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## WELCOME TO IZOLA! OFFERING »AUTHENTIC HOSPITALITY« ON FISHING BOATS

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the article is to present everyday uses of authenticity within the popular and tourist discourses along the present-day Slovene coastline and to highlight the active role of individuals in the process of hospitality. In particular, we will be interested in the uses of "authentic hospitality" connected to fishing tourism that was developed due to the economic and other problems within Slovene fishing sector and will pose question: How authentic is hospitality on fishing boats? Methods used are participant observation and interviews.*

**Key words:** fishing tourism, authenticity, hospitality, Izola, Slovene coast

## BENVENUTI A ISOLA! OFFERTA DELL'«OSPITALITÀ AUTENTICA» SUI PESCHERECCI

### SINTESI

*Lo scopo dell'articolo è di presentare l'uso d'autenticità sulla costa slovena odierna così nel discorso turistico come anche nel linguaggio popolare e dimostrare il ruolo attivo dell'individuo nel processo dell'ospitalità. Nel centro dell'interesse sarà l'uso dell'«ospitalità autentica», collegato con turismo di pesca, sviluppatosi a causa delle difficoltà economiche e altre nell'ambito del settore di pesca marina. Ci porremo la domanda seguente: Quanto è autentica l'ospitalità sui pescherecci? I dati usati sono stati ottenuti con metodo di osservazione, con partecipazione e le interviste.*

**Parole-chiave:** turismo peschereccio, autenticità, ospitalità, Isola, Costa slovena

## INTRODUCTION

Along with myths, imaginaries, host-guest and center-periphery relations, as well as other tourism-related issues, hospitality has been "...one of the most pervasive metaphors within tourism studies referring in one sense to the commercial project of the tourist industry (such as hotels, catering, and tour operation) and in another sense to the social interactions between local people and tourists—that is, hosts and guests" (Germann Molz & Gibson, 2007, 6). Hospitality brings to the discussion numerous contemporary questions related to cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, relations between social groups, tourist images as well as personal experiences of exclusion or inclusion. As Bell observed, the last decade has seen a renewed interest in the concept of hospitality, bringing to the fore the critical turn in hospitality studies (away from the solely functional emphasis) and the adoption of the concept and practices of hospitality across a range of social science disciplines (Bell, 2012). Although there are some general tendencies that can be observed in recent approaches to hospitality, the disciplinary location however additionally tailors the main focus as well as the way of combining three angles of the "hospitality story": product, process and experience. When dealing with hospitality from an anthropological perspective - that is an ethnographically informed view - the relations between hosts and guests as well as the personal experience in this relation assume special importance.

Another important concept within tourist studies that deserves mention in relation to hospitality is that of authenticity. Anthropology of tourism - dealing with consumption of myths and staged authenticity - was the only sub-discipline of anthropology in which the concept of authenticity was frequently reflected or/and criticized (see among many MacCannell, 1989; Selwyn, 1996; Rojek & Urry 1997; Theodossopolou, 2013). As stressed by Selwyn: »Tourism is about the invention and reinvention of tradition. It is about the production and consumption of myths and staged inauthenticities. It also has far-reaching economic, political and social consequences at levels ranging from the household to nation" (Selwyn, 1996, 30). Following tourist narratives and tourist sites many anthropologists have observed that the history and archaeology aimed at tourists presents a homogenous singular narrative despite the many conflicting interpretations of history and furthermore recognised different levels of authenticity (Duke, 2007; Field, 2009; Selwyn, 1996). As Theodossopolou points out that while deconstructing the "inauthentic" singular tourist narratives offered to tourists as "authentic", anthropology can also fall into the trap of operating within the binary framework of "authentic-inauthentic". After detecting the singular and constructed authenticity of

the tourist site one can still be pursuing the question: Would this tourist site be more authentic if we would make people aware of heterogeneous interpretations? In his synoptic article on the concept of authenticity "Laying claim to Authenticity: five Anthropological Dilemmas" Theodossopolou (2013) stresses that "...The development of analytical conceptualizations of authenticity with qualifying adjectives or nouns is not a sign of academic verbalism, but an academic response to authenticity's multiple vernacular uses: in many evaluations of objects, performances, or cultural practices, more than one conceptualization or criteria of authenticity is debated at any given moment" (Theodossopolou, 2013, 340). In this article we would like to follow this direction, acknowledging the stresses of the current debate within anthropology of tourism that has moved beyond the essentialist conceptualizations of culture, recognizing that there are no bounded, single, and self-contained cultures, neither is there an all-embracing anthropological definition of authenticity (Field, 2009).

