Conceptual development of the trail methodology for the preservation of intangible maritime heritage: A case for the Adriatic coast and islands

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Received 31 May 2015; accepted 18 September 2015
Available online 21 November 2015

Abstract In the Adriatic, the importance in tourism of the small rowing and sailing boats, like the gajeta and other heritage vessels, is clearly relevant, as icons of heritage boats adorn brochures, logos, and their names are bequested to hotels and restaurants. As a symbol, the gajeta stands for the heritage of the island, and the ethics of the place; these constitute an intangible treasure which highlights the lifestyle of the agriculturalist society. However, the distinct experience of the gajeta, or other local boats as a relevant form of tourist activity, is largely missing in the offerings of local tourist information centers and nature parks where they reside. This paper outlines a heritage trail interpretive strategy, which would create a network supporting small local tourist venues that showcase intangible maritime heritage of the coast and islands. The methodology creates an alternative to what is primarily leisure-based tourism that Adriatic counties like Croatia are experiencing in all but the largest cultural monuments and ecological reserves which provide avenues for community-based ecological management in remote regions.

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Introduction: The concept of a heritage trail

The Croatian coast and islands from the south at the border with Monte Negro to the northern border with Slovenia spans more than 1777 km. Croatia has more than 1200 islands. When the coastlines of the islands and mainland are combined, this 5790 km makes ⅓ of the Mediterranean total. 66 islands have settlements of varying sizes, each with a rich cultural diversity that can be found along the way. Different coastal regions and islands have distinct cultural traits that can be seen, in speech, as on the island Vis where the inhabitants of Komiza and Vis town use a different common dialect, and dress and food are also distinctive for each settlement in the archipelago.

The differences in culture can also be found in the varying types of rowing and sailing boats found along the coast,

It is at the local, community level where successful trail networks begin.
—Brandywine Conservancy, Community Trails Handbook, 1997
heritage vessels. Each locality has developed its own type of distinct watercraft, as with the two types small sailing boats, the *gajeta* from Murter (Photo 1) and Korčula, the small cargo boat, *bracera* from Brač (Photo 2), the offshore fishing vessel, *falkuša* from Komiza (Photo 3), and the utilitarian skiff, *batana* of Rovinj (Photo 4). There are many more types of vessels that exist and are still being used along the coast, but these are just a few of the more prevalent examples.

This class of vessels represent a form that may be rowed or sailed under varying conditions. The rotund hull shape and double ended design characterize the boats, which range between 5 and 12 meters. These types have been historically family owned which insulated them from transitions in technology and economics that replaced the larger ships of the region. The boats were and are used as multipurpose watercraft with a myriad of function. Of these mentioned here, all

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1 The term ‘heritage’ is used in place of ‘traditional’ vessels as it is a more appropriate term that fits with local nomenclature of boats as part of heritage or *bština*.

**Photo 1** Gajeta Cicibela- built 1938. Typical Heritage vessel common to the central Dalmatian islands. Betina, Murter (photo by James Bender).

**Photo 2** Bracera, typical small cargo vessel common to the central Dalmatian islands before the combustion engine. (Photo by Ljubo Gamulin).
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