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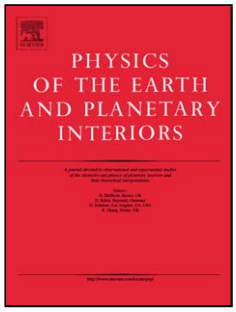

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ANALYSIS OF RELAXATION TEMPORAL PATTERNS IN GREECE THROUGH THE RETAS MODEL APPROACH

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Abstract

The temporal decay of eight aftershock sequences in the area of Greece after 1975 was examined with main shocks magnitudes of $M_w \geq 6.6$. The analysis was done through the Restricted Epidemic Type Aftershock Sequence (RETAS) stochastic model, which enables the possibility to recognize the prevailing clustering pattern of the relaxation process in the examined areas. In four of the cases the analysis selected the Epidemic Type Aftershock Sequence (ETAS) model to offer the most appropriate depiction of the aftershock temporal distribution which presumes that all shocks to the smallest ones in the sample can cause secondary aftershocks, while for the rest of the sequences triggering potential seems to have aftershocks above a certain magnitude threshold (RETAS model) and they are expected to induce secondary activity.

The models, developed on aftershock data, were also applied to forecast real seismicity after the conclusion of the aftershock sequences. For four out of eight cases, we obtained promising estimations of ensuing seismicity after the end of the sequences with models based only on aftershock data. Some features of the RETAS model simulation were

also studied, like simulating magnitudes, revealing that it is reasonable to consider in the model the temporal behavior of the aftershocks' magnitudes as well. Stochastic modeling was also applied to estimate the duration of the relaxation process, assuming that the end of each sequence is marked by the divergence of real seismicity from the Modified Omori Formula (MOF) model, the latter known to represent pure aftershock activity. The obtained results give an indication that possibly low stressing rate results in longer duration of the relaxation process in a region.

Keywords: *Aftershock sequence, stochastic models, RETAS, ETAS, relaxation process, simulation*

1. Introduction

Stochastic modeling has become a major tool in examining the clustering properties of earthquake occurrences. Former tendency of carrying out declustering algorithms that remove aftershocks from a catalog is now replaced by the application of a number of stochastic processes to fit the clustering behavior of a sequence. This allows making use of all available information in a seismic catalog and thus aftershock data can in many cases help in the detection of anomalous seismicity changes like quiescence or activation prior to a large earthquake (Matsu'ura, 1986; Zhao et al., 1989; Ogata et al., 2003; Ogata, 2005a, b; Drakatos, 2000). The great interest dedicated by many researchers of the aftershock activity to statistical methods is obviously linked to the vast possibilities, which they offer in studying and modeling the relaxation process. Among them, the most important are development of detailed temporal patterns, elaboration of adequate stochastic models of aftershock occurrences, detection of anomalous seismicity changes before strong aftershocks or before forthcoming main shocks, providing stochastic grounds for seismic hazard analysis etc.

One can find a number of point processes in the literature that concern aftershock clusters in time or both in space and time (Ogata, 1988, 1993, 1998; Kagan, 1991; Vere–Jones, 1992; Musmeci and Vere–Jones, 1992; Rathbun, 1993, 1994; Schoenberg, 1997; Console and Murru, 2001; Zhuang et al., 2002; Ogata et al., 2003; Console et al., 2003; Gospodinov & Rotondi, 2006). One of the first approaches to model the gradual decay of the aftershocks triggered by a strong earthquake is the so–called Omori Law (Omori, 1894). Utsu (1970) transformed it into the Modified Omori Formula (MOF), which is most widely used up to now. It is grounded on the basic assumption that all the events in an aftershock sequence are triggered by the stress field change due to the main shock follow a nonstationary Poisson process and there is no subclustering in the sequence. When we deal with more complex cases and especially when smaller aftershocks are considered, temporal clustering becomes apparent. Under such circumstances and particularly when we study some conspicuous secondary aftershock activities of large aftershocks, the single Modified Omori Formula can not provide the best prediction of the rate decay as demonstrated in Guo and Ogata (1997).

These cascading complex features of aftershocks motivated Ogata (1988) to formulate the Epidemic Type Aftershock–Sequence (ETAS) model, based on the idea of self–similarity and extending the capacity of generating secondary events to every aftershock of the sequence. The two models constitute limit cases, the MOF model with only one parent–event and the ETAS model in which every event shares in the generation of the subsequent ones. The vast variability of different geotectonic conditions and different temporal patterns of aftershock occurrences require some intermediate cases to be considered and there is a range of triggering models, which stand between the MOF and ETAS (Vere–Jones, 1970; Vere–Jones and Davies, 1966; Ogata, 2001; Gospodinov & Rotondi, 2006). In their work on the Restricted Epidemic Type Aftershock–Sequence (RETAS) model Gospodinov & Rotondi

(2006) examined a case in which, as in Ogata (2001), triggering capabilities possess events with magnitudes larger than or equal to a threshold, M_{th}. The RETAS model is similar to the ETAS one, but leaving a gap between the magnitude M_{th} of the triggering event and the magnitude cut–off M_o. The idea is borrowed by Bath's law (Bath, 1965, 1973), which affirms certain difference between main shock's magnitude and the one of the largest aftershock. By varying M_{th} one can examine all RETAS models between the MOF and the ETAS model on the basis of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974)

The purpose of this paper is to study stochastic features of the relaxation process after some strong earthquakes in Greece by the RETAS model approach. There are a number of papers which analyze aftershock occurrences in that area on the basis of the MOF model (Latoussakis et al. 1991; Drakatos and Latoussakis, 1996; Drakatos, 2000) but in our work we want to make use of the enhanced capacities of the RETAS model to identify the most adequate stochastic patterns of time clustering for the data. The model has the advantage to verify all its versions between the MOF and the ETAS model including them as limit cases. Our aim is also to test how well an aftershock occurrence model can forecast the seismicity rate after the sequence is over, examine some aspects of the RETAS model simulation and analyze its applicability to assess the relaxation duration. We expect to shed more light on whether different seismotectonic regimes may reflect in stochastic dissimilarity.