Although we will follow several theoretical debates on authenticity (Selwyn 1996, Bendix, 1997; Macdonald, 1997; Theodossopolou, 2013) and hospitality (Lashley, 2007; Selwyn, 2007; Bell, 2012) this article will neither dwell on the theoretical discussion of authenticity and hospitality in general, nor will it engage in any extended sense the dilemmas about the use of the concepts of authenticity in anthropological analysis. Our more focused and modest intent is to present everyday uses of authenticity within the popular and tourist discourses along the present-day Slovene coastline and to highlight the active role of individuals in the process of hospitality within fishing tourism. In particular, we will be interested in the uses of "authentic hospitality"<sup>1</sup> connected to fishing tourism that has developed in response to economic and other pressures within Slovene fishing sector, and will pose question such as: How authentic is hospitality on fishing boats? Our contention is that different understandings of this "authentic hospitality" attached to Slovene coastal area and fishing tourism can best be understood as holding a key element of innovation leaving the binary framework of authentic-inauthentic tension aside. We will focus on the case of fishing tourism in the present-day Slovene coastal town of Izola, where for many decades now fishing has been the first and foremost local activity (Kramar, 2003).

## IZOLA – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEMPORARY TOURIST RHETORIC

Within the politic regime of SFR Yugoslavia government, tourism became one of the most developed sectors of the Yugoslav economy. Yugoslav tourism aimed

1 The term »authentic hospitality« is not an emic term developed by our interlocutors or local tourist agencies but it serves as a metaphor with which we would like to elaborate on innovative strategies developed by local actors.

at several directions; attracting foreign tourists with hard currency, supporting socialist projects of building a nation in the spirit of brotherhood through domestic tourism migrations and putting accent on personal fulfillment and free time instead of on consumerism (Walton, 2010, x). From 1965 onwards, tourism expanded rapidly, mostly within two Yugoslav republics, Croatia and Slovenia. Along the Slovene coast, tourism developed in different ways mostly in accordance with the specificities of each coastal town - Koper, Izola, Portorož and Piran. As one of the inhabitants from Koper stated: "...the port of Koper closed the sea and rendered impossible the development of tourism". Izola on the other hand built its identity around the fishing industry and kept its image throughout the Yugoslav and Slovene period as fishermen's' and workers' town. Although Izola had the capacity of 300 beds for tourists before the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, in the period after the war, tourism was slow to develop. In 1952 Izola started to develop holiday camps for children in villa *Isolina* and several restaurants for visitors were opened such as *At the Fishermen, Tourist, In the Park* (Kramar, 2002, 269). Slowly the former hotel *Luigi Menis* was renovated in 1956 and renamed into *Zora (Dawn)*. In 1962 they started to build holiday homes and bungalows in *Belvedere* and later on, two camps (*Jadranka* and *Belveder*) were established (Kramar, 2002, 270-271). In the beginning of the 1980s, holiday houses for the retired were built as well as several syndicate homes and later on holiday homes for the handicapped (Tome-Marinac, 1994, 130). Despite this development, tourism still only played a minor role in Izola around the 1980s (Tome-Marinac, 1994, 130), and the strong accent on syndicate tourism was specific to Izola. Portorož, on the other hand, focused the most (in comparison to other Slovene coastal towns) on foreign tourism, developing alongside also a measure of domestic tourism in the holiday homes. Piran was also specific for its numerous second homes, as many of the former Italian houses were transformed into weekend retreats of urban people (Jeršič, 1968).

Recent touristic brochures partly continues with this rhetoric, adding some new aspects representing Izola and its hinterland as a town where people appreciate

healthy local food and refuse to buy into capitalist consumerism, aiming instead at *Kilometer zero* philosophy. As written in the promotional brochure: "*The diverse and rich Mediterranean – Istrian cuisine in Izola has been further enhanced with the initiative "Kilometer zero". The idea of Kilometer zero is to offer in selected local restaurants autochthon and authentic food. [...] Guests will have the opportunity to taste the typical dishes of our local seafood as part of the "Sea on the table", where the catch of the morning is on the table at lunch.*"<sup>2</sup> The above quotation is in consonance with Slovenia's national marketing strategy for the Littoral, and it foregrounds four key aspects relevant to our discussion: the Mediterranean, Istria, authenticity and "mute", mysterious history. Although the case of Izola's fishermen remains in the background of this campaign, it is closely interwoven with all these aspects. First of all, Izola is seen to be represented primarily through its fishing and work culture, as an »... *old Mediterranean town [...] where the genuine traditions of fishing and winemaking, mysterious traces of the past, and the welcoming character of the locals merge together to form an unforgettable mosaic of experiences.*«<sup>3</sup> Nowadays Izola still remains a fishing town and fishing is promoted as one of the main landscape attributes from the town's history. One can find old photos of fishermen and fishing boats blown up into large posters looking out on the pavement from the Mercator shop windows alongside the information on working hours of this Slovenian commercial enterprise, or attached to the walls and doors in public toilets – mysterious traces of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century - staring at visitors without any explanation but merely, it seems, for aesthetic pleasure. The last two decades have also seen extensive promotion of the authentic experience of spending free time with Izola's fishermen (»*With fishing boat Zlatoperka you will get to know hard fishing life*«; »*Experience a different day, experience a fishing day!*«) coupled with the demonstration of mending and sewing fishing nets.<sup>4</sup> Fishing is promoted mostly through notions of healthy climate and food (Rogelja, 2006) in relation to Istria or the Mediterranean more generally. Local innovations of authenticity are indeed deeply connected also with the historical context. The troubled history of

2 Corrections to the original text: "*The rich and diverse Mediterranean – Istrian cuisine in Izola has been given an extra boost with the initiative "kilometer zero". The idea of Kilometer zero is to offer in selected local restaurants local, authentic food. [...] Guests will have the opportunity to taste typical seafood dishes of the area as part of the "Sea on the table", where the catch of the morning is on the table at lunchtime.*" The *Kilometre zero* (Kmnič) is a project, which intends to offer "*indigenous/autochthonous and authentic gastronomic products of Izola and its rural areas to the visitors and tourists*". The aim of the project is to seasonally present authentic dishes from locally-obtained, fresh and healthy ingredients cultivated with the help of local communities and prepared according to traditional local recipes. This spring the project carried out a campaign "*Erbe per ovi*" (Herbs for eggs), which took place from 15 March to 17 May 2014. Houses and farmhouses of rural Izola offered their guests egg dishes with seasonal herbs. *Kilometre zero: fresh and from nearby* (Kilometre nič: sveže in blizu) as an initiative started in 2012 in cooperation with the mayor of Izola, mag. Igor Kolenc, director of the Tourist Association of Izola, Danilo Markočič and a fisherman and tenant of the Izola Fish Market, Fabio Steffe. Together they presented their first campaign under the slogan "*Sea on the table (where the catch of the morning is on the table at lunchtime)*". This slogan was used also in the year 2013 on the basis of a rich catch of one-and-a-half tons of mullet in March 2013 (from the article *Kilometre nič* [Kilometre Zero], <http://www.obala.net/obala/kilometre-nic-58726/clanek>, dated from 6. 3. 2013; last accessed 6. 5. 2014).

3 Welcome to Izola [http://www.slovenia.info/?\\_ctg\\_kraj=2784&lng=2](http://www.slovenia.info/?_ctg_kraj=2784&lng=2) (last accessed 6. 5. 2014)

4 Ribiške počitnice [Fishing holidays] [http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/partnerji/morski\\_ribolov/](http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/partnerji/morski_ribolov/) (last accessed 6. 5. 2014)



*Fish cantina at sea (Photo: Nataša Rogelja)*

the exodus of the Italian-speaking inhabitants (among whom there were also fishermen) who after the 2<sup>nd</sup>WW left *en masse* the coastal towns of the present-day Slovenia constitutes, for example, a chapter in history that is still considered to be too problematic, to be openly talked about and refashioned for the purposes of tourism. Furthermore, the marketing of industrial fishing heritage is also not without its silences, since most of the factories were closed in the last 20 years and the fishing industry restructured, sometimes even collapsed due to unsuccessful attempts at privatization from 1991 onwards. After the establishment of the new maritime border between Slovenia and Croatia (which is still not fixed), Slovene fishermen on the one hand experienced a narrowing of fishing territories but on the other, by joining the EU in 2004, they also experienced new possibilities derived from EU funds for regional development. Regional development funds have provided new opportunities and marketing niches, whereby authenticity becomes on the one hand popular and up-to-date and on the other it is still semantically loose enough to provide a space than can accommodate the hidden and suppressed historical episodes (wrapping them up in phrases such as “*mysterious traces of the past*”) and

simultaneously allow for the development of new innovative contents. One of them is “authentic hospitality” on fishing boats, developed by local fishermen in their effort to survive, to be able to stay on the sea and on their boats and sometimes even to collectively enjoy the fishing tourism together with their guests.

#### FISHING TOURISM

One of the factors that fishermen in Slovenia see as having most impacted their daily lives after 1991 was the establishment of the new state border as this caused significant losses to their fishing territories. After 1991, this closure of substantial swathes of fishing ground (along the previously joint Yugoslav coastline) coupled with the prohibition of fishing with driftnets during late spring and summer periods, meant a dead season for fishermen used to this kind of fishing technology. Additionally, during the dead season the state of Slovenia withheld their support to fishermen by paying their health insurance and neither did the new Slovenian government with its appointed ministry put any effort into improving their employment status<sup>5</sup>. The status of fishermen was initially regulated within the category of individual entrepreneurship and

5 As shown already in the second part of the book some substantial changes were nevertheless triggered by the efforts of the fishermen office and its inputs for better communication between fishermen, national political actors and the international network *Medisamak*.



later on it was regulated on the same basis as the status of farmers. Furthermore, the number of Slovenian fishing boats that have previously fished in present-day Croatian waters was, after the establishment of the new state border (which is still subject of the international arbitrage), suddenly much too high for the Slovene sea with less than 50 km of coastline divided into three protected areas within Slovene national waters. Another negative consequence was that the market for the fish cannery factory diminished drastically. Further restrictions on commercial sea fisheries were brought about “by changes to the shipping regime to the commercial Port of Koper as of December 2004, which abolished existing rules giving priority of way to fishing vessels over commercial ships” (NSP, 2014, 8). Due to all this as well as because of the fact that Slovene fishing<sup>6</sup> is strictly seasonal, and the Gulf of Trieste is overused, several fishermen decided to combine fishery with tourism in the summer months in a form of passenger transportation, fish picnics, fishing with fishermen tours and school excursions. Izola, as a “town of fishermen”, and its inhabitants took on a special role in these endeavors (Rogelja, 2006; 2004a; 2004b).

Fishermen who engage with fishing tourism advertise their activity during the summer spring and autumn period on notice-boards placed on the fishing pier (usually in front of their boat), they hang them on their boat or stick them to the doors of their vans. Some of them use also web to promote their activity. Their advertisements can be found on the web sites of local tourist information centres<sup>7</sup> or municipal webpages where one can find a photo of the boat with the telephone number of a captain, a pricelist and a menu. Individual fishermen cooperate with certain tourist agencies who promote their activity in a simple way – with a photo and a phone number. On the home page of municipality [www.izola.eu](http://www.izola.eu) visitors can find different offers and images. Pamphlet “*Visit Izola, a delightful fishing town with delicious vedutas*” is accompanied with estheticized pictured of fishing nets, port and boats and with an invitation to excursions with different local boats. If we click on one of the links connected with the boat named *Jež* [Hedgehog/Urchin] we reach the slogan “*With fishermen in a fishermen way*” and some additional information on excursions (food details etc.). Several fishermen promote themselves on their own web-sites. On the website [www.delfin2.si](http://www.delfin2.si) the boat *Delfin II* [Dolphin II] and its owner “fish” their visitors with extensive number of photos showing a boat, cheerful visitors or a captain with a big smile, standing in his aft cabin and holding the rudders. The sea-food showed on photos

are anchovy, sardines and calamari. The homepage is designed in a blue colour and photographs are framed in blue frames. They give the appearance of trendy tourist look and are in no way connected with “traditional or ancient times”. A visitor can see photos of two boats; *Meduza* and *Delfin II*; one on the sea and the other in the port. They are both very clean and tidy, shining in a fresh white colour. Beside photos there are just few data on prices, different tourist packages (fish picnics, panoramic excursions, bathing and route: Izola – Piran – Portorož – Izola) and a contact address.

Additional web presentation of fishing tourism can be found under the name *Fishing holidays*<sup>8</sup>. This programme was developed by the group of actors (among which there are also local fishermen) who are connected through common work within the framework of EU fishery politics, EU fond for fisheries and sustainable development issues. The programme’s moto is »*Spend a different day, experience a fishing day!*«. Within this programme different thematic excursions, culinary and tourist programmes, programmes for special groups and sport fishing are offered. The text on the webpage explains that the hosts will: »...*disclose their trade secrets of fishing and fish farming, and offer their products for tasting in a traditional way or high culinary style. [...]*« Although it resembles some of the previously presented approaches such as the excursions within *Riba* company for industrial fishing or fish picnics the novelty of the *Fishing holidays* programme is a joint cooperation of different actors (fishermen, aquaculture farmers, biologists, tourist transporters, culinary experts, sport fishermen, fish food processing experts...). Prices of the excursions are higher in compare with “ordinary” fish picnics and although the rhetoric may seem quite similar as in the previous material the target public group that this programme wants to attract is obviously a different one, the frame of reference is more likely to be connected with the “cool authenticity”<sup>9</sup>.

## TWO ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES

In the following lines we will present two ethnographic narratives connected with fishing tourism that will further help us to elaborate on the question: How authentic is hospitality on fishing boats? The first ethnographic narrative, *A day off for coal-miners and peasant women* took place in the first phase (1999-2004) of our ethnographic research, while the second one *Fishing with fishermen* (describing the activity, which was later developed in *Fishing holidays* tourist product<sup>10</sup>) draw

6 The data of SURS (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia) from 2005 shows that there 159 fishermen have been active on the strip between Piran and Ankaran. Furthermore 72 fishermen were involved in fishing as their primary occupation and 87 are part-time fishermen (source: SURS, Maritime fishing 2005 cited in Operational Programme for Fisheries Development in the Republic of Slovenia 2007-2013, 2013: 155.

7 [http://www.izola.eu/index.php?page=static&item=96&tree\\_root=5](http://www.izola.eu/index.php?page=static&item=96&tree_root=5)

8 Ribiške počitnice – Fishing holidays <http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/en/>

9 On the distinction between the cool and hot authenticity see Tom Selwyn (1996).

10 *Fishing Holidays: Spend a different day, experience a fishing day.* [http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/en/partners/marine\\_fishing/](http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/en/partners/marine_fishing/)

on our second ethnographic phase (2010-2014). These ethnographic stories obtained through the method of participant observation reveal a variety of approaches in fishing tourism, from daily excursions, fishing with fishermen excursions, to educational trips.

### A day off for coal-miners and peasant women

The most frequent excursions practiced among the fishermen from Izola between May and September in the period between 1999 and 2004, as also during the last decade, were those of panoramic excursions and fish picnics (as they call the excursions where seafood is offered). The average number of working days connected with such excursions in the season is seen to vary between 70 and 100 days. The visitors who signed up for such excursions were at the time mostly people living in Slovenia, which gives a special character to this particular line of business. When fishermen talked about their visitors, they tended to stress that they were not involved in business with tourists but were dealing mostly with “organized groups”, that is closed collectives of coworkers and friends). In saying so, it became clear that the word *tourist* was strictly reserved for foreigners or strangers, defined as those not living close by and not speaking Slovene or Italian, and the term *organized groups* was linked to school groups, work collectives, or other professional groups from various seminars and congresses, all coming from Slovenia. Other terms (rather than organized groups) the fishermen have described their guests with are: *visitors, home guests, and the world of business*.

During the summer 2001 we participated in several full-day fish picnics where the visitors were work collectives such as a group of coal-miners or a group of peasant women. Both excursions featured the same Dalmatian pop music that used to be popular also on Yugoslav holidays along the coast. As stated by one of the visitors, songs of the popular Croatian singer Oliver Dragojević bring back the memories of “*the sea as we used to know it*”. After the panoramic tour along the Slovenian coast sardines and wine were offered to the visitors. Not much attention was paid to the history of the region or to the natural peculiarities of the area. There was small conversation about the boat and fishing itself and about the problems that Slovene fishermen are facing, whereas the capital of Ljubljana as the new administrative center was perceived as a “bad” influence on fishing. Fishermen stressed to their visitors that the times of Yugoslavia were better for them, with the fishing center located in Split and thus situated in the maritime culture area, something Ljubljana, in their perception, certainly did not possess. The main motive for the excursion, however, was relaxation. Usually there were two fishermen on the boat, occasionally also a friend of fishermen who would help out with the anchor. Usually one fisherman steered the boat and the other prepared the food. While

talking on one such occasion to the fisherman preparing the fish, the fisherman explained to Nataša that sardines were the best fish for him. Sardines are supposedly healthier and taste like real fish, unlike, as they said in joke “*the rich people’s white fish*”. One of the fishermen stated that he wants to do his best for his visitors as they are hard workers enjoying the sea for one day. The relation between the fishermen and visitors was always congenial and even egalitarian in the sense that enjoyment was reciprocal and on both sides. It seemed that the relation between fishermen and visitors was forged out of the relationship between tourists and tourist workers and in a way resembled the Yugoslav type of domestic tourism that “covered” underdeveloped regions (Tylor & Grandits, 2010, 9) (or in this case disappearing fishing economy). Personally, we were able to witness the fishermen’s encounter with two hard-working groups (coal-miners and peasants), enjoying a day together in the context of an economic transaction of a paid excursion (at a reasonable if not low-price rate). On the basis of these examples one could talk about domestic tourists also in the function of useful consumers. Furthermore we can observe the hospitality within the already established frame of references. Since the visitors were domestic tourists from the same social class as fishermen the “hospitality approach” was based on already established relationship. As Tom Selwyn wrote: “*The basic function of hospitality is to establish a relationship or to promote an already established relationship. Acts of hospitality achieve this in the course of exchanges of goods and services, both material and symbolic, between those who give hospitality (hosts) and those who receive it (guests)*” (Selwyn, 2007, 19). As he continues, this relationship between hosts and guests necessarily evolve within moral frameworks and one of the principal functions of any act of hospitality is either to consolidate the recognition that hosts and guests already share the same moral universe or to enable the construction of a (new) moral universe to which both host and guest agree to belong (Selwyn, 2007, 19). In the case presented the act of hospitality in a way consolidates existing structures of relations (domestic tourism, Yugoslav coastal tourism, economic transaction as useful consumerism, host and guest belonging to the working class...) by symbolically affirming them and enjoying them collectively.

*It was a calm and hot summer day when we came to Izola to participate and film the one day excursion of peasant women. We agreed with fishermen which excursion was to be filmed and the women agreed to have us around on their day off. We met on the pier and introduced ourselves and the fishermen helped the women to embark in a kind, gentlemanly manner offering each woman a hand, a bow and a smile, guiding them across the bridge. The passage from the pier to the boat already gave rise to a fair amount of laughter and comments, already bonding us as a group. When*

the boat took off we sat comfortably on the benches taking in the blue surroundings and beginning to chat casually. The plastic canvas protected us from the heat and with the boat starting to move it felt the wind also blew away the heat from the peer. One group of women started to sing a Slovene song *Barčica po morju plava* [The boat sails the sea] as some other women played the accordion. The atmosphere was relaxed and joyful. One of the fishermen offered us a drink. One of the women explained to us that this was her only free summer day as she has to take care of her family farm and cows. She said that she had been looking forward to this day for a long time and that it seemed to her like all her troubles just fell into the water the minute she embarked on the boat. The women were of different ages dressed in casual sport clothes. After a few glasses of *bevanda* [wine with water] they lightened up even more. They took a walk around the boat and around the cabin, observing fishermen's equipment. One of the fishermen showed them a dried sea-horse, hanging down from a tiny string in the saloon. Women didn't pay much attention to the historical peculiarities of the region neither did fishermen bother them with such information. While one of the fishermen was steering the boat the second one mixed with the group and chatted with women. He asked them about their farms and their work and talked about their working fishing day. After a few rather formal sentences about their work as fishermen, they started to make joking comments about the women coming to the boat alone, leaving their husbands behind. The comments reaped a lot of laughter. One of the fishermen started to prepare sardines that were later served as the main dish. Nataša started a small chat with the cook and her colleague who was filming the event for the purpose of ethnographic film was explaining the women about the nature of their work. She promised to send a VHS copy of a movie for their families. After a while the food was served and before we started to eat the captain gave an explanation of how sardines are eaten properly; he told us to throw the bones into the sea if we didn't want to eat them; he told us about the fresh fish we were about to eat, adding that sardines in his opinion are the best fish as they have the real taste of the sea. Fishermen mixed with the group and the feast began. One of the women told Nataša how happy she was, because she didn't have to cook that day. After lunch the boat stopped for a swim. Fishermen lowered a ladder into the sea from the boat so the women could go in. Again there was a lot of laughter, shouting and joking. The lunch and the after-lunch swim were the two big events of the

excursion. In the late afternoon the boat slowly approached the homeport of Izola. Once again the fishermen helped women to disembark safely from the boat, chatting with them for a while still on the peer. Eventually they said goodbye and waved while walking away. We waited on the peer for fishermen to clean up the boat and afterwards went for a coffee together. Fishermen finally told us that such excursions were once they liked best. They remembered practically with horror how last week they had to take a group of drunken guys for a stag party on a similar excursion and ended up feeling utterly exhausted from it all...

### Fishing with fishermen

Fishing with fishermen excursions are, according to the fishermen themselves, emphatically a very distinctive form among all other forms of tourist products. Primarily, this product was not meant to be profitable as a job, but rather as an extra activity, which came in the first place from visitors' own interests. In other words, it aims to please the visitors, since, after all, as one of the fishermen had said, visitors '*live with fishermen for a day, which is something special; they become one of us for a day*'. Officially, in 2010 participation was practiced only in the company *Riba*, whereas other fishermen sometimes take occasional visitors on board to fish with them or just observe them working, but as the fishermen say, they do not do so to earn money, but to please the visitors. The adapted demonstration of fishing mostly involves school groups or group of friends while in the case of participatory fishing there are smaller groups of people (3-5 persons) who stay on board with fishermen the entire day as in the above story. Fishing with dragnet seems the most appropriate, if not the only appropriate way to enable such an experience for the visitors. In accordance with the explanation of our interlocutors, fishing with nets, for example, is unsuitable because there is a 12-hour period between setting and raising the nets, unless someone is using two boats, one for fishing and one for excursion. Fishing for mullet, which is generally one of the big events in the area, is also unsuitable since the timing for catching this type of fish is unpredictable – often it takes place during the night and frequently during wintertime. As will be seen from the following ethnographic story one can note certain less appealing aspects to these excursions (such as the intense smell of fish, the heat, the noisy engines, the smoke, pornographic calendars and long working hours...) that visitors need to contend with if they are to embark on such adventures. The "authentic hospitality" of the whole event is "so pristine" that it is sometimes "hard to digest", which may be the reason why such excursions were less popular in comparison with other trips and were developed recently in others, more official forms of tourist offer.



*In June 2010 we embarked on one such Fishing with fishermen excursion organized by the company Riba. One of Nataša's friends from Izola, a former school mate of the captain, organized the excursion. Together with their children, Nataša and her friend met the captain at Izola's peer at 5.30 in the morning. There were three other visitors sharing the Saturday morning with us, turned with their sleepy faces against the sea; a couple and another acquaintance of the captain. The sharp smell of dead fish lay heavily on our morning stomachs. The journey began as two twin fishing boats left the peer. Soon after we took off, we were invited for a morning coffee. There were four other fishermen in the saloon smoking and talking loudly. They had a survey book on the table, and were giving us figures of their previous catches. On the walls there were two pornographic calendars. Nataša sat her children so they were facing away from the photos. The small saloon was soon completely filled with smoke. Children wanted to go out. Running past the noisy machine room and escaping the smoke, they were able to inhale deeply the fresh morning sea air. The four children were happy to be together and they started to observe the sea while talking about the events of the previous day at school. It was a bright sunny day with the sea being calm. After a few hours fishermen finally found a spot to start fishing. Fishing was done with driftnets between the two boats. They lowered and pulled the nets several times over the next four hours. The first hour was quite exciting, as we watched a huge quantity of sardines being pulled onboard. At around 12.00, children started asking their mothers if they could go home. The summer heat was building up slowly. All visitors felt tired. Two people occupied a shade on the roof and the children asked the fishermen if they could play cards in their bedrooms. The fishermen agreed. After the catch was done, fishermen started to sort out the fish and to clean the nets. All the visitors just looked on, observing the process. Nobody asked to join in. Both outside and inside the boat the heat was incredible. Children became irritable. After the fish was packed on the ice, the fishermen asked the children to fill up a big round tub (for swimming), where the fish were jumping just a minute ago, with water, to which they happily agreed. The mothers exchanged a few glances and helplessly agreed to this odd/unusual suggestion. The smell of fish was anyway everywhere. It was one of the biggest catches of the year that they had made. Fishermen were pleased. They offered us a stew for the meal. Children refused to eat and continued with their game in the fish pool. It was*

*late afternoon when the boats Riba 1 and Riba 2 reached Izola. Visitors and fishermen were exhausted but satisfied. All of the visitors received a big plastic bag full of sardines and a big hug.*

Certain aspects of, exoticized version of authenticity, as Theodossopoulous described it (2013, 342) – the version of authenticity connected with Western philosophical tradition encompassing expectations of discovering authenticity of the untouched world and realising self among uncorrupted natives - can be used also for the interpretation of the ethnographic case attached to the Riba company that organised a day with the true fishermen. It seems like the fishermen played exactly on those cards – on “deep” expectations of their visitor to spend an ordinary day with the real fishermen although it appeared that guests did not shared exactly the same expectations as their hosts. In the above presented ethnographic story the fishermen did play their part of the role and they presented themselves to the guests as they are; they treated their guests “genuinely”, they acted as simple hosts and permitted their guests to enter their privacy as they for example invited children to play on their messy beds, showed cabins where they keep documentation, cabins where they eat and where they amuse themselves with watching pornographic calendars, expressing their sexual masculine intimacy to all their guests regardless of their age. They fished with pelagic trawl for industrial fishing and exposed their visitors to the noisy engine, they did not play Dalmatian or any other music on board that would stimulate romantic, nostalgic, adventurous or cheerful feelings during the navigation neither they occupy themselves with the extra comfort of their guests. After the long working day in the heat of the Mediterranean summer they offered to their guests to cool their heated bodies in a tub full of cold water. It was the same tub where sardines have swam just a minute ago for the last time - before they put them into ice. They shared their goulash with guests, while no special sea food – the one that is often offered on fish picnics - was offered to their visitors. Nevertheless the cohabitation and a joint meal can be interpreted as a gift in Mauss's terms (Mauss, 1996) bringing to the fore the symbolic knitting of social relations between hosts and guests. At parting the fishermen also symbolically split their catch of the fish with their visitors (each person got a bag of sardines) who were their colleagues for a day and they (almost) caught fish together. Instead of a hand shake or a formal regards, the closure of the event was marked with a hug on the peer. In this case the act of hospitality was in a way structurally transformative (fishermen and their guests did not share exactly the same expectations) and similar yet different excursions developed during the years in a more accommodated version of *Fishing holidays*.<sup>11</sup> Due to the fact that

11 Ribiške počitnice – Fishing holidays <http://ribiske-pocitnice.si/en/>





*On a trip with a fishing boat (Photo: Nataša Rogelja)*

the fishing boats of company *Riba* were cut up in November 2012 or sold away<sup>12</sup> as well as because of the fact that such excursions were not profitable nor were they “digestible” for a broader public, the additional types of “cool” and much more expensive educational excursions appeared. These novel approaches that are developing only recently (fishing holidays with fishermen, visit of a mariculture farm with farmers, educational excursions with biology experts etc.) must be further understood within the sustainable development discourse and the development of the type of project financing within EU<sup>13</sup>.

#### HOW AUTHENTIC IS HOSPITALITY ON FISHING BOATS?

While performing and advertising their activity fishermen are well aware of the symbolic context in which their work takes place. They are aware of the attractive-

ness of their profession in the context of sea imaginaries but also in the context of the “problematic history”. In their efforts to attract visitors, to offer them genuine hospitality and to stay themselves on the sea, they cooperate with various discourses and navigate in different directions according to given circumstances. On their web pages they do not discuss the fishing history, but they do refer to their family tradition<sup>14</sup>; they expect that the majority of their guests will be fascinated by staying on fishing boats listening to the music that resembles Yugoslav holidays, but they are also open to other possibilities with new boats aimed exclusively for passenger transportation, alternative food menus or “adjusted versions of authenticity”. Apart from the fact that fishermen are actively cooperating with various discourses and representations of the Slovene coast and the sea as well as with meanings attached to “traditional” professions, we can also notice a kind of “collective” enjoyment of these representations by both sides - hosts and guests

<sup>12</sup> The company is still active formally in business registers while the actual site is locked and closed firmly.

<sup>13</sup> These novel approaches are not the subject of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> Such symbolic aspects of fishing can be noticed also on tourist boats that are not fishing boats and where captains are not fishermen. We noticed that they also stress in their advertisements certain aspects of their connection with fishing in order to attract more visitors (they for example highlight the fact that the boat was once used for fishing or they stress that their crew members are coming from a fishing families etc.) Such example is the boat *Meja* [Border] aimed exclusively for passenger transportation.

that gives their hospitality a special character. In their relation with mine-workers they would express their solidarity, while in relation to peasant-women, they would offer them their masculinity. In both cases, however, they act from within the frame of “real fishermen” developing their own approach of “authentic hospitality”. These approaches build on previous historical experiences, the intertwining of different discourses found in the area where they perform their activity (the “unspoken history” tourist imaginaries of the sea, notions of fishing as “traditional” and “authentic” maritime occupation) and on their ability to enjoy collectively the situation of fishing tourism. Participation in imaginaries was even more evident among those fishermen who were the most critical towards the connection between fishing and tourism and who proposed their alternative solutions in which fishermen would still continue to be fishermen instead of being transformed into the tourist worker, and consequently to “babysitters”. Such examples actually indicate both sides of the story; the compatibility between tourist imaginary and everyday life along the coast but also an incompatibility between them. As Selwyn contends, apart from introducing capitalist relations of production on the coast, tourism also introduces a ‘parallel reality’ – a kind of aesthetification of the landscape that is, following Selwyn, increasingly unrelated to the uses to which it is put (Selwyn, 2004, 57). Even though we agree with this statement, our ethnographic case reveals the possibility of relatedness and compatibility between the everyday aspects of life along the coast and tourist imaginaries. The idea of a “proper” connection between fishing and tourism, as stressed by several of our interlocutors, tries to combine the aesthetification of the landscape with everyday uses. Within this process different aspects of authenticity merge and leave the binary framework far behind. As such - as merged in the “bag of everyday use”, they in a way relieve anthropology of its dilemmas about the use of authenticity and, referring back to the initial question “How authentic is hospitality

on fishing boats?”, expose it as unimportant and redundant. The true nature of the “authentic hospitality” on fishing boats lies in the notion of innovation. Innovations develop in response to many different impulses such as tourist industry, national narratives, social and economic crises or simply in response to various changes that can break the everyday routine or personal beliefs. They act through many different agents and are expressed in various forms. As Theodossopolus pointed out, in local “authentic” adaptations, authenticity can be understood as agency and rhetorical flexibility. Innovation, attached to the here presented ethnographic case, is closely connected to authenticity yet it also elaborates more on other aspects such as emotions and self-image while leaving out essentialist meanings of traditional Slovene fishing, the original fishing culture, etc. Fishermen’s innovative approach lies precisely in the fact that they avoid the “burden” of local history (connected with the exodus of Italian speaking inhabitants after the 2<sup>nd</sup> WW or with nationalistic narratives) focusing more on present-day relations between hosts and guests. If they were to engage in those meanings of the original tradition they would have to incorporate historical aspects attached to heritage and tradition. Instead they put stress on the actual activities (fishing, aquaculture and shellfish farming, passenger transportation, restaurant services, providