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CULTURAL HERITAGE, COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PIRACY HERITAGE, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT DESIGN STRATEGIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN MANI, ALONNISOS, PAROS AND LESVOS

Fotini Maniou [1,*], Maria Poli [2], Ioanna Maniou [3], Ioanna Gkioni [4] and Maria Manola [5]

[1] Department of Economics and Sustainable Development, Harokopion University of Athens, Greece.
[2] Department of Interior Architecture, University of West Attica, Greece.
[3] Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.
[4] School of Film, Faculty of Fine Arts, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.
[5] Department of Tourism Management, University of West Attica, Greece.
* Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

This article examines four distinct ways to mobilise the memory of piracy for cultural interpretation and tourism: the historical interpretation of landscapes in Mani, museum interpretation in Alonissos, the participatory event in Naoussa on Paros, and the presentation of maritime memory through local legends and residents' accounts in Lesvos. The study applies comparative qualitative analysis to official local sources, literature on event tourism and cultural heritage, and different forms of local storytelling. The comparison indicates that piracy does not constitute a uniform tourism product: each destination possesses different evidence, narratives, infrastructure and opportunities for community participation. The article proposes small-scale routes, educational activities, business networks and impact evaluation, while distinguishing historical evidence, local tradition and contemporary performance. Tourism development can generate more enduring value when historical memory, opportunities for local cultural practitioners and the protection of places are integral to its design.

Keywords: Piracy Heritage; Cultural Tourism; Mani; Alonissos; Paros; Lesvos; Local Development.

1 INTRODUCTION

Piracy occupies an ambivalent position in public history. Historically, it was associated with raids, captivity, insecurity and the adaptations imposed on coastal communities. In contemporary entertainment, pirates are often portrayed as resourceful adventurers and central figures in festive performances. Local legends mediate between these representations. Their historical significance lies in their preservation of memories of past conditions and their expression of the ways communities have interpreted their experiences. Cultural interpretation should therefore clarify

which elements are documented, which survive as legends and which have been created for contemporary performances.

Mani, Alonissos, Paros and Lesvos offer a productive basis for comparison. In Mani, maritime activity intersects with the memory embodied in tower houses and rugged coastlines. In Alonissos, a private museum displays objects associated with pirate vessels. In Paros, the harbour of Naoussa becomes the setting for Corsair Night. In Lesvos, local legends and residents' accounts have provided a basis for presenting the maritime history of Gera through interpretive routes and a community event at sea.

The study examines the evidential basis of each narrative, the form of the visitor experience and the potential contribution to local economic activity and education. Its central question concerns the forms of interpretation appropriate to the available evidence, community priorities and the carrying capacity of each place. This approach treats piracy heritage as a locally differentiated resource whose tourism development requires context-sensitive interpretation.

The constructive role of digital technologies in cultural entrepreneurship education must be emphasized. To strengthen this field, we must encourage digital integration across all educational areas. We should adopt paradigms like mobile devices [16], diverse ICTs [17–20], and AI & STEM Robotics [23-25] to enhance core educational processes like evaluation, intervention, and instruction. Furthermore, connecting these ICT tools with models of metacognition, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence development [21-22] accelerates and optimizes educational practices. This holistic approach yields significant results, particularly for cultural entrepreneurship, where psychological resilience and empathy are essential for success.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Cultural tourism encompasses visits to places and activities through which travellers encounter the ways societies interpret their past. Heritage includes narratives, skills, celebrations and locations whose significance emerges through lived experience, as well as material objects [1, 2]. The value of a heritage experience consequently extends beyond its commercial performance.

Event tourism introduces a temporal dimension. An event can mobilise residents, influence destination image and generate additional demand on particular dates. Getz [3] emphasises the importance of examining planning, participation motives and impacts. In relation to intangible heritage, UNESCO [4] assigns particular importance to the participation of the communities that create and transmit it. The cultural significance of an event therefore depends on more than the presence of traditional costumes or music.

The methodology consists of a comparative qualitative study of four cases. The analysis draws on official event programming in Paros, information provided by the Municipality of Alonissos and the museum, material concerning the contemporary initiative in Gera, and selected research literature. Interpretation is organised around the historical basis of each case, the role of legends, community participation and opportunities for tourism development. Available attendance figures are not treated as substitutes for evidence of economic outcomes or travel motivations.