2. RETAS model formulation

Each stochastic model is developed after some basic physical assumptions. For the MOF it is regarded that the total relaxation process is controlled by the stress field changes caused by the main shock. The aftershocks are conditionally independent and follow a nonstationary Poisson process. The ETAS model (Ogata, 1988) assumes that every aftershock in a certain zone can trigger further shocks and the contribution of any previous

earthquake to the occurrence rate density λ_j of the subsequent events can be decomposed into separate terms representing the time and magnitude distribution as:

$$\lambda_j(t,m) = h(t-t_j \mid m_j) = k(m_j)g(t-t_j) \qquad (1)$$

Here $h(t-t_j \mid m_j)$ is the functional form of the rate density after the *j–th* event, which depends on the elapsed time after this shock and on its magnitude. As Ogata (1988) suggested, this function is decomposable and the temporal decay rate follows the MOF $g(t) \propto (t+c)^{-p}$ while the functional form of $k(m_j)$ is chosen to be exponential on the basis of the linear correlation between the logarithm of the aftershock area and the main shock's magnitude, studied extensively by Utsu and Seki (1955). Hence, the expected resultant rate density of aftershocks is given by Ogata (1988):

$$\lambda(t/H_t) = \mu + \sum_{t_j<t} \frac{K_o e^{\alpha(m_j - M_o)}}{(t-t_j+c)^p} \qquad (2)$$

where μ (shocks/day) is the rate of background activity, the history H_t consists of the times t_j (days) and magnitudes m_j of all the events which occurred before t and the summation is taken over every *j–th* aftershock with a magnitude stronger than the cut–off $m_j \geq M_0$ i.e. over all events in the sample. The main shock in this case is indicated by $j=1$. In probabilistic terminology, the first term on the right–hand side of (2) stands for the "independent" seismicity and the "induced" seismicity is represented by a superposition of the modified Omori functions shifted in time. In formula (2) the coefficient α measures the magnitude efficiency of a shock in generating its aftershock activity and K_o (shocks/day)

measures the productivity of the aftershock activity during a short period right after the mainshock (cf. Utsu, 1970; Reasenberg and Jones, 1994). Like in the MOF (Utsu, 1970) *p* is a coefficient of attenuation, which changes in value usually from 0.9 to 1.5, regardless of the cutoff magnitude. The variability in *p*–value may reflect variations in the structural heterogeneity, stress and temperature in the crust (Kisslinger and Jones; 1991, Utsu *et al.*, 1995), but it is not yet clear which of these factors is most significant in controlling the *p*-value. The parameter *c* in formula (2) is a regularizing time scale that ensures that the seismicity rate remains finite close to the mainshock.

The MOF and the ETAS model are two limit cases, the former with only one parent–event and the latter with all events sharing in the generation of the subsequent ones. Gospodinov and Rotondi (2006) offer the Restricted Epidemic Type Aftershock Sequence (RETAS) model, which is based on the assumption that not all events in a sample but only aftershocks with magnitudes larger than or equal to a threshold M_{th} can induce secondary seismicity. Then the conditional intensity function for the model is formulated as:

$$\lambda(t/H_t) = \mu + \sum_{\substack{t_j < t \\ m_j \geq M_{th}}} \frac{K_o e^{\alpha(m_j - M_o)}}{(t - t_j + c)^p} \qquad (3)$$

Following the Bath's law in seismology there should be a gap between the magnitudes of the main shock and the strongest aftershock. Introducing this rule to be valid for all secondary sequences in the data would mean that a gap could also be expected between the triggering level M_{th} and the magnitude cut–off M_o. An advantage of the RETAS model is that this gap is not fixed and by varying M_{th} all RETAS versions between the MOF and the ETAS model can be examined on the basis of the Akaike criterion given by:

$$AIC = -2\max\log L(\theta) + 2k \qquad (4)$$

where θ stands for the model parameters, k is the number of parameters of the model and $\log L$ is the logarithm of the likelihood function, given by:

$$\log L(\theta) = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \log \lambda_\theta\left(t_i \mid H_{t_i}\right) - \int_0^T \lambda_\theta\left(t \mid H_t\right) dt \qquad (5)$$

In the above formula N is the number of considered aftershocks and T is the time period which they cover.

By allowing the triggering magnitude M_{th} to vary from the cut-off magnitude M_o to the main event magnitude, we consider a number of RETAS models and for each of them we calculate the AIC criterion value through formula (4). The smallest value of the Akaike criterion recognizes the best fit model (Akaike, 1974). Gospodinov and Rotondi (2006) have developed a program in Fortran 95 which exploits subroutines of the IMSL library to maximize the likelihood of the RETAS model following a quasi–Newton method and we apply the same software in this study.

To identify possible discrepancies between the best fit model and the data we apply an approach offered by Ogata (1988). He uses the residual analysis to evaluate the goodness of fit after choosing the best fit model. The integration of the nonnegative conditional intensity function produces a transformation of time from t to $\tau = \Lambda(t)$ so that the occurrence times t_j are transformed 1:1 into τ_j and the earthquakes follow the standard stationary Poisson process on the new axis if the intensity function is the true one for the data.

$$\tau = \Lambda(t) = \int_0^t \lambda(s)ds \qquad (6)$$

The process is called a residual process and its mean and standard deviation are used to study possible deviations of the data from the model (Ogata, 1992).

