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Tourism-Led Rural Gentrification in Multi-Conservation Rural Settlements: Yazıköy/Datça Case

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Abstract

Yazıköy, a rural settlement in southwestern Türkiye situated within overlapping cultural and natural protection zones, provides a critical case for analyzing the implications of heritage regulations on village life. This study examines how conservation policies shape livelihoods, land use practices, and community participation. Employing a mixed-methods design, the research draws on 114 household surveys and five semi-structured interviews conducted in 2024 with residents, local officials, and business owners. Findings show that heritage designation stimulates tourism, creating income and employment opportunities while simultaneously imposing regulatory constraints that delay infrastructure improvements and restrict new construction. Rising land values, the conversion of agricultural land for tourism-related uses, and the involvement of external investors illustrate the early stages of tourism-driven rural transformation. Moreover, age emerges as a critical determinant of participation: younger residents engage more actively with conservation and tourism initiatives, whereas older inhabitants experience barriers stemming from limited resources and access to information. Overall, conservation regimes safeguard cultural identity but constrain local agency. Reconciling protection imperatives with community-defined development requires inclusive planning and participatory governance. The Yazıköy case highlights how heritage policy, shaped by overlapping conservation regulations and tourism pressures, intersects with broader dynamics of rural gentrification, providing insights relevant to other rural heritage contexts.

Keywords: tourism-led rural gentrification; rural heritage; conservation policy; community participation; archeological site; Yazıköy; Türkiye

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1. Introduction

Türkiye's diverse geography harbors an extraordinary variety of natural, cultural, historical, and archeological assets [1]. In areas where conservation designations overlap—such as archeological, urban, and natural sites—preservation efforts become increasingly complex due to fragmented regulations, conflicting authorities, and rising development pressures. These challenges are particularly acute in coastal regions like the Aegean, where multiple conservation statuses coincide with mounting tourism demand. One such case is Yazıköy, a traditional rural settlement located within both natural and archeological site boundaries on the Datça Peninsula. Yazıköy exemplifies the tensions between heritage preservation, community livelihood, and tourism-induced spatial transformation.

Conservation in Türkiye is governed by Law No. 2863 [2], which regulates cultural and natural heritage protection. However, the institutional bifurcation between ministries responsible for natural and cultural assets has led to unclear mandates and lengthy approval processes, particularly in mixed-status areas [3,4]. In Yazıköy, the coexistence of multiple site statuses results in restrictive planning environments that both preserve valuable heritage and limit infrastructure development and economic growth [5,6]. Residents often interpret these regulatory layers as obstacles to everyday life, reinforcing a sense of alienation from heritage protection frameworks.

The concept of cultural heritage conservation has evolved significantly over the past century, transitioning from the protection of individual monuments to more holistic frameworks encompassing built, natural, and intangible elements. Early international charters such as the Athens Charter [7] and the Venice Charter [8] laid the foundation for global conservation norms, which were later institutionalized through the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention [9]. Subsequent documents, such as the 1975 Amsterdam Declaration and the 1985 European Charter of Architectural Heritage, integrated economic, social, administrative, and legal aspects [10,11]. In more recent decades, the cultural landscape approach has gained prominence, viewing heritage as a dynamic product of the interaction between people and their environment [12,13]. The 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) advanced this integrative approach by emphasizing the continuity between tangible and intangible values, the built and natural environment, and past and present practices [14]. Yazıköy, with its terraced rural morphology, traditional stone architecture, and deep-rooted community practices, represents a clear case of such a multi-layered cultural landscape, yet one that remains vulnerable to fragmented governance and tourism-driven transformation.

Rural settlements are characterized by both natural and cultural values, and as a result, are shaped over time through traditional lifestyles closely intertwined with the environment. These communities have evolved distinctive features in terms of plant biodiversity, agricultural practices, land division systems, water management, and vernacular architecture [15]. However, the conservation of rural heritage is increasingly challenged by factors such as abandoned buildings that no longer meet contemporary needs, declining agricultural activity, insufficient infrastructure, and aging populations [16–18]. These difficulties are further compounded by modern threats, including urban sprawl, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and cultural erosion [19].

In the case of Türkiye, however, rural settlements face a unique set of challenges in the context of heritage preservation, including aging populations, underused or abandoned buildings, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of regulatory clarity regarding what constitutes a "rural area" under heritage law [20]. While global scholarship has increasingly emphasized the need for participatory and community-based approaches in rural heritage management [15,16], implementation within the Turkish context has been hindered by centralized control and top-down decision-making. This disconnect is especially pronounced in areas like Yazıköy, where overlapping designations—archeological, urban, and natural—create legal gray zones that complicate restoration efforts, delay permits, and discourage resident involvement.

In parallel with these administrative challenges, recent studies have drawn attention to the phenomenon of tourism-led rural gentrification, whereby rural areas undergo socio-spatial and economic transformation due to increased investment and visitation from urban newcomers or entrepreneurs [21–23]. While such processes can inject new energy into local economies, they often do so at the cost of altering traditional lifestyles, increasing land values, and marginalizing long-standing residents.

In international literature, rural gentrification is often explained through a staged model: the process begins with increased external visibility and investment, continues with shifts in land use and demographics, and ultimately culminates in the cultural and spatial reconfiguration of rural settlements [21,22]. In Türkiye, however, this trajectory manifests in diverse forms across coastal regions, protected settlements, islands, and historic towns. Conservation and tourism policies, mediated through the real estate market, drive changes in property ownership, thereby influencing the economic and spatial behaviors of local populations. Türkiye cases demonstrate that this trend (i) transforms rural landscapes and traditional ways of life, (ii) leads to the erosion of the "identity" and "character" of historic settlements and the loss of their "authenticity and heritage values," (iii) is associated with different social groups and temporal rhythms of mobility, (iv) accelerates processes of social reproduction and class-based transformation in rural areas, (v) restricts local accessibility due to rising land values and the expansion of the second-home market, and (vi) generates differentiated forms of participation contingent on age and capital [24–28].