The cases are compared using common criteria: the type of historical evidence, the role of local narratives, the form of the experience, community participation, the temporal distribution of visits and the scope for measuring outcomes. No fieldwork was undertaken, and no visitor expenditure or overnight-stay data were collected. Potential economic effects are therefore formulated as propositions requiring empirical assessment. This limitation is particularly important when the popularity of a performance is taken to demonstrate increased tourism expenditure.

3 THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL LEGENDS

Legends constitute a type of historical source distinct from administrative records. They do not necessarily provide precise information about the dates, individuals or sequence of a raid. They can, however, reveal the threats remembered by a community, the places associated with those threats and the practices that communities sought to explain to subsequent generations. Stories of ships being misled, maritime raids, harbour defence or the childhood of a seafaring figure express ways of understanding landscapes and social experience. This mnemonic function has historical significance in its own right.

The significance of a legend does not depend on the confirmation of every dramatic detail. It rests on the continuity of its transmission, its relationship to a particular place, its variations and its potential comparison with other testimony. An inscription may establish a name, an archival record may document a raid, and an oral account may illuminate how

residents remembered it. These sources possess different evidential capacities, but each can contribute to a fuller historical interpretation when its status is clearly explained.

For cultural tourism, this approach creates a more informative experience than a simple classification of narratives as either fact or fiction. Visitors can encounter a local version, view the place in which it is situated, compare maps with written sources and understand why the story retains significance. Residents are thereby recognised as custodians of memory with the right to present and interpret their own traditions, rather than being assigned a supporting role in an externally imposed narrative.

4 MANI AND THE INTERPRETATION OF MARITIME LANDSCAPES

The history of Mani encompasses diverse forms of maritime violence, trade, defence and mobility. The term piracy requires careful use because historical sources may distinguish maritime robbery from politically authorised privateering. The actions of a settlement or group should also not be attributed indiscriminately to the entire region. Narratives concerning Inner Mani connect maritime activity with difficult living conditions. The legend of ships being misled by lights is historically significant as an expression of remembered relationships between the coast, darkness and shipwreck, although its specific details require additional archival substantiation.

The landscape itself provides the most tangible interpretive resource. Topography, natural coves, visibility from elevated positions and fortified dwellings allow exploration of how communities responded to multiple threats. The Greek National Tourism Organisation relates the towers of Areopoli to defensive needs arising from piracy, Ottoman pressures and local conflicts [5]. This multidimensional interpretation is more accurate than attributing every tower exclusively to protection against pirates.

An appropriate tourism experience for Mani would be a small-scale historical geography route. At safely accessible stops, a qualified guide could relate the coastline, settlement, tower house and maritime route to selected historical accounts. Digitised map extracts could support comparisons between the present landscape and earlier descriptions. Piracy would constitute one interpretive thread alongside architecture, social organisation and the economic strategies of local communities.

The entrepreneurial dimension could connect qualified guides, small accommodation providers, local producers and traditional craft workshops. Pre-booked group visits could be distributed across several days, reducing the need for large gatherings in sensitive settlements. Site selection should respect private ownership, the condition of monuments and access restrictions. The price of an experience alone is an inadequate measure of success if residents have limited participation in its design and benefits.

5 ALONISSOS AND MUSEUM INTERPRETATION OF PIRACY MEMORY

Alonissos presents a different model. According to the Municipality of Alonissos, the Historical and Folklore Museum of Kostas and Angela Mavrikis has operated in Patitiri since 2001. Its collections include weapons and objects presented as finds from naval and pirate vessels, alongside displays of folklore and everyday life. The museum's own description identifies a dedicated display of piracy-related objects intended to provide an educational and entertaining experience [6, 7].

The collection enables interpretation to begin with material evidence: the identification of an object, its dating and provenance, and the degree of certainty with which it can be associated with piracy. Labels can distinguish documented provenance, probable use and later popular attribution. Such distinctions strengthen the credibility of interpretation and can become part of the visitor experience by inviting reflection on how historical knowledge is constructed.

The coexistence of piracy-related and folklore collections offers an opportunity to connect maritime insecurity with everyday island life. Exhibitions can address work at sea, exchange networks and practices of protection. Activities for children might involve identifying and interpreting evidence, while avoiding the assumption that every historical weapon can be linked to a specific act of piracy.

Museum interpretation can also incorporate oral legends concerning maritime routes, hiding places and vessels. Recording the narrator, location and date of collection provides contextual information without recasting the stories as verified events. Objects and oral memories can thus be presented together: the former illuminate what has survived materially, while the latter reveal what communities considered worth transmitting. Their juxtaposition can strengthen educational interpretation and reduce the commercial standardisation of local legends.

The museum offers relative temporal continuity, potentially receiving visitors on more dates than an annual festival. Short guided visits, conservation workshops or presentations of local maritime history could be developed in cooperation with businesses in Patitiri. The Mavrikis museum must, however, be distinguished from the Peristera Underwater Museum, which concerns an ancient merchant shipwreck rather than a pirate vessel [8]. A shared maritime itinerary could include both sites while preserving their distinct historical identities.

6 PAROS AND CORSAIR NIGHT AS A PARTICIPATORY EVENT

In Naoussa on Paros, Corsair Night forms part of the celebrations held nine days after the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. The official cultural website of Paros describes it as a re-enactment involving dance groups and local organisations. The municipal programme for 2022 listed the event on 23 August, with dancing and fireworks [9, 10]. Programme details require verification for each year; the date recorded in an earlier programme does not establish the schedule of subsequent editions.

In local narratives, the contemporary re-enactment is associated with Barbarossa's raid of 1537, a connection also presented in the cultural information provided by Paros [10]. The legend of local resistance is historically significant as a means through which the community remembers threats and reaffirms collective identity. The historical context and its contemporary festive interpretation should be distinguished. Staged battles, costumes, dances and the concluding celebration constitute a contemporary cultural composition through which this memory is sustained.

Paros illustrates the significance of shared public space. The harbour becomes a stage, local associations and participants produce the performance, and food services and other businesses may benefit from visitor concentration. However, the event takes place in late August, when tourism demand is already high. A reduction in seasonality cannot be inferred without measurement: the event may primarily enrich the experience of visitors already on the island. This distinction is important when defining the objectives of the event.

The protection of public space should be integral to the cultural strategy. Planning should address pedestrian movement, waste management, safety at sea and accessibility. Small interpretive activities before the performance could present maps, historical sources and community narratives. Local producers and cultural practitioners could participate under transparent conditions. Commercial activity should preserve residents' access to public space and retain the specificity of the tradition, rather than reducing it to a generic pirate-themed celebration.

7 LESVOS AND MARITIME MEMORY THROUGH LEGENDS AND COMMUNITY ACCOUNTS

In Lesvos, the Gera initiative emerged from an interest in bringing the maritime history of the area back into public discussion. Legends linking villages, coves and individuals to piracy acquire particular significance when considered alongside residents' accounts: family stories, place names and memories of life around the gulf. The value of this oral heritage extends beyond establishing whether a particular raid occurred. It reveals how the local community understands its relationship with the sea and why it seeks to transmit that relationship to subsequent generations.

Palaiokipos and the Gulf of Gera provide landscapes in which narratives acquire spatial meaning. The tradition associating the area with Barbarossa forms part of collective memory and provides an opportunity to discuss navigation, maritime connections and population movements in the Aegean. The use of a historical figure as a tourism symbol can provide a framework for residents of different generations to present their accounts and illuminate the broader maritime past. Recording who narrates each story and where it is situated supports the continuity and contextual interpretation of oral traditions.

The initiative took public form through a maritime event in Evreiaki, on the Gulf of Gera, during the summer of 2026. Cultural associations, fishers, volunteers and residents contributed vessels, music and participation. The celebration brought local legends into a shared setting, allowing visitors to experience the landscape through the people who sustain its narratives. Attendance reportedly exceeded 1,000 visitors [11]. This reported level of participation suggests interest in the initiative, although sustained demand and the prospects for a recurring event require further assessment. Systematic collection of oral accounts, small guided visits and collaboration with local cultural practitioners could make maritime history accessible beyond a single evening. Such continuity would support the interpretation of Gera's folk traditions as living knowledge while maintaining the community's leading role. The pre-event coverage describes the initiative and its planned activities [12, 13, 14].

8 COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR CASES

The four destinations represent distinct approaches to piracy heritage. Mani foregrounds the interpretation of architecture and landscapes; Alonissos centres on museum collections; Paros focuses on a recurring theatrical event;

and Lesvos presents maritime history through legends, residents' accounts and collective action. These differences explain why uniform promotional language or attendance-based evaluation would be inadequate.

Their relationships with seasonality also differ. Under suitable conditions, an outdoor route in Mani could operate outside the summer peak. The museum in Alonissos can accommodate repeated visits within its actual opening season. Paros hosts an established event during a period of strong summer demand. Lesvos could link activities held on different dates, but an effect on seasonality has not yet been established. Assessment would require comparison of overnight stays and travel motivations.

Authenticity raises different interpretive questions in each case. In Mani, episodes preserved in folklore should be distinguished from archival evidence. In Alonissos, the provenance of objects requires clear explanation. In Paros, visitors should understand that they are attending a contemporary performance with historical references. In Lesvos, legends and residents' accounts acquire greater contextual meaning when presented in the places where they have been transmitted and linked to local maritime history. Uncertainty about a particular detail does not diminish the historical significance of collective memory.

A common interpretive framework is proposed with three clearly differentiated levels. The first concerns the historical context supported by dated sources and monuments. The second concerns local legends, including the places and people associated with their transmission. The third concerns contemporary creative performances, with attribution to their creators. This framework assigns each form of knowledge a distinct interpretive role. Visitors can respond to the emotional significance of a legend while gaining a clearer understanding of the historical conditions in which it emerged or was preserved.

9 A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

Cooperation among the four destinations could take the form of a digital thematic hub rather than a single physical itinerary, given the distances involved and differences in travel motivations. The proposed hub would contain four independent strands: coasts and defence in Mani, objects and interpretation in Alonissos, celebration and collective memory in Paros, and sources and community in Lesvos. A shared thematic identity would facilitate access to knowledge while preserving each destination's narrative specificity.

Each strand could include a concise set of verified historical statements, clearly identified local traditions and practical access information. Maps, short audio narratives and educational activities could be produced collaboratively by historians, museum specialists and residents. Images of monuments and collection objects require appropriate permission and attribution. Regular review would help ensure that access information remains current and that unsupported claims are not presented as established facts.

Local businesses could contribute to small experience packages through written agreements on remuneration and quality. Guides, workshops and food producers could collaborate while preserving the non-commercial dimensions of cultural participation. Opportunities for younger practitioners and small organisations depend on open calls, manageable entry costs and advance scheduling. A proportion of revenue from commercial activities could support documentation, conservation and residents' access.

Evaluation should begin with simple, comparable indicators: unique visitors per activity, place of residence, motivation for attendance, overnight stays attributable to the activity, payments to local contributors and the proportion of procurement sourced from local businesses. Residents' satisfaction, the quality of historical information and environmental pressures should be assessed alongside these measures. A short questionnaire and anonymised records voluntarily provided by participating businesses would offer a stronger evidential basis than general claims of success.

A visitor already holidaying on Paros is not necessarily an additional arrival generated by the event. A museum may provide substantial educational value despite modest attendance. A community event in Lesvos may strengthen cooperation before producing a measurable effect on overnight stays. Evaluation should therefore recognise the different purposes and potential contributions of each case.

10 CONCLUSIONS

Piracy heritage can support cultural tourism in Mani, Alonissos, Paros and Lesvos when the concept is applied with interpretive precision. Mani offers historical interpretation of place, Alonissos offers museum-based learning, Paros offers participatory celebration, and Lesvos offers the presentation of maritime memory through legends and residents' accounts. Each approach should be developed in relation to its local context rather than transferred unchanged to the

other destinations. Memory and piracy heritage forms an integral part of a place's history and should be acknowledged and interpreted in its full historical context, including all of its historical implications [15].

The strongest potential for enduring local value lies in the activities sustained beyond an initial visit: updated routes, small remunerated collaborations, opportunities to repeat or extend an experience, and the retention of economic benefits within the community. Historical violence can be interpreted without romanticisation. When documented sources, local memories and creative performances are presented as distinct forms of knowledge, tourism development can support learning, participation and the care of places.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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