3. Seismotectonic regime of the study area and data

Various researchers have presented much information on basic problems regarding active tectonics and deformation in the broader Aegean area (**Fig. 1**). It is one of the most active tectonic regions of the Alpine–Himalayan belt, with its most prominent tectonic feature the subduction of the eastern Mediterranean lithosphere under the Aegean Sea along the Hellenic Arc (Papazachos and Comninakis, 1970, 1971). The seismicity is very high throughout the arc, which is dominated by thrust faulting with a NE–SW direction of the axis of maximum compression. A belt of thrust faulting runs along the eastern Adriatic shore, continues south along the coastal regions of Albania and northwester Greece and terminates at central Ionian Islands. This type of faulting is connected with the continental collision between Outer Hellenides and the Adriatic microplate. The direction of the maximum compression axis is almost normal to the direction of the Adriatico–Ionian geological zone. Between continental collision to the north and oceanic subduction to the south, in the area of central Ionian Islands, the dextral strike–slip Cephalonia Transform Fault (CTF) is observed (Scordilis et al., 1985), in agreement with the known relative motion of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. The back–arc area, south Aegean Sea and continental Greece is dominated by extension. North Aegean Sea is characterized by a combination of right–lateral shear and extension. McKenzie (1970, 1972, 1978) showed that the northward motion of the Arabian plate pushes the smaller Anatolian plate westwards along the North Anatolian fault,

continuing along the North Aegean Trough (NAT) region, which is the boundary between the Eurasian and south Aegean plates. Right–lateral strike–slip motion associated with the North Anatolian Fault (NAF) appears to become more distributed in the northern Aegean Sea. This motion is transferred into the Aegean but in a south–westerly direction. This style of faulting is consistent with several fault plane solutions of recent strong earthquakes (Papazachos et al., 1998a).

The study area has frequently experienced strong earthquakes accompanying with an intense aftershock activity. In our study, we selected to examine the seismic sequences with main shock magnitude $M \geq 6.6$. The threshold magnitude of 6.6 was chosen to satisfy both the needs of our model, since an adequate number of aftershocks above a certain minimum magnitude are needed for the analysis and this number increases proportionally with the main shock magnitude in general, and on the other hand to obtain a satisfactory number of aftershock sequences. Eight such cases are available and the main shocks epicenters are depicted as stars in **Fig. 1** (see also ***Table 1***). Phases from the International Seismological Center and local stations were used for the relocation of the earthquakes by applying modern location techniques. The magnitudes are taken from the earthquake catalog of Papazachos et al. (2006), expressed as equivalent moment magnitudes (Papazachos et al., 1997).

Four out of the eight seismic sequences took place in the North Aegean Sea (1975 in Saros gulf, 1981 in the central part of North Aegean Sea, and 1982 and 1983 along the North Aegean Trough). Dextral strike–slip faulting dominates the northern Aegean Sea area as the North Anatolian fault prolongates into the northern Aegean Sea, where it bifurcates into two main branches of NE–SW trend. Parallel secondary faults are also recognized from seismicity and fault plane solutions of recent strong earthquakes. This area has frequently experienced many destructive earthquakes some of them occurring very close in time, as indicated from both instrumental data and historical information. Two seismic sequences (1981 Alkyonides

in Corinth gulf and 1995 Kozani in northern Greece) are associated with normal faulting that dominates in the back arc territory of Greece. Corinth gulf is an asymmetric half–graben, with the higher extension rates in continental Greece and frequent occurrence of strong ($M \geq 6.0$) earthquakes, although, the 1981 main shock was the largest one during the instrumental era. Kozani is an area of relatively low stressing rate in comparison with adjacent fault zones and the broader Greek territory in general, resulting in very long recurrence times for strong events of this magnitude class. The central Ionian Islands, where the 1983 Kefalonia and 1997 Zakynthos seismic sequences took place, exhibit a high level of seismic activity. This is due to the fact that the Cephalonia Transform Fault, where the 1983 main shock took place, is the area with highest moment rate release in the whole Eurasia (Papazachos and Kiratzi, 1996). The 1997 Zakynthos earthquake is located at the northwestern edge of the Hellenic arc, thus associated with the subduction process, which results in high seismic activity.

4. Application of the RETAS model and results

Below we present the results obtained by the application of the RETAS stochastic model to analyze the relaxation process after the eight strong earthquakes, listed in ***Table 1***.

4.1. Saros seismic sequence, 27 March 1975, M_w=6.6

This earthquake occurred offshore west of the Sea of Marmara in the Gulf of Saros, a pull–apart basin associated with prolongation of the northern branch of the North Anatolian fault (NAF) into the Aegean Sea. The main shock focal mechanism indicates oblique dextral strike-slip rupture (Taymaz et al., 1991) with the fault plane striking at ENE–WSW consistent with the strike of the North Aegean Trough (NAT) at this site (**Fig. 2a**). We compile a catalog of aftershocks, up to the end of 1975, in a zone defined by the vertices 39.8^o N, 25.4^o E; 41.0^o N, 26.8^o E (**Fig. 2a**) and in a depth range up to h=20 km, since it is

well known that crustal seismicity in the Aegean region is confined to this depth range. The application of the ZMAP software package (Wiemer, 2001) for the recognition of the magnitude of completeness returns a value of M_o=4.0. For this magnitude cut–off only 29 events remain in the catalog and because of the small number of examined events the results for the Saros sequence should be considered with greater caution. In **Fig. 3a,** we plotted the obtained AIC values versus the triggering magnitude M_{th}. As it can be seen, the smallest AIC value for this sequence identifies the best fit model to be RETAS with M_{th}=4.2 and a background activity of $\mu = 0$ (***Table 2***). The relaxation pattern here is such that only events with magnitudes bigger or equal to 4.2 are supposed to cause secondary clustering.

The model–to–data fitness is verified graphically through the cumulative number curves. Substituting the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimates of the best model parameters in (3) we calculated the expected cumulative number curve and it is represented by a solid blue line in **Fig. 4a**, where the red circles indicate the real cumulative number of aftershocks. **Fig. 4a** depicts the process in real time while **Fig. 4b** the one for a transformed time axis after applying formula (6). Dashed lines stand for error bounds determined after the standard deviation of the model process. The bottom part (**Fig. 4c)** represents the residual process, from which it is easy to see that there is no significant discrepancy between model and real data, the real curve staying inside the error bounds.

The RETAS model was developed to describe not only aftershock activity, but also like ETAS (Ogata, 1998) it can be used to represent general seismic activity, too. Following this idea, we decided to test how well the model can 'predict' the seismic process in the same area after the examined time period. The model cumulative curve is calculated using the model parameter values obtained on the aftershock data sample only and the real aftershocks magnitudes (***Table 2***).

The results are illustrated in **Fig. 4d, e, f** and they expose that about 900 days after the main event the actual data diverges markedly from the model giving higher values for the cumulative number. We suppose parameter values might be underestimated because of some lack of events in the examined sample. In **Fig. 4d,** we also present the MOF model curve (green line) calculated after the ML estimates of the aftershock data. As the MOF model was designed to depict pure aftershock activity, we suggest that the deviation of real data from the model can be utilized to mark the duration of the relaxation process. For this sequence, th**e** duration seems to be about 850 days after the main shock (indicated by an arrow in **Fig. 4d)**.

4.2 Alkyonides Seismic Sequence, 24 February 1981; M_w=6.7

An intense seismic sequence started on 24 February 1981 with a main shock of magnitude M_w=6.7, whose epicenter was about 77 km to the W–NW of Athens. It is associated with normal faulting on an almost E–W striking and north dipping fault at the eastern part of the Corinth gulf. Strong aftershocks followed, one of them five hours later with a magnitude of M_w=6.4 in a small distance of the main shock and one more in about 8 days later (4 March) with M_w=6.3 associated with an antithetic fault. The relaxation process was examined in a polygon area with vertices 37.5^o N, 22.5^o E; 38.5^o N, 23.5^o E (**Fig. 2b**), inside which the crustal seismicity up to the end of 1981 is considered. The ZMAP software estimated the magnitude of completeness to be M_o=3.7 and we compiled 553 aftershocks stronger than this cut–off.

The aftershock sequence analysis distinguishes the RETAS model with a triggering magnitude of M_w=6.3 to depict best the data (**Fig. 3b** and ***Table 2***). The clustering type is such that the main shock, along with the two strong aftershocks, control events' temporal behavior. A more detailed inspection of **Fig. 5b, c** detects a relative quiescence period before the second strong aftershock (follow arrows)**.** It starts the first day after the main shock and

continues several days then turning to a relative rate increase one day before the M_w=6.3. This is in concordance with the findings of other papers (Latoussakis et al., 1991; Papazachos et al., 1984).

The predicted cumulative curve of the best fit model and the one of the MOF model calculated after the end of the studied period are presented in **Fig.5d** (blue and green solid lines, respectively). Comparison with real data reveals that the latter follow the MOF line for quite a long time. In fact, if we use again the divergence between them to spot the end of the sequence it should have lasted not less than 2000 days (see arrow on **Fig. 5d)**. This result is quite far from the ones obtained after a statistical study by Kourouzidis et al. (2004) for Greece but it does not seem so strange if we consider that the seismicity level after the aftershock sequence is not high. In regions of low seismicity an aftershock sequence can last much longer than the period, we estimated – for example for the Nobi earthquake (M=8.4) of 1891 the aftershock duration was evaluated to be more than 100 years (Ogata, 1989).

As far as the best fit RETAS model curve is concerned (blue line in **Fig. 5d**), it does not present a good forecast of real seismicity, which is quite expected as according to the model only earthquakes stronger than M_w=6.3 can induce secondary activity. Thus, in this case the model is adequate for an aftershock sequence, but not for normal seismicity.

4.3. North Aegean Seismic Sequence, 19 December 1981; M_w=7.2

The main shock of this sequence occurred in the central part of North Aegean Sea. The focal mechanism (Taymaz et al., 1991; Kiratzi et al., 1991) indicates right–lateral strike–slip faulting striking northeast–southwest, parallel to the orientation of the NAT and in full agreement with the spatial distribution of the aftershocks (**Fig. 2c**). The strongest aftershock occurred eight days after the main shock having a magnitude of M_w=6.5. We considered events with $M_w \geq 3.7$, above which the catalog was evaluated to be complete. A number of

297 aftershocks occurred in one–year period in a region defined by the points 38.2^{o} N, 24.8^{o} E; 39.4^{o} N, 26.4^{o} E; 40.0^{o} N, 25.8^{o} E; 38.8^{o} N, 24.25^{o} E.

The clustering type recognized by the RETAS model analysis suggests that aftershocks with $M_{th}\geq 4.4$ are supposed to trigger secondary shocks (**Fig. 3c**). The best fit RETAS model allows selection of some relative to model deviations of the data. At the end of the first day a one-day activation starts, which was followed by a period of quiescence of about four days, after which a recovery of the process is observed one day before the strong M_w=6.5 aftershock (consider arrows on **Fig. 6c)**.

In **Fig. 6d** real data diverges (see arrow) from the MOF model (green line) about 870 days after the first shock occurrence and this is assumed to be a measure of the aftershock sequence duration. Real data departs also from the RETAS model (solid blue line) revealing that it does not supply a good guess of the seismic process after the end of the aftershock sequence.

4.4. The Aegean Earthquake Seismic Sequence, 18 January 1982; M_w=7.0

The location of this event is at the central part of the western branch of the North Aegean Trough (**Fig. 1**). The focal mechanism and spatial extend of the aftershock zone (**Fig. 2d**) indicate northeast striking dextral strike–slip faulting (Taymaz et al., 1991; Kiratzi et al., 1991). We delineated a study area by the vertices 39.0^{o} N, 23.85^{o} E; 40.05^{o} N, 25.8^{o} E; 40.9^{o} N, 25.25^{o} E; 39.8^{o} N, 23.3^{o} E, in which 158 aftershocks have occurred in a period of one year with a cut–off magnitude M_o=3.7, above which the data were assessed to be complete (**Fig. 2d**).

The smallest AIC was calculated for M_{th} =4.2 (see **Fig. 3d** and ***Table 2***) which identifies the best fit model to be RETAS with the corresponding triggering magnitude. The pattern of grouping presumes the weakest events in the sample to be attached to aftershocks

of M_w =4.2 or larger. Data to model comparison (**Fig.7a, b, c**) reveals a relative rate increase at the end of the first day caused by a cluster of four shocks in the 4.5–4.8 magnitude range (follow arrow in **Fig. 7c)**. After several days, this increase converts to a relative decrease lasting until the 130th day after the main event. This decrease is not related to any particular event and it is outstanding that the occurrence of the strongest aftershock of M_w =5.2 does not cause rate change at all.

Examining **Fig. 7d** one can see a remarkably good correspondence between real seismicity (red circles) and the model curve (blue solid line). The RETAS model provides a very good forecast of the seismic process including the sequence of the M_w6.8 earthquake, which occurred in the region about a year and a half later. The real cumulative number follows the model more than 15 years after the 1982 main shock when real data diverges from the model curve (see arrow in **Fig. 7d)**. Of course, in this prediction we use real (true) magnitudes (magnitudes are not simulated) but still an amazing fit between data and model is observed, considering that model parameters are estimated only from data covering the first year after the main shock occurrence. The duration of the aftershock sequence cannot be determined by comparing the data to the MOF model (green line) as the relaxation process is unambiguously not over when the next strong event in the region strikes in 1983.

4.5. Kefalonia Seismic Sequence, 17 January 1983; M_w=7.0

The main shock is associated with the Cephalonia Transform Fault (Scordilis et al., 1985) in the area of central Ionian Islands (**Fig. 1**). Its fault plane solution and the ones of its largest aftershocks show right–lateral, strike–slip faulting with a thrust component, on a fault striking in an about NE–SW direction. The magnitude of completeness for this sequence was assessed to be M_o=4.2 and a number of N=364 events were found to fulfill this requirement. They are confined inside a polygon defined by the vertices 37.5^o N, 20.0^o E; 38.0^o N, 21.0^o E;

38.5° N, 21.0° E; 39.0° N, 20.75° E; 38.25° N, 19.5° E (**Fig. 2e**) and cover the period till the end of 1983.

The model that provides the most appropriate picture of the aftershock process is the ETAS (**Fig. 3e** and ***Table 2***). We can define a relative period of activation in **Fig. 8b, c** starting one day before the strongest aftershock of M_w=6.2 (see arrow in **Fig. 8c)** and lasting about three days.

The sequence obviously is a complex one and the MOF model is inappropriate to distinguish the temporal details The MOF model is not suitable to determine aftershock duration, neither, as can be seen on **Fig. 8d** (green line). It is of importance to emphasize the exceptional good forecast of the real seismicity after the aftershock sequence which the ETAS model provides – a model developed on data of only one year 'predicts' well real seismicity behavior for more than 20 years (**Fig. 8d**). The real cumulative curve moves within the predicted error bounds for more than 20 years after the main shock and that remains so until the end of the period that our data cover (March 2006).

4.6. North Aegean Seismic Sequence, 6 August, 1983; M_w=6.8

The main shock of this sequence took place in a neighboring fault segment of the one associated with the 1982 occurrence, along the North Aegean Trough (**Fig. 1**). The spatial and temporal (a year and a half after) differentiation was the reason that this one was considered as a separate sequence. The northeast elongation of the aftershock zone (**Fig. 2f**) and the dextral strike–slip focal mechanism are similar to the 1982 earthquake (Taymaz et al., 1991; Kiratzi et al., 1991). The aftershocks which are stronger than the determined magnitude of completeness, M_o=3.8, are compiled for a period of one year after the main event in an area confined by the points 39.0° N, 23.85° E; 40.05° N, 25.8° E; 40.9° N, 25.25° E; 39.8° N, 23.3° E.

For this sequence, the triggering pattern seems to be different from the previous ones. The smallest AIC value (**Fig. 3f**) coincides with the magnitude cut–off $M_o=M_{th}=3.8$ and the finest data description is provided by the ETAS model, according to which even the weakest aftershock can trigger clusters. No significant departures of the model from the data are distinguished; the latter staying in the model curve error bounds for the entire period (**Fig. 9a, b**) and the residual process has a small standard deviation (**Fig. 9c).**

We examined carefully again both curves – model and real data on **Fig. 9d**, which represent the cumulative numbers after the one–year period of analysis. The ETAS model fits the data in a period of about 1800 days and after that, the data deviates exceeding the model significantly. It is difficult to define the sequence duration as the data curve diverges from the MOF model gradually but we spot the aftershock activity to be over 800 to 1000 days after the start of the sequence (see arrow on **Fig. 9d)**.

4.7. Kozani – Grevena Seismic Sequence, 13 May 1995; M_w=6.6

The Kozani–Grevena earthquake of M_w=6.6 occurred on 13 May 1995 in the central part of northern Greece (**Fig. 1**) and is associated with an ENE–WSW striking, north dipping normal fault. The first event was followed by a very high aftershock activity most of which was recorded after the deployment of a portable seismological network in the epicentral area (Hatzfeld et al., 1997). Although it occurred in a relatively low deformation area, the seismic sequence was intense and felt aftershocks continued to occur for several months after the mainshock occurrence (Papazachos et al., 1998b). For our analysis we prepared a catalog of 573 aftershocks up to the end of 1995, with magnitudes above the determined cut–off M_o=3.5 in a region defined by the points 39.8^o N, 21.2^o E; 39.8^o N, 22.1^o E; 40.4^o N, 22.1^o E; 40.4^o N, 21.2^o E (**Fig. 2g**).

The smallest AIC value in **Fig. 3g** is for a triggering magnitude of M_{th}=3.5, which is equal to the magnitude cut–off and this result recognizes the ETAS model to fit best the temporal evolution of the seismic sequence. Both model and real cumulative curves are illustrated in **Fig. 10 a, b.** In **Fig. 10c** one can observe a relative activation commencing at the end of the second day after an M_w=5.2 shock (see arrows). It lasts about 15 days and turns to a rate decrease which keeps on until the occurrence of a second aftershock of the same magnitude, subsequent to which model and data progress quite closely (see bottom part of **Fig. 10a**). The periods of relative discrepancies do not seem to mark any particular event.

In **Fig. 10d,** the MOF model (green line) starts to depart from real data (red circles) at approximately 2000 – 2300 days after the main shock (see arrow), which is an estimate of the aftershock sequence duration. This is a highly rough assessment, however, as the seismicity in the region after the sequence is very low, and, therefore, this impedes a more precise evaluation. After the end of 1995 where the studied period ends, the ETAS model persists to depict well the real seismicity, starting to exceed it after an earthquake of M_w=5.0 which caused no aftershock activity at all. Overall, the best fit model provides a very good forecast of seismicity subsequent to the aftershock sequence till the end of October 2005.

4.8. Zakynthos Seismic Sequence, 18 November 1997; M_w=6.6

The main shock took place at the northwestern part of the Hellenic Arc (**Fig. 1**) associated with thrusting on the subduction interface. It occurred on November 18 and was followed by a strong aftershock of M_w=6.0 just six minutes later, the epicenter of the latter being to the west of the main shock. We compiled a catalog of N=640 events in a one year period with a magnitude cut–off M_w=3.8 which was determined with the help of the ZMAP software (Wiemer, 2001). The epicenters are confined in between the points 36.9^o N, 19.8^o E; 36.9^o N, 21.4^o E; 38.3^o N, 21.4^o E; 38.3^o N, 19.8^o E (**Fig. 2h**).

The results from the stochastic modeling are presented on **Fig.3h** where the smallest AIC value recognizes the model giving the finest data description to be the one for which $M_w=M_o=3.8$ (RETAS coinciding with ETAS). The data curves in **Fig.11a, b, c** expose an intensive comparative activation from the 5^{th} to the 20^{th} day, after which they follow the model curves slope, but real data exceeds the error bounds for quite a long period lasting more than 150 days (follow arrows in **Fig. 11c** from left to right). From about the 100^{th} to the 165^{th} day a relative rate decrease is seen subsequently to which data and model move close to each other. None of the above discrepancies are related to any particular strong aftershock but the peculiarity here concerns the large number of aftershocks with magnitudes $M_w \geq 4.5$, which could be the reason for the observed temporal behavior.

In **Fig. 11d,** we detect that the MOF model (green line) deviates from real data (red circles) about 1600–1700 days after the beginning of the sequence. We assume this an evaluation of the aftershock process duration. This result departs substantially from the average duration values for Greece obtained by Kourouzidis et al. (2004) as were the cases with the Alkyonides and the Kozani sequences, although the background seismicity here is not low. The seismic process forecast produced by the best fit ETAS model after the conclusion of the examined sample is not very good as data and model start to diverge even before the end of the aftershock sequence (after the 1000^{th} – 1100^{th} day; see arrow on **Fig. 11d)**. On the other hand, this departure progresses very slowly and both curves are very similar in form which reveals that the model still captures a lot of the real process temporal features.

5. Features of the RETAS model simulation

A purpose of high priority in the stochastic modeling of seismicity is the possibility to make shorter or longer forecasts of the real process. We have found, that for several (four

cases out of eight) aftershock sequences the recognized best fit model portrays very well the data curve after the end of the relaxation process although model parameters were estimated on aftershock data only. These results seem very interesting and promising as they hint that we have perhaps identified some general features of seismic interaction and triggering in these regions. We have to keep in mind, however, that this is not a real prediction of the process as we input in the model real magnitudes of which we do not have preliminary knowledge. In fact, if we intend to avoid this problem we have to forecast magnitudes, too, that is, we must simulate the model. The simulation procedure of the RETAS model is presented by Gospodinov & Rotondi (2006) in a greater detail and here we generated a set of aftershock sequences to analyze some problems accompanying this topic.

In practical terms to predict the aftershock process in a region with the help of the RETAS model means to be able to calculate future activity immediately after the main shock using formulae (3) and (6). Assuming that the model parameter values are known in advance, the future aftershocks' magnitudes were generated randomly after the recurrence law of the real events. Bearing it in mind, we produced a set of random sequences following the best fit ETAS model identified for the Kozani aftershock process (parameter values in ***Table 2***). The cumulative curves of these series are plotted in **Fig. 12a,** while in **Fig. 12b** a similar set created after the MOF model for the same aftershock sequence is illustrated.

It is impressing to observe how poorly the simulated data after the ETAS model tracks the real one, a result found also in previous investigations (Helmstetter et al., 2003). The generated curves diverge largely and very quickly, even from the first days. Furthermore, their pattern is quite different from the real curve. As the only actual event in the simulation procedure is the main shock with its magnitude, the created data do reveal some decreasing behavior but at a much lesser extent than the genuine aftershock process and for a short period. After that, for a lot of the simulated sequences the rate starts fluctuating around a

constant value. In fact, these results are not so astonishing as the model itself presented by formula (3) does not foresee a decaying behavior. In that aspect, the more interesting question is how such a stochastic process makes a very good fit of the real data (thicker blue line in **Fig. 12a**). The answer is in the magnitudes – that of the main event and the ones of the real aftershocks. We assume in the model that aftershock magnitudes are independent from each other and from their times of occurrence, which now turns not to be completely correct. In our opinion, the observed divergence of the simulated curves can be explained if we assume that for the real data the magnitudes of the aftershocks tend to be larger at the beginning of the sequence – a feature that is not considered in the stochastic model and in the simulation procedure.

The MOF model simulations in **Fig. 12b** provide much better long-term forecasts of the aftershock temporal performance. In fact the results up to now disclose that the ETAS model makes a good retrospective description of an aftershock sequence, while for real–time prediction it can be used for a short–term period only which depends on the rate of the process at the moment. It is the Modified Omori Formula, which can provide a long–term picture of the future aftershock process on the average although missing some of the process details.

6. Discussion and conclusions

We analyzed the temporal decay of eight aftershock sequences in the area of Greece after 1975 with main shocks magnitudes of $M_w \geq 6.6$. We applied the RETAS stochastic model, which allows choosing the best fit model for each data set thus enabling the possibility to recognize the prevailing clustering pattern of the relaxation process in the examined areas. In four of the cases, triggering potential seems to have aftershocks above a certain magnitude threshold (RETAS model) and they are expected to induce secondary

activity. For the other four sequences, the analysis selected the ETAS model to offer the most appropriate depiction of the aftershock temporal distribution, which presumes that all shocks to the smallest ones in the sample can cause consequential aftershocks. Actually, the versions of the RETAS model corresponding to the triggering magnitude values introduce a measure of the secondary activity in a sequence. For a sequence following the MOF model no secondary clustering is expected while for another one after the ETAS model subclustering is to be found for all events down to the weakest ones (Kefalonia 1983, North Aegean 1983, Kozani 1995, Zakynthos 1997). The sequences that fit the intermediate versions the RETAS model expose a temporal pattern characterized by secondary aftershock activity only for events above a certain magnitude. Similar cases are the Alkyonides 1981 sequence, where only the three strongest events in the group control the type of clustering, as well as the sequences in Saros 1975, North Aegean 1981, and North Aegean 1982.

Selecting a best fit RETAS model for each sequence permits the recognition of some relative to model activations or rate decrease. For several of them they seem to be related to the strongest aftershocks in the sequence (Alkyonides 1981, North Aegean 1981, North Aegean 1983) while in other cases they are not entitled to any particular event (Kozani 1995, Zakynthos 1997). It was a matter of key importance in the present study to verify probable relations between selected stochastic models and any aspects of the geotectonic structure or physical processes underlying seismicity. Attempts to explain aftershock temporal decay are usually associated with phenomena like static fatigue, visco–elastic relaxation or diffusion (fluids), but in the lack of an exact theory any effort to correlate these processes to stochasticity would turn to be speculative. Thus, we are tempted to consider an idea according to which the relaxation pattern after the main event is controlled by optimally–oriented Coulomb stress changes. Depending on the tectonic structure of the region, these

changes will or will not trigger secondary aftershocks thus defining the activity to follow different versions of the RETAS model.

Another result of our analysis which could indirectly support feasible connection between stochastic modeling and region's tectonic characteristics is the fact that for four out of eight cases we obtained promising forecasts of seismicity after the aftershock sequence on models based only on aftershock data. These predictions, however, were formulated by exploiting real magnitudes and when we apply simulated magnitudes, the forecast is much worse. It becomes evident that the ETAS model can not provide an appropriate simulation of real seismicity as it assumes random magnitude values in the simulation procedure and in real sequences stronger aftershocks often have a bigger probability of occurrence at the beginning of the process.

We would also like to draw reader's attention on the fact that for all eight sequences the minimum AIC values are calculated for models with background seismicity $\mu=0$ which reveals that such models better depict aftershock temporal behavior. In ***Table 2*** we also present model parameters for $\mu<>0$ for comparison, but it must be noted that these model versions are not appropriate to forecast seismic activity after the sequence is over, as the parameter μ seems to be overestimated on the aftershock data. These results provoke the question of whether we should include the background seismicity μ in the stochastic modeling of an aftershock sequence, when seismicity is mainly controlled by the stress field changes after the main shock.

We attempted to estimate the duration of the relaxation process assuming that the end of each sequence is marked by the divergence of real seismicity from the MOF model, the latter known to represent pure aftershock activity. No dependence between aftershock duration and main shock's magnitude was found but the period of activity for some of the sequences was evaluated to be quite longer than the average values for the region. A probable

dependence between aftershock duration and background seismicity rate could be the explanation of these results as generally longer activity periods were obtained for regions of lower seismicity. The obtained results give a hint that low rate of stress build–up could be related to longer duration of the relaxation process in a region.

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Table 1. *List of Events With M≥6.6 That Occurred in the Territory of Greece During the Last 30 Years.*

Event number	Year	Date	Time UT	Latitude	Longit.	h (km)	M_w	Focal Mechanism			Location	Ref
								Strike	Dip	Rake		
1	1975	27 Mar	05:15:08	40.400	26.100	13.0	6.6	68	55	-145	Saros	1
2	1981	24 Feb	20:53:37	38.220	22.920	5.3	6.7	264	42	-80	Alkyonides	1
3	1981	19 Dec	14:10:51	39.080	25.260	14.3	7.2	47	77	-167	North Aegean	2
4	1982	18 Jan	19:27:25	39.780	24.500	11.6	7.0	233	62	-177	North Aegean	1
5	1983	17 Jan	12:41:31	38.100	20.200	7.0	7.0	39	45	175	Kefalonia	3
6	1983	6 Aug	15:43:52	40.000	24.700	8.8	6.8	50	76	177	North Aegean	2
7	1995	13 May	08:47:47	40.160	21.670	14.0	6.6	252	41	-90	Kozani	4
8	1997	18 Nov	13:07:41	37.576	20.568	10.0	6.6	352	25	144	Zakynthos	5

1. Taymaz et al. (1991); 2. Kiratzi et al. (1991); 3. Papadimitriou (1993); 4. Hatzfeld et al. (1997); 5. Louvari (2000).

Table 2. *Maximum–likelihood estimates of the RETAS model parameters (best model is marked in gray).*

Model	M_{th}	*AIC*	μ	*K*	α	*c*	*p*
			Saros 1975; M=6.6; Mo=4.0				
RETAS (best)	4.3	59.151	0	0.023	1.638	0.020	1.094
	4.2	70.247	0.013	0.027	1.589	0.033	1.244
MOF	6.6	62.940	0	2.645	0.031	0.021	0.998
			Alkyonides 1981; M=6.7; Mo=3.7				
RETAS (best)	6.3	-1965.67	0	28.186	0.00001	0.115	1.123
	6.3	-1955.88	0.044	29.006	0.00001	0.127	1.15
MOF	6.7	-1621.02	0	24.529	0.896	2.122	1.417
			North Aegean 1981; M=7.2; Mo=3.7				
RETAS (best)	4.4	-376.068	0	0.043	1.759	0.051	1.023
	4.4	-373.84	0.111	0.047	1.778	0.104	1.175
MOF	7.2	-312.726	0	10.538	0.296	0.058	0.926
			North Aegean 1982; M=7.0; Mo=3.7				
RETAS (best)	4.2	-119.535	0	0.046	1.713	0.037	1.049
	4.2	-118.156	0.099	0.035	1.887	0.108	1.313
MOF	7	-93.666	0	2.701	0.569	0.042	0.971
			Kefalonia 1983; M=7.0; Mo=4.2				
ETAS (best)	4.2	-546.242	0	0.093	1.826	0.184	1.357
	4.2	-536.179	0.032	0.105	1.804	0.225	1.439
MOF	7	-219.203		8.736	0.687	0.809	0.996
			North Aegean 1983; M=6.8; Mo=3.8				
ETAS (best)	3.8	-208.244	0	0.0181	2.270	0.071	1.145
	3.8	-199.134	0.037	0.018	2.271	0.094	1.224
MOF	6.8	-175.314	0	3.357	0.625	0.072	1.000
			Kozani 1995; M=6.6; Mo=3.5				
ETAS (best)	3.5	-1868.87	0	0.067	1.572	0.056	1.291
	3.5	-1862.31	0.094	0.073	1.566	0.083	1.401
MOF	6.6	-1777.33	0	9.999	1.241	2.561	1.467
			Zakynthos 1997; M=6.6; Mo=3.8				
ETAS (best)	3.8	-830.979	0	0.085	1.702	0.1406	1.192
	3.8	-821.982	0.064	0.093	1.683	0.171	1.251
MOF	6.6	-716.141	0	0.661	1.7119	0.812	0.907

Figure captions

Fig. 1. Main geodynamic characteristics of the broader Aegean region (NAF: North Anatolian Fault, NAT: North Aegean Trough, CTF: Cephalonia Transform Fault). Arrows indicate the relative plate motion (convergence along the Hellenic Arc and the collision zone, strike slip faulting in CTF and North Aegean, and extension in the back arc Aegean area). The epicenters of the main shocks of the studied sequences studied are depicted as stars, and the numbers next to its epicenter denote the event number in chronological order of occurrence.

Fig. 2. Spatial distribution of the aftershocks (red dots) sequences. The main shocks fault plane solutions are depicted as lower hemisphere equal area projections. (a) Saros 1975; (b) Alkyonides 1981; (c) North Aegean 1981; (d) North Aegean 1982, (e) Kefalonia 1983; (f) North Aegean 1983; (g) Kozani 1995; (h) Zakynthos 1997.

Fig. 3. Results from the RETAS model application – the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) versus the triggering magnitude M_{th} for eight aftershock sequences in the area of Greece (see main events details in ***Table 1***); a) Saros 1975 – best fit model is RETAS for M_{th}=4.3; b) Alkyonides 1981, best fit model is RETAS for M_{th}=6.3; c) North Aegean 1981, best fit model is RETAS for M_{th}=4.4; d) North Aegean 1982, best fit model is RETAS for M_{th}=4.2; e) Kefalonia 1983, best fit model is ETAS; f) North Aegean 1983, best fit model is ETAS; g) Kozani 1995, best fit model is ETAS; h) Zakynthos 1997, best fit model is ETAS

Fig. 4. Saros sequence, 1975; (a) Cumulative number of events in real time for the examined catalog of N=29 aftershocks; blue continuous line – after the best fit model, dashed lines – error bounds after the standard deviation, red circles – real cumulative number; (b) – the same for a transformed time axis (see in text); (c) – residual process (difference between real and model cumulative numbers and standard deviation of the

residual process as error bounds). (d, e, f) – the same as in '(a, b, c)' correspondingly but for earthquakes up to 2006 for the same zone (green continuous line – after the MOF model); Right vertical axes stand for aftershocks' magnitudes, plotted as vertical lines

Fig. 5. Alkyonides sequence, 1981, N=553 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 6. North Aegean sequence, 1981, N=297 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 7. North Aegean sequence, 1982, N=158 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 8. Kefalonia sequence, 1983, N=364 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 9. North Aegean sequence, 1983, N=187 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 10. Kozani sequence, 1995, N=573 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 11. Zakynthos sequence, 1997, N=640 – notation as in **Fig.4**

Fig. 12. Simulated sequences; a) Sequences simulated after the best fit ETAS model with parameter values after the Kozani aftershock sequence (see ***Table 2***); Solid blue line is the ETAS model curve for the Kozani sequence and red circles stand for the real cumulative number; the thinner curves of different colors depict simulations of the ETAS model, generated after a procedure offered by Gospodinov and Rotondi (2006); b) Notation as in 'a)' but for the MOF model for the Kozani aftershock sequence.

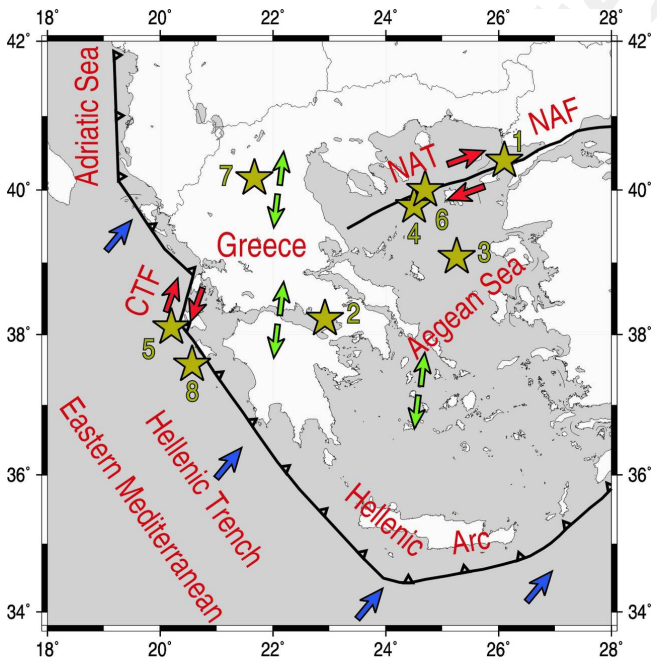

Fig. 1