In the Turkish context, agricultural land in the hinterland of Istanbul and along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts is increasingly being converted to tourism and real estate uses, while conservation regimes, on the one hand, safeguard heritage, yet on the other, impose new restrictions on local livelihoods. This indicates that Yazıköy is not an isolated case but rather part of a wider national trend of tourism-led rural gentrification in Türkiye.

In Yazıköy, the growing visibility of the nearby Knidos archeological site has led to new forms of economic activity—such as boutique guesthouses, artisanal cafes, and employment opportunities linked to tourism infrastructure—that reflect early-stage gentrification dynamics. However, these benefits remain unevenly distributed. Many local residents, particularly those without access to capital or land in non-restricted areas, experience tourism development as exclusionary. Meanwhile, conservation designations are often perceived as zones of restriction rather than shared cultural resources, reinforcing skepticism toward regulatory authorities [23,24]. Introducing this framework at the outset allows for a clearer interpretation of Yazıköy's current trajectory as an early-stage case where tourism-led pressures are beginning to reshape socio-spatial relations.

A recurring theme in the literature is the need for inclusive and participatory heritage governance [29]. International conservation charters, including the 1987 Washington Charter and the 1999 Burra Charter, explicitly state that long-term conservation cannot succeed without the involvement and consent of local communities [5]. However, the limited public understanding of heritage conservation and the insufficient dissemination of information to local communities have raised concerns about the reliability and validity of public opinion in conservation processes [30,31]. Furthermore, the lack of awareness and heritage-related knowledge among residents can act as a significant barrier to meaningful community participation in planning and management efforts [32–34]. In contexts like Yazıköy, community engagement remains limited. Residents report being insufficiently informed about conservation regulations and excluded from decision-making processes. Research has shown that such disengagement not only weakens conservation outcomes but can also foster informal practices that jeopardize heritage assets [33,34]. Without effective dialog and transparency, the gap between institutional conservation goals and community realities continues to widen.

Recent sustainability scholarship offers a path forward. Studies stress that heritage governance must move beyond technical preservation to address broader questions of social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic viability [35,36]. This involves recognizing the lived experiences of communities, protecting not just monuments but cultural rhythms, and ensuring that tourism and conservation initiatives generate inclusive benefits. Cardak [37] proposes a multi-level governance model grounded in

three pillars—community-based engagement, ecosystem-based conservation, and heritage-conscious tourism—all of which align closely with Yazıköy's emerging needs.

2. Case Context: The Spatial and Social Characteristics of Yazıköy

Datça Peninsula is part of Muğla Province, situated at the confluence of the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. It appears as "Dadya" and "Bedye" in Piri Reis' writings [38] and as "Dacce" and "Becce" in Evliya Çelebi's Travelogue [39]. Today, these names have evolved to "Datça" and "Betçe" in the vernacular.

Historical and archeological research shows that the earliest dense settlement on the Datça Peninsula emerged in Knidos at the western tip, where maritime trade flourished [40–42]. Wine production and agriculture likewise constituted the region's principal livelihoods in antiquity [43]. Evidence for agricultural installations outside the urban core suggests that a substantial share of the ancient Knidian population lived beyond the main settlement [40,44]. Whereas the eastern sector (Datça) contains relatively broad plains, the rugged topography of the Betçe region fostered a dispersed settlement pattern [45].

Yazıköy is situated approximately 8 km from the ancient city of Knidos and lies within a designated conservation corridor on the western edge of the Datça Peninsula (Figure 1). The settlement's terraced residential morphology, historic rural fabric, and ecological value have led to its classification under multiple conservation regimes, including 1st and 3rd degree archeological sites and natural protection zones (Figure 2). As such, it presents a rare spatial context where natural, archeological, and traditional rural values intersect.



Figure 1. Location of Yazıköy within the Datça Peninsula, Muğla Province, Türkiye.

Permanent occupation in Yazıköy, located inland, began in the 7th century CE after Knidos started to be abandoned. Successive Byzantine and Turkish phases were later complemented in the late Ottoman period by an "Arab Quarter" formed by migrants from Egypt [41,46,47].

Officially renamed Yazı Neighborhood, Yazıköy was reclassified from village to neighborhood status in 2014 with the enforcement of Law No. 6360 [48]. Yazıköy is a rural settlement located in the western part of the Datça Peninsula, approximately 8 km from the ancient city of Knidos [47]. Its unique topographical setting—between the Kocadağ and Bozdağ mountain ranges—has shaped a distinct terraced-residential morphology, blending agricultural production with residential clusters. Historically situated along a valley corridor, the village has evolved through successive cultural layers, with spatial patterns reflecting centuries of adaptation to both environmental and socio-economic constraints [49–51].

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to examine the dynamics of heritage conservation in Yazıköy, a rural settlement on the Datça Peninsula characterized by overlapping archeological and natural conservation statuses (Figure 2). The methodological framework integrates quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from semi-structured, in-depth interviews, supported by extensive field observations and spatial documentation. The combined approach allows for a holistic understanding of local

perceptions, institutional challenges, and socio-spatial transformations associated with conservation policies and tourism-driven change.

