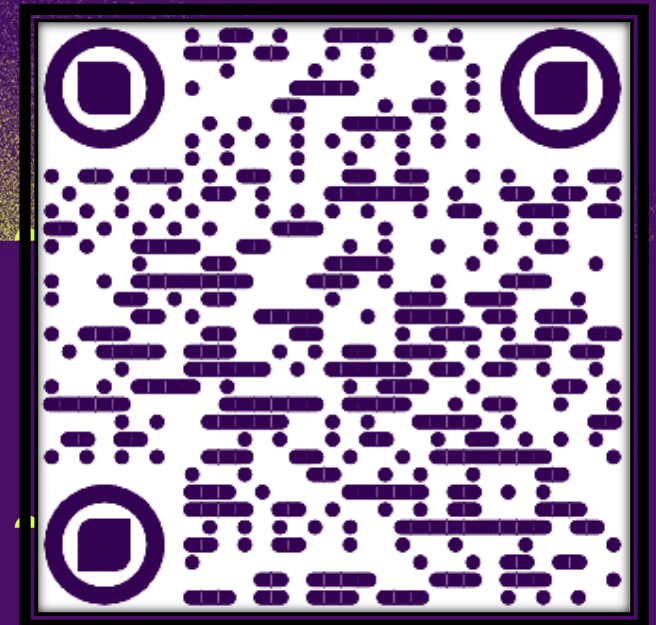
"There are far,
far better things ahead
than any we leave behind."

(Clive Staples Lewis)



Thank you for your attention

To download my presentations
(including this one) scan here:



Visit:
<http://papathanassis.com>



Hochschule Bremerhaven

Prof. Dr. Dr. hc Alexis Papathanassis
Hochschule Bremerhaven

T +49 471 4823-100

M +49 173 6132-565

W www.hs-bremerhaven.de

E apapathanassis@hs-bremerhaven.de

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153

154

155

156

157

158

159

160

161

162

163

164

165

166

167

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

191

192

193

194

195

196

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

204

205

206

207

208

209

210

211

212

213

214

215

216

217

218

219

220

221

222

223

224

225

226

227

228

229

230

231

232

233

234

235

236

237

238

239

240

241

242

243

244

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

252

253

254

255

256

257

258

259

260

261

262

263

264

265

266

267

268

269

270

271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

287

288

289

290

291

292

293

294

295

296

297

298

299

300

301

302

303

304

305

306

307

308

309

310