

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF TENEDOS AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Tenedos possesses a rich cultural heritage that serves as a strong element of local identity and an attractive factor for both residents and visitors. Leveraging this heritage through innovative business activities can act as a catalyst for sustainable local development while promoting the preservation and dissemination of traditional customs, historical monuments, and local products. The combined use of cultural initiatives and modern technologies creates opportunities to strengthen the local economy, attract high-quality tourism, and maintain social cohesion. Promoting traditions—such as festivals, viticulture, traditional gastronomy, and historical monuments—through organized cultural entrepreneurship programs contributes to regional revitalization, reinforces local identity, and fosters a sustainable development model that respects the past while looking toward the future.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Tenedos, Local Development, Cultural Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Tenedos (Bozcaada in Turkish), the third-largest island in the northeastern Aegean Sea, had a recorded population of 3,223 in 2018. Geographically, the island occupies a strategic position between the coast of Asia Minor and the island of Lemnos, situated approximately 2.5 nautical miles from the Turkish mainland and 12 nautical miles from the entrance to the Hellespont. Its location, coupled with its natural resources, has played a decisive role in shaping its trajectory of development, particularly in the sphere of tourism over the past few decades, establishing Tenedos as a notable destination within the region. Characterized by its fertile land and the absence of steep mountainous terrain, the island is especially renowned for its longstanding viticultural tradition. Residential activity is primarily concentrated in the settlement of Tenedos and the adjacent port area located on the island's eastern coastline.

Despite its small size, Tenedos has a rich cultural heritage. Its historical path parallels that of Imbros, although it followed a different developmental course due to its exploitation as a summer resort for wealthy Turks since the early 20th century. This development contributed to the alteration of part of its natural environment, in contrast to Imbros, which remained more unaffected by mass tourism. However, Tenedos still retains important architectural and cultural elements, which, combined with its wine tradition, offer opportunities for the development of cultural entrepreneurship with an emphasis on sustainable tourism and cultural revival

ISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Tenedos bears historical traces dating back to the Neolithic Age, with the earliest signs of habitation dating back to the 6th millennium BC. In ancient times, it was an important port

and strategic point in the Aegean Sea, while it was known for its agricultural production, pottery, and—above all—viticulture. The island is said to have taken its name from King Tennes, and is already mentioned in the Homeric epics in connection with the Trojan War. During historical times, it was successively ruled by the Aeolians, Persians, Athenians, Macedonians, Romans, and Byzantines.

During the Byzantine period in particular, Tenedos gained strategic importance due to its proximity to Constantinople. In 1376, it fell to the Venetians, who reinforced its fortifications. During the Venetian-Turkish and Russo-Turkish wars (17th-18th centuries), Tenedos was a point of conflict and was repeatedly deserted and repopulated.

The island was closely linked to the Greek presence, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, until it became part of Turkish territory with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Despite initial provisions for autonomy and respect for the rights of the Greek minority, subsequent policies led to the gradual expulsion and decline of the Greek element. Greek education was abolished in 1964, while military actions and administrative interventions contributed to the complete demographic decline of the minority.

Today, the Greek presence in Tenedos is symbolic, with a small number of inhabitants and a strong element of nostalgic reconnection through cultural activities, restorations, and customary revivals by the Tenedian diaspora. These conditions highlight both the difficulties and the possibilities for cultural entrepreneurship, with a focus on historical memory, cultural revival, and sustainable tourism.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN TENEDOS

The case of viticulture

Tenedos is a prime example of a region with dynamic cultural entrepreneurship, thanks to the exploitation of its wine-making tradition. Viticulture, deeply rooted in local history and religious tradition, has been associated since ancient times with Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. The worship of the god, in the particular form of Dionysus-Zagreus, is found in Tenedos in ritual practices that even included animal sacrifices, such as the sacrifice of calves following their birth, an act symbolically linked to the sacrificial rebirth of the god (Kakridis, 1986; Kerényi, 2014; Seaford, 2015).

Archaeological finds, such as coins and ritual symbols, confirm the long and uninterrupted presence of viticulture in the economic and cultural life of the island. Tenedos was—and remains—known for its table and wine grapes. The crops included traditional varieties such as "augoustiades," "tsaousia," and, for wine production, "gkoutris," "vasilatsa," and "yapiltsatsa" (Kerkineoglou, 2008).

The process of harvesting and transporting grapes, mainly to Constantinople, was carried out with absolute respect for the fruit and the markets, forming a distribution network that incorporated commercial strategy, know-how, and folk tradition. Local producers used methods such as advance sales of their production or direct cooperation with winemakers, while much of the transport was carried out by caiques or traditional means of transport, which were festively decorated with "chouchlouvitsis" and bells, giving the process the character of a local ritual (Kerkineoglou, 2008).

Viticulture was not limited to the grape harvest; on the contrary, it was a continuous annual system involving tasks such as pruning, trimming, digging, and "disking." In addition, practices such as pruning, grafting, and sulphurization were applied, which required specialized knowledge, observation, and a deep understanding of nature. Until the mid-20th century, farmers used natural materials such as manure and traditional mixtures (e.g., blue stone with lime) to protect their plants. It was only after 1960, when production was severely

affected by downy mildew, that the use of agrochemicals and specialized tools began systematically.