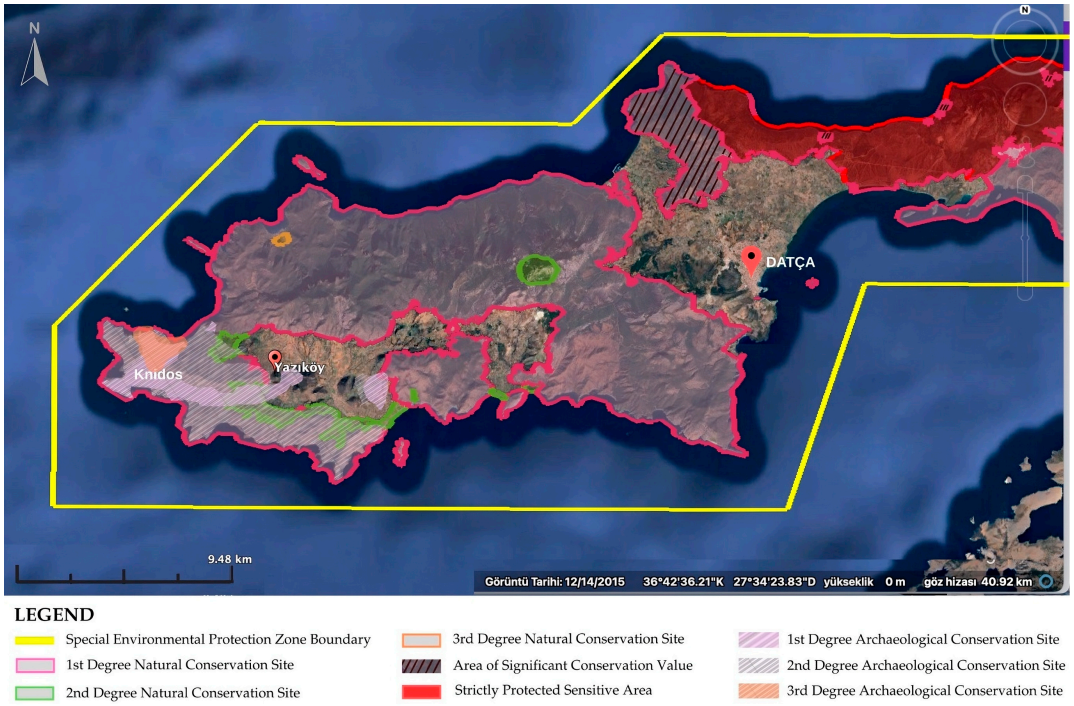

Figure 2. Spatial distribution of conservation sites and rural settlements in the Datça Peninsula.

The settlement structure is defined by low-density, stone-built dwellings organized along narrow, organically curved pathways that follow natural water channels and topographic contours [52]. The internal circulation system, often no wider than 2 m, restricts vehicular access but promotes pedestrian interaction and spatial intimacy. These curved routes are punctuated by small communal nodes—plazas, fountains, and meeting points—that serve as the social heart of the village. Housing clusters are situated on terraced platforms, enabling optimal use of land for olive and almond cultivation while mitigating erosion through a landscape-integrated design [51].

Architecturally, Yazıköy displays a consistent vernacular character, composed primarily of one- or two-story limestone masonry houses. These structures often follow a, with ground floors serving agricultural or storage functions and upper floors designated for domestic life. Traditional roof forms include flat earthen roofs made with timber and regional soil ("geren toprağı"), as well as later-period hipped tile roofs [53]. Facade compositions typically feature arched chimneys and symmetrical window placements, while interior spaces reveal exposed timber elements and central hearths framed by niche alcoves [54]. The visuals obtained from the field study conducted in Yazıköy are presented below (Figure 3).

The village's cultural landscape further includes olive oil presses (mengen), restored fountains dating back to the 1950s, historic windmills, and terraced agricultural fields framed by dry-stone walls (Figure 4). Water channels and stone bridges—many still functional—illustrate the long-standing infrastructural logic that underpins the settlement's agricultural sustainability and ecological balance. The visual integration of residential silhouettes with native vegetation—olive, carob, and maquis scrub—adds to the village's spatial cohesion and environmental character.

In addition to its physical structure, Yazıköy maintains a vibrant set of intangible cultural practices. Seasonal almond and olive harvesting continues to be organized through collective labor traditions (imece), reinforcing social cohesion. Although traditional crafts

such as saddle-making and basketry have largely declined, skills such as stonemasonry endure through the maintenance and restoration of heritage buildings [45]. Oral traditions, including Betçe folk songs and local proverbs, are preserved through community choirs and festivals.



Figure 3. Cultural landscape elements: fountains, windmills, and dry stone structures in Yazıköy.



Figure 4. Traditional vernacular architecture and domestic spatial organization in Yazıköy.

One of the most socially significant events is the annual Almond Blossom Festival, which merges local heritage with tourism-oriented activities and serves as a cultural bridge between generations. In addition, Sunday markets and herb-foraging excursions form part of the village's seasonal rhythm and contribute to the social sustainability of daily life [55]. Culinary traditions, such as almond pastries and thyme honey, not only preserve gastronomic heritage but also offer opportunities for household-level entrepreneurship, especially among women.

Demographically, Yazıköy has experienced gradual aging due to rural outmigration, especially among younger generations pursuing education or employment in urban centers. Despite this, survey data reveal a strong sense of belonging among residents—particularly those who have lived in the village for decades. This attachment is tied not only to kinship or property but also to shared memories, seasonal rituals, and spatial familiarity. Importantly, this sense of place is underpinned by a collective identity that resists urban standardization, even as tourism and conservation pressures reshape the village's economic and spatial dynamics.

In summary, Yazıköy presents a unique case of a rural settlement whose spatial form and social practices are mutually reinforcing. Its terraced morphology, vernacular architecture, and layered cultural landscape have evolved through centuries of adaptation, while its social fabric continues to reflect deeply rooted traditions of cooperation, memory, and environmental stewardship. However, these qualities are increasingly under strain

from external pressures-particularly tourism growth and restrictive conservation policies-which risk disrupting the fragile equilibrium between tradition and transformation.

3. Methods

Three primary methods were employed in data collection:

On-site observation and spatial documentation: The research team conducted field visits to systematically record Yazıköy's physical and spatial features, including street morphology, architectural typologies, agricultural terraces, and conservation markers. Photographic documentation and sketching were supported by cadastral data and the 1/5000-scale zoning plan obtained from the Datça Municipality.

Questionnaire survey: A structured questionnaire was designed to measure residents' perceptions of conservation, sense of belonging, communication with authorities, and participation in heritage-related activities. The instrument included 16 questions—four demographic and twelve thematic—administered through Google Forms and distributed using the snowball sampling method. The sample size was determined based on a 90% confidence level and a 7% margin of error, yielding a minimum required sample of 114 participants out of a population of 630 [56]. Participants were required to have resided in Yazıköy for at least five years. All participation was voluntary and conducted with prior informed consent under ethical approval from Dokuz Eylül University.

Semi-structured interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with five key stakeholders who have lived or worked in Yazıköy for a minimum of ten years and hold positions related to conservation, planning, or local knowledge. Participants included an excavation director, the village headman, a tourist guide, a retired excavation worker, and a local real estate agent. The interviews followed a flexible guide addressing themes such as perceived benefits and limitations of site designations, community participation, planning issues, and future recommendations. Interviews were audio-recorded, anonymized (coded P1–P5), and transcribed for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis followed a systematic process. First, the researchers gained familiarity with the data by repeatedly listening to the recordings and carefully reading the transcripts while taking preliminary notes. The transcripts were then coded line by line to identify relevant statements, which were grouped into initial categories (e.g., "infrastructure inadequacy," "youth participation," "tourism pressures"). These codes were subsequently refined and organized into broader themes, which were reviewed against the raw data to ensure consistency and reliability. Finally, the themes were consolidated and reported, with representative quotations incorporated into the findings section to illustrate key insights.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing comparability across participants while also enabling in-depth exploration of individual perspectives. Among these, several key stakeholders participated in longer sessions that can be considered in-depth interviews. On average, the interviews lasted between 45 and 60 min, with some extending up to 90 min depending on the participant's role and level of engagement. Conversations were typically held in familiar local settings such as participants' homes, the village coffeehouse, the neighborhood square, or the headman's office, ensuring both comfort and contextual relevance during data collection.

The survey was divided into two main sections:

Section A (Demographics): Collected information on gender, age, duration of residence in Yazıköy, and level of attachment to the settlement.

Section B (Perceptions and Participation): Assessed residents' understanding of conservation designations, their engagement with decision-making processes, views on the advantages and disadvantages of protected site status, and their participation in cultural and natural heritage-related events.

To improve clarity and accessibility, a three-point Likert scale ("agree," "partially agree," "disagree") was used, which has proven effective in settings with diverse literacy levels [57,58]. The responses were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29, employing descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages) and cross-tabulation to examine correlations between variables such as age, gender, and conservation attitudes.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, focusing on recurring patterns in stakeholder perspectives. Codes were developed iteratively from the interview transcripts, allowing themes to emerge inductively. This qualitative dimension was critical in contextualizing survey findings, providing deeper insights into how conservation policies are experienced by different segments of the community, and revealing hidden tensions and opportunities not captured through quantitative data alone.

4. Findings

The findings of this study are derived from a triangulated analysis combining structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. This section presents key insights into local residents' perceptions of conservation, infrastructure challenges, participation in heritage-related activities, and the emerging impact of tourism on Yazıköy's spatial and social fabric.

4.1. Survey Results

The demographic profile of the 114 participants indicates a predominantly aging population, with 43.9% over the age of 60 (Table 1). Despite youth outmigration, a strong sense of belonging persists: 80.7% of respondents report feeling attached to Yazıköy, regardless of age or length of residence. This emotional connection correlates positively with support for heritage conservation, although it does not necessarily translate into participation in planning processes.

Table 1. Categorical distribution of participants.

Variable	Category	Frequency (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–30	14	12.3%
	31–59	50	43.9%
	60+	50	43.9%
Gender	Female	63	55.3%
	Male	51	44.7%
Years living in Yazıköy	Less than 10 years	18	15.8%
	10–30 years	36	31.6%
	30+ years	60	52.6%
Sense of belonging	Yes	92	80.7%
	No/Neutral	22	19.3%

In the second part of the survey, respondents were asked about their communication with stakeholders and their awareness of Yazıköy's historical, cultural, and natural features. Results indicate that a significant proportion of residents feel excluded from official planning processes. Specifically, 50.9% of respondents stated that the central government does not share information about upcoming projects with the local community. An additional 22.1% believe that information is shared only partially, while just 23% felt that the government does indeed provide information transparently.

Participation in local decision-making processes also varies. While 45.6% of respondents reported that they regularly attend meetings or share input on decisions related to Yazıköy, 31.6% participate occasionally, and 22.8% do not participate at all. These results reflect a partial level of civic engagement, shaped by institutional accessibility and perceived efficacy.

In terms of communication channels, respondents overwhelmingly reported better interaction with local authorities than with national institutions. Only 23% found communication with the central government adequate or effective. Over half of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the level of information provided by central authorities, while 85% indicated that they communicated more readily with the village headman and council members than with national-level institutions. Regardless of age, residents expressed that the village headman was more approachable, accessible, and responsive compared to formal state representatives.

When asked about the meaning of the term "conservation area", the most frequent associations included "restricted zone" (72 respondents), followed by "protected archeological/historical area" (77), and "an area that obstructs development" (67). These results reflect a perception of conservation designations as development constraints rather than community assets (Figure 5).

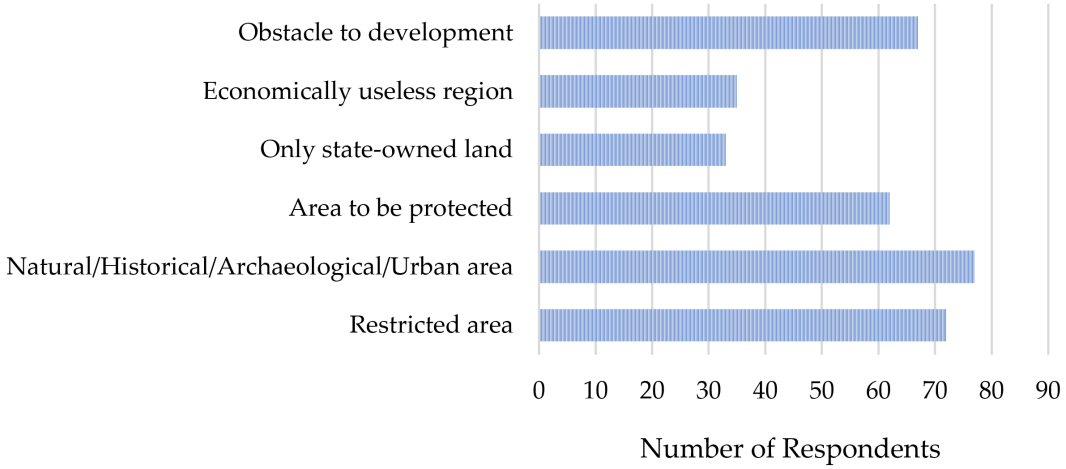

Figure 5. Perceptions of the term site.

Regarding awareness and knowledge, the vast majority of participants (85 out of 114) acknowledged that any new construction within protected areas requires municipal permission and conservation board approval. Only a few individuals, primarily those aged 70 and above, were unaware of this requirement. In terms of cultural and historical knowledge, most respondents felt reasonably informed about Yazıköy and Knidos, with 48 fully agreeing and 53 partially agreeing that they had sufficient knowledge. However, despite this general confidence, the ability to identify specific buildings that require protection was relatively low: only 22 respondents could name at least eight such buildings, while 63 stated they could not.

Beliefs regarding the importance of conservation were consistent across demographic groups. A clear majority agreed that protected areas should be preserved (53 agreed, 36 partially agreed), with no significant variation based on age or gender. However, younger participants demonstrated a higher level of factual knowledge about local heritage, while some older individuals expressed uncertainty or lacked specific details.

Participation in awareness-raising activities and educational excursions related to Yazıköy and Knidos was also relatively high. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported participating either fully or partially in heritage activities, and tour attendance was particularly strong among younger participants. While older individuals were less likely

to participate, most respondents, including those over the age of 70, expressed a desire to attend such events in the future, indicating a latent interest that could be encouraged through inclusive programming (Table 2).

Table 2. Participation in cultural activities by age group.

Activity	18–30 (%)	31–59 (%)	60+ (%)
Knidos site visits	78%	62%	38%
Almond Blossom Fest	84%	76%	61%
Heritage workshops	66%	44%	20%

Interestingly, younger respondents were more likely to participate in cultural events such as heritage walks or Knidos excursions. While older participants expressed strong emotional ties to the village, their level of factual knowledge about specific protected buildings or legal frameworks was lower. This generational divide underscores the importance of targeted awareness-raising efforts.

Perceived disadvantages of protected status include inadequate infrastructure -cited by 85 participants- especially in relation to road access, water supply, electricity, and internet connectivity. Residents also noted delays in obtaining construction permits and frequent rejection of zoning applications, leading to frustration and informal practices (Figure 6).

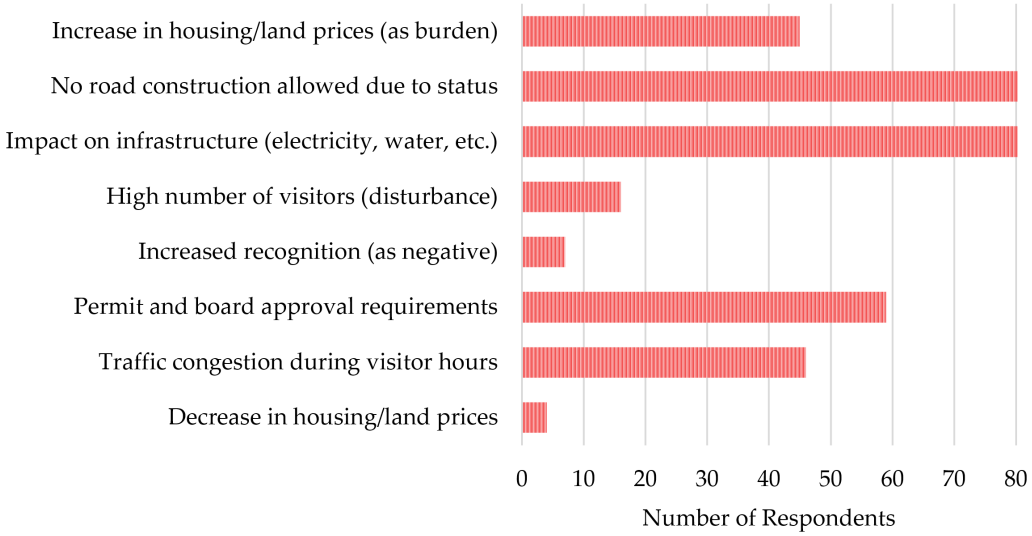

Figure 6. Negative aspects of Yazıköy being an archeological site.

Nonetheless, positive outcomes were also identified: 90 respondents reported that heritage status boosted local economic activity through almond and olive sales and job opportunities linked to Knidos tourism. Sixty-four participants cited increased recognition of Yazıköy as a benefit, and many supported the idea that heritage-based tourism contributes to the cultural vitality of the village (Figure 7).

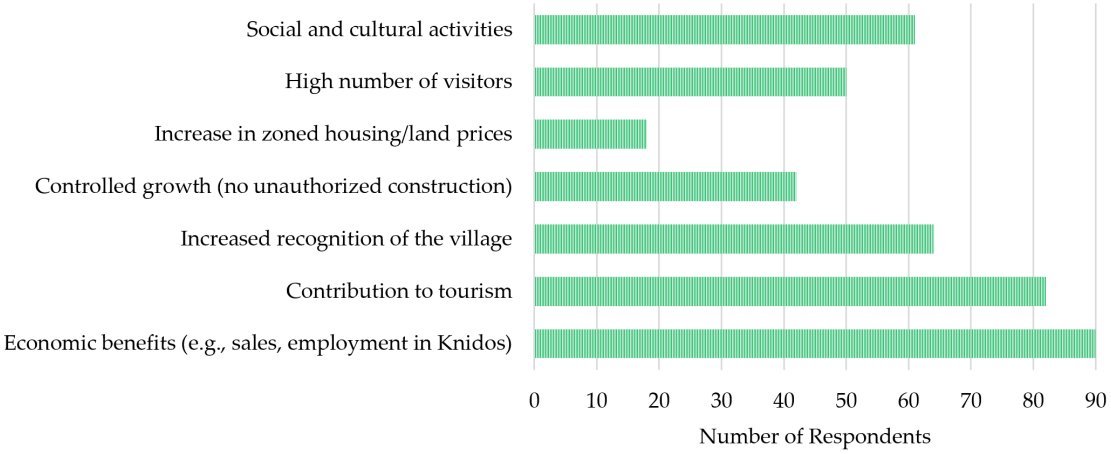

Figure 7. Positive aspects of Yazıköy being an archeological site.

4.2. Interview Results

To complement and deepen the survey findings, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with five individuals who have either resided in or worked in Yazıköy for a minimum of ten years and who hold roles directly or indirectly linked to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage (see Table 3). The interview sample was purposefully selected to ensure a balanced representation of institutional stakeholders and local knowledge holders. Participants included figures such as the excavation director, the village headman (muhtar), an elderly farmer, a tour guide, and a real estate agent, thereby capturing both expert perspectives and community-based experiences related to the management of protected site areas.

Table 3. Information on stakeholders with semi-structured interviews.

Participant Code	Occupation/Role	Connection to Yazıköy	Years of Experience	Type of Knowledge
P1	Excavation Director/ Academician	Leads archeological work in Knidos	34	Institutional/ Expert
P2	Village Headman (Muhtar)	Elected local authority in Yazıköy	35	Community/ Administrative
P3	Tour Guide	Conducts cultural tours in the area	10	Heritage Interpretation
P4	Elderly Farmer	Lifelong resident and landowner	87	Traditional/ Local Knowledge
P5	Real Estate Agent	Sells and manages local properties	60	Economic/Regulatory

An adaptable interview guide was employed, structured around four main thematic categories:

perceived benefits and constraints of protected status;
infrastructure and spatial planning challenges;
community participation in conservation processes; and
future-oriented recommendations for heritage management.

However, the semi-structured format also allowed for the emergence of context-specific discussions—such as the pressures of informal/illegal construction, intergenerational knowledge transmission, and heritage-based livelihood strategies—which enriched the depth of the qualitative data.

All interviews were audio-recorded with prior informed consent, and anonymity was ensured by assigning participants coded identifiers (P1–P5). To maintain transparency while preserving privacy, descriptive metadata—including years of residence in Yazıköy, occupational background, and relevant institutional affiliations—was documented separately. This methodological approach allowed for both analytical rigor and ethical integrity in the handling of qualitative data (Table 3).

Semi-structured interviews with five key stakeholders confirmed and deepened the survey insights. All interviewees viewed heritage protection positively in principle, emphasizing its importance for identity preservation, tourism development, and preventing unregulated construction. However, they also expressed frustration with outdated or ambiguous regulations, prolonged permit procedures, and a general lack of institutional support for infrastructure development.

For instance, Participant P1 (excavation director) emphasized that "Knidos, despite its remote location and poor road access, attracts considerable attention, but the infrastructure cannot support the demand." Participant P2 (village headman) stressed that "the current regulatory framework makes it nearly impossible for villagers to build or renovate homes, which leads them to either abandon properties or resort to unauthorized construction."

Participants P3 (tour guide) and P5 (real estate agent) noted the emergence of tourism-linked gentrification, whereby outsiders purchase or lease properties for commercial use, driving up land values and altering the traditional spatial fabric. While this trend has brought short-term economic benefits—such as seasonal employment in tourism services and increased sales of local goods—it has also led to increased pressure on water, sewage, and transportation systems, particularly during peak seasons.

All interviewees acknowledged that the rising visitor numbers had created new income streams, especially for young people working in Knidos-related services. However, they also reported a growing sense of inequality (Table 4), as many villagers cannot capitalize on these opportunities due to land use restrictions or lack of resources. Participant P5 explained, "70% of the land in Yazıköy is in protected zones, and even those who want to farm legally face barriers like being unable to plow, plant trees, or build terraces."

Table 4. Interviews.

Theme	Summary Insight	Sample Quote (Participant)
Infrastructure Inadequacy	Current services do not meet seasonal tourism demand	"We still don't have ambulance access" (P2)
Regulatory Constraints	Residents face barriers in obtaining building permissions	"Even tree planting needs approval" (P5)
Economic Inequality	Locals cannot access tourism income equally	"Only outsiders are profiting" (P3)
Identity and Pride	Community takes pride in its heritage but feels excluded from decisions	"We protect this land, but they don't ask us" (P4)

Several negative consequences were repeatedly cited across interviews: excessive traffic congestion on narrow village roads, lack of parking, inadequate waste management during festivals or holidays, and insufficient emergency vehicle access. P1 warned, "We've been lucky so far not to face a serious medical or fire emergency during major events. When it happens, we'll realize how critical the infrastructure gaps truly are."

4.3. Synthesis

The integration of survey and interview data reveals a complex relationship between conservation, tourism, and community well-being. On the one hand, the presence of

Knidos and Yazıköy's layered heritage generates visibility, cultural pride, and modest economic gains. On the other hand, the rigid application of conservation laws, inadequate infrastructure, and the limited voice of residents in planning decisions have created a sense of exclusion and inertia.

Local perceptions of conservation are strongly shaped by everyday experiences of restriction rather than opportunity. Conservation policies, while well-intentioned, have often lacked contextual sensitivity, treating Yazıköy more as an object of protection than as a living community (Figure 7). Nevertheless, high levels of youth engagement in cultural events and widespread attachment to place suggest strong potential for participatory heritage strategies if institutional frameworks can be adapted accordingly (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. Synthesis of interviews. [x = stated by interviewer or identified in survey].

		Interview Results					Survey Results
		P1	**P2**	**P3**	**P4**	**P5**	
Positive Reviews	Area to be protected	x	x	x		x	x
	Protecting the values of the people/belonging	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Increased recognition	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Organizing social and cultural activities	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Irregular construction is not allowed	x	x				x
	Providing economic contribution	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Increasing demand for zoned land and housing					x	x
	Increase in the number of visitors	x	x	x	x	x	x
	The site boundaries are made according to the relevant conditions of the relevant period.	x					
	Attending events and going on trips						x
Negative Comments	Private property problems	x	x			x	
	Use of stones from the ancient city	x					
	Increased environmental pollution	x	x	x			
	Infrastructure deficiencies	x	x	x	x	x	x
	The road is narrow/traffic congestion/cannot be used in emergencies	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Having parking problems	x	x	x			
	The length of the process regarding zoning and permits for new construction		x	x		x	x
	Increase in illegal construction		x			x	x
	Inability to plant/plough/maintain trees in fields		x		x	x	
	Lack of awareness-raising activities		x	x			
	Loss of value in undeveloped lands		x			x	x

Table 6. Key issues, opportunities, and recommendations for Yazıköy.

Key Issues
Negative Perceptions of Site Areas—Site areas are seen as economic restrictions Infrastructure Deficiencies—Inadequate roads, utilities, and internet Property and Regulatory Challenges—Lengthy permits, informal construction Limited Local Participation—Poor central communication, low engagement
Opportunities
Economic Benefits of Tourism—Job creation, conservation support Youth Participation—High youth involvement in heritage Potential for Awareness-Raising—Older residents can be engaged
Recommendations
Re-evaluate Site Boundaries—Balance conservation and local needs Invest in Infrastructure—Meet the demands of residents and tourists Develop Supportive Economic Policies—Align livelihoods and heritage Expand Education and Awareness Programs—Engage all age groups Enhance Community Participation—Build local trust and inclusion Adapt and Replicate Lessons—Apply the model to other rural areas

5. Discussion

Recent international literature has highlighted how rural tourism contributes to a form of gentrification in which affluent urban residents or tourism entrepreneurs move into rural settlements, reshaping their social, spatial, and economic fabric [21,22,58,59]. This phenomenon, called "tourism-led rural gentrification," results in both opportunities and disruptions for existing communities [60,61].

In the case of Yazıköy, although the local population has not yet experienced large-scale displacement, there are early indicators of rural gentrification dynamics:

- Rising Tourism and Economic Restructuring: The growing visibility of Knidos and the increased visitor numbers in Yazıköy have created new economic activities—home-style cafés, boutique rentals, and heritage-linked tourism jobs—which resemble the "tourism entrepreneur gentrifiers" described by [21,62]. These activities shift the village economy from agriculture to services and tourism [63].
- Infrastructure Strain and Local Frustration: As highlighted by residents and experts in the study, the inadequacy of roads, water, and waste infrastructure during peak tourist seasons mirrors challenges found in gentrifying rural areas globally [60–65]. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies that the concept of site is considered as restricted areas [4], and that this restriction can lead to significant infrastructure deficiencies [5,6].
- Perception of Heritage Restrictions as Development Barriers: Similarly to tourism-gentrified areas in China and South Africa, many Yazıköy residents perceive conservation designations as "restricted zones" that limit farming, housing, and daily life [23,24]. This perception can lead to local resentment, especially when external actors gain more from tourism than long-term residents.
- Changing Cultural Landscape and Place Identity: The increased presence of visitors and entrepreneurs potentially introduces a different esthetic and functional use of space, shifting the "lived rurality" toward a commodified landscape—what some scholars call "imagined rurality" [22].
- Potential for Indirect Displacement: Even in the absence of forced relocation, residents face indirect displacement when land prices rise, local values are eroded, or development pressures lead to social alienation [66,67].

Recent literature reinforces the need for inclusive heritage management. Ineffective heritage governance is often linked to inadequate stakeholder engagement, especially the exclusion of local communities from planning stages. This lack of participation undermines awareness and stewardship of heritage, ultimately leading to management failures [35]. Nicolini et al. [36] emphasize that development models that disregard local rhythms and focus solely on consumable resources are no longer acceptable. Actions aiming to reinforce local identity and protect 'inconsumable' assets, such as historic and environmental landscapes, are increasingly seen as vital for sustainable local development [36].

Additionally, gentrification and the commodification of heritage often marginalize indigenous communities. A growing body of research calls for governance frameworks that are more sensitive to local contexts, especially in addressing environmental justice and social inequality [37,68] proposes a multi-level, multi-stakeholder governance model grounded in three pillars: community-based engagement, ecosystem-based conservation, and a qualified tourism approach. This framework aligns closely with Yazıköy's needs, suggesting that participatory planning, heritage awareness, and inclusive governance are essential for balancing conservation with local well-being [37,69].

Moreover, studies have consistently indicated that the protection and promotion of cultural and natural assets can enhance tourism appeal, support cultural tourism, and thereby contribute to the local economy. Awareness-raising is also seen as instrumental in bolstering conservation outcomes [70–76].

Understanding Yazıköy through the lens of tourism-led rural gentrification reframes its challenges: infrastructure gaps, regulatory friction, and local exclusion are not just administrative problems, but signs of broader socio-spatial transformation [49,77,78]. By integrating this perspective, policy solutions should not only aim at physical preservation but also at equitable economic participation and cultural continuity for local residents. Future conservation policies in similar rural settings must anticipate the socio-economic dynamics that tourism introduces, especially where conservation meets commerce.

6. Conclusions

The Yazıköy case offers significant insights into the challenges faced by rural settlements with multiple conservation statuses in Turkey and beyond. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, interviews, and field observations, to analyze the interaction between conservation policies, tourism, and community experiences in Yazıköy.

The core research problem was to examine the impacts of conservation policies on community participation and local livelihoods in a settlement where archeological and natural sites overlap. Our findings reveal that while the conservation status has brought economic benefits, it has also created problems such as inadequate infrastructure and complex regulations. These challenges have led the local population to perceive conservation areas as "an obstacle to development."

The case of Yazıköy illustrates how heritage conservation, when situated within a complex mesh of regulatory designations and tourism pressures, becomes inseparable from broader dynamics of rural change. Understanding this transformation through the lens of tourism-led rural gentrification reveals that issues such as infrastructure gaps, community exclusion, and conflicting land uses are not simply planning failures, but symptoms of deeper socio-economic shifts.

In this context, we conclude that tourism has triggered socio-spatial and economic transformation in the village, with early-stage gentrification dynamics becoming visible. Rising land values, new tourism-focused economic activities, and shifts in land use priorities risk transforming Yazıköy from a "living community" into a "commodified landscape."

This situation can create a sense of exclusion among locals and may lead to the indirect displacement of long-term residents.

To address these issues, we propose the following policy recommendations:

- Inclusive Planning Frameworks: A multi-level governance model should be adopted that includes all stakeholders, particularly the local population, in conservation decisions, alongside central and local authorities.
- Investment in Infrastructure: Current infrastructure deficiencies (roads, water and waste management) should be addressed and improved, considering the balance between tourists and local users, conservation and use.
- Enhancing Community Participation: Context-sensitive education and awareness programs should be developed to encourage the participation of both young and old populations.
- Economic Equity: Policies should be created to ensure that the benefits of conservation and tourism are distributed more equitably among village residents. For example, entrepreneurship models that support local crafts and agricultural products can be promoted.

In conclusion, the sustainable management of cultural and natural heritage urgently requires a holistic approach that goes beyond the physical preservation of buildings to center on the well-being, participation, and cultural continuity of the communities that inhabit them. The case of Yazıköy demonstrates that heritage conservation cannot be understood separately from broader rural transformation dynamics. Moving beyond static preservation toward policies that embrace cultural continuity, community participation, and equitable development is essential for safeguarding both heritage and livelihoods in rural Türkiye.

7. Study Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. As a case study specific to Yazıköy, the generalizability of its findings to other regions is restricted. Furthermore, while the survey sample size met the minimum requirements, the research focused on participants' perceptions, and a more comprehensive longitudinal analysis would be necessary to fully measure all the economic and demographic effects of tourism-led gentrification. Only five in-depth interviews were conducted within the scope of this study. This limitation stems from the rural context of Yazıköy, which is characterized by a small year-round population, a limited number of long-term residents, and generally low educational attainment. Nonetheless, the data collection prioritized individuals with in-depth knowledge of the settlement.

Future research in Yazıköy and other rural settlements with varying conservation statuses should delve deeper into the long-term effects of gentrification dynamics and the changes in the cultural identity and quality of life of the local population. Such studies should also discuss measures to preserve place-specific qualities. Therefore, we plan to continue their research on the relationship between rural conservation and tourism, community engagement, and heritage governance.

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