The creation of new vineyards was also based on traditional techniques, such as grafting wild vines with domesticated ones after two years of cultivation. The whole process reveals not only the agricultural know-how of the inhabitants, but also the cultural significance of viticulture as a pillar of identity and the local economy.

Today, traditional viticulture is subject to restrictions due to industrialisation, urbanisation, and tourist pressure. However, it remains a key factor in the cultural identity of Tenedos and a potential lever for cultural entrepreneurship. The potential for developing a sustainable agrotourism model centered on the local wine heritage is significant, provided that it is accompanied by strategies for promoting cultural practices, oral history, and rural art, as well as their interconnection with the contemporary visitor experience. The development of wineries open to visitors, viticulture museums, or cultural routes focusing on vine cultivation and its historical significance could strengthen the local economy and promote Tenedos as an example of cultural exploitation in a cross-border context.

Traditional structures, religious landmarks, and customs as cultural capital. Windmills: technological memories and local identity.

Until the early 20th century, eight windmills dominated the landscape of Deirmen Tepe on Tenedos, serving as important technical and social landmarks for agricultural production and interregional trade. The mills, powered by the island's strong winds, ground grain brought by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages on donkeys or horses. The windmills had twelve sails covered with canvas and were powered by millstones weighing 300 kg. The miller, usually Greek, was paid in cash or with a share of the production. After 1923 and the population exchange, the mills ceased to operate, and the area was altered by newer buildings. Today, only one semi-ruined windmill remains, while restoration programs have been underway since 2019. Their restoration could support the promotion of local craftsmanship and be included in an industrial heritage route (Haidoulis, 2017).

The monastery of Agia Paraskevi: worship, symbol, and reunification of the community

The monastery of Agia Paraskevi, built in 1657 on the lush foothills, is surrounded by eight centuries-old plane trees and overlooks the sea. It is inextricably linked to the religious and social life of Tenedos. Agia Paraskevi is honoured as the patron saint of the island and her feast day, which takes place on 26 July, is a major event that brings together the local and diaspora communities. The festive celebration, with traditional music, delicacies, and a communal meal under the trees, highlights the experiential continuity of tradition.

The church, which constitutes, together with the recently renovated Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary - the only functioning Orthodox church on the island, is accompanied by the adjacent Holy Spring - an underground vaulted structure, which needs immediate restoration. Despite the efforts of local associations and the Patriarchate, the relevant permit has not yet been obtained from the Turkish state. The maintenance of the site and its use as a religious and cultural point of interest can serve as a lever for cultural tourism, while maintaining respect for the sacred character of the site (Doumouzis, 2009).

Local museum and collective memory: the case of the Tenedos Local History Research Center

The Tenedos Local History Research Center is housed in the historic Toulmidis family residence, built in 1874. Since 2006, under the supervision of Hakan Guruney, it has been operating as a museum, housing more than 5,000 objects that document everyday life on Tenedos. The collection was assembled through active collaboration with locals, who donated

family heirlooms, photographs, documents, and objects related to viticulture, winemaking, and other traditional professions.

Particular emphasis is given to the way of life during the period 1925–1965, highlighting professions such as winegrower, blacksmith, basket weaver, and sailor. In addition, the museum presents the evolution of taverns and their contribution to the entertainment and cultural expression of the Greek community. The museum provides the basis for the development of experiential activities and educational programs that enhance the sustainability of local cultural entrepreneurship (Haidoulis, 2017; Poli & Malagas, 2024).

LOCAL CUSTOMS: FOUNTOUKERI AND APOKRIES AS LIVING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

The revival of local customs such as Fountoukeri and Apokries offers strong potential for cultural commercialization while respecting authenticity. Fountoukeri, a gift offered by godparents to their godchildren on the eve of Epiphany, is a characteristic example of a customary gift with rich material and symbolic content. The composition of fruits, nuts, sweets, and candles testifies to the community's solidarity and social cohesion (Vrahopoulou, 2007).

Carnival in Tenedos includes a series of customary practices with costumes, folk festivals, traditional foods, satirical games, and offerings. Distinctive features, such as bear costumes, the custom of halva, and the ritual announcement of engagements, constitute a dynamic field of intangible cultural heritage. Promoting these customs and linking them to festival-based forms of tourism could add value to the local economy and strengthen the intergenerational transmission of tradition (Vrahopoulou, 2007).

PROPOSALS FOR CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Tenedos, with its wealth of intangible and tangible cultural resources, is an attractive but underrated place with significant development potential. The island's traditional viticulture, windmills, monasteries, and local customs are not only evidence of a multifaceted history but can also be promoted as pillars of sustainable cultural entrepreneurship and local development (Maniou, Vlassas & Anastasopoulou, 2022; Maniou, 2023). The exploitation of these elements through the creation of thematic cultural routes, such as the "Wine and Dionysus Route" and the "Paths of Faith and Memory," can significantly boost high-quality tourism, while also making use of modern technologies such as augmented reality and narrative guides (Maniou, 2023b; Maniou, 2024).

At the same time, the restoration and reopening of windmills and the Holy Spring, through collaborations with cultural organizations and international programs, can create new multipurpose spaces for culture and entrepreneurship, strengthening the local economy and promoting the preservation of cultural identity (Maniou, Mitoula & Kostakis, 2024; Maniou et al., 2024d).

The preservation and promotion of local customs, such as Fountoukeri and Apokries, through the organization of annual cultural events and the development of a market for traditional products, strengthens the sustainability of cultural heritage and the participation of the local community (Manola et al., 2025; Maniou & Mitoula, 2025). Furthermore, the use of the Tenedos Museum as a hub for cultural storytelling, with digital documentation and thematic exhibitions, contributes to the promotion of local history and cultural creativity, attracting new visitors and researchers (Maniou, Mitoula & Manola, 2025; Poli, 2019).

The networking of the Tenedian diaspora through digital archives and cultural gatherings strengthens reunification and collective memory, while at the same time mobilising resources

and voluntary actions to promote local development (Maniou, Mitoula & Tsatalmpasoglou, 2025; Vouglanis et al., 2025). Cultural entrepreneurship in Tenedos, as in other island regions, can be a key driver not only of economic development but also of social cohesion, strengthening local identity and ensuring the intergenerational continuity of traditions (Maniou, 2023; Maniou et al., 2025).

The success of such ventures requires the active cooperation of local actors, academic institutions, and cultural organizations, with the aim of sustainable management of cultural heritage and innovation in entrepreneurship, always with respect for historical memory and social cohesion (Maniou, 2024).

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GOOD PRACTICES IN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN LESBOS, IMBROS, AND SIFNOS

A comparative study of cultural entrepreneurship practices in island regions with common characteristics can offer valuable lessons for promoting Tenedos as a destination for cultural tourism and sustainable development. The cases of Lesbos, Imbros, and Sifnos highlight different models of cultural capital exploitation based on local identity, innovation, and community participation.

Lesvos - Culture as a tool for regional development

Lesvos is becoming an important centre of gastronomy, culture, and sustainable tourism development, through the organisation of numerous gastronomic festivals, such as the Lesbos Food Fest, the Ouzo Festival, the Sardine Festival, the Octopus Festival, and the Trahanas Festival, as well as traditional festivals, such as the Tavros in Agia Paraskevi. These events combine wine and gastronomy with architectural and cultural heritage (Maniou, 2023; Maniou et al., 2024), using modern digital tools such as augmented reality (AR) applications and guides through QR codes, which enhance the visitor's experience and attract new age groups, as typically observed in the area of Agiasos.

In addition, women's cultural cooperatives and local cultural communities play a key role in the organisation, management, and implementation of these activities, promoting participatory development, empowering the local community, and preserving cultural heritage sustainably and innovatively.

Imbros - Reconnecting the diaspora and reviving cultural life

The case of Imbros is a model of reviving cultural practices through close links with the diaspora and the active return of the Imbrios (Maniou, 2024). The restoration of schools, churches, and community buildings, carried out in collaboration with the diaspora and with the valuable contribution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, has led to the creation of new spaces of cultural encounter and revitalisation of local identity (Poli, 2019).

At the same time, the preservation of traditional customs - such as festivals, music and cooking - is accompanied by the development of modern forms of cultural entrepreneurship, such as the operation of small museums, craft and pastry workshops and catering businesses, which are mainly concentrated in the villages of Imbros, thus contributing to the economic and cultural revitalisation of the island.

Sifnos - The example of gastronomic entrepreneurship

Sifnos successfully exploits its gastronomic heritage through the Cycladic Gastronomy Festival "Nikolaos Tselementes", an institution with international recognition. The festival combines traditional flavours, local products, live cooking demonstrations, cultural events,

and interactive experiences for young and old alike. It creates an environment of authentic participation, enhancing the local economy and the extroversion of the island. Parallel events highlight pottery, customs, and folk arts. The involvement of the local community and producers is a key component of its success. Sifnos is turning tradition into sustainable cultural entrepreneurship (e-sifnos.com).

CONCLUSIONS

Tenedos has a wealth of cultural resources, which remain largely unexploited, despite their significant development potential. The island's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, can act as a powerful driver of local development and sustainable entrepreneurship if a targeted and innovative approach is applied. The promotion and protection of traditional elements such as viticulture, windmills, monasteries, and local customs, combined with modern technologies and interactive experiences, can attract quality tourism and create new jobs.

The cooperation of local actors with scientific and cultural organisations, as well as networking with the Ténédia diaspora, is a key factor in the implementation of sustainable cultural activities and business initiatives. Cultural entrepreneurship in Tenedos is not only limited to the economic dimension, but contributes significantly to strengthening local identity, social cohesion, and intergenerational continuity of traditions.

Finally, the sustainability of the proposed actions requires a holistic approach that combines the protection of historical memory with innovative, digital, and participatory practices. In this way, Tenedos can strengthen its competitiveness as a cultural and sustainable tourism destination and become an example of successful cultural entrepreneurship in island regions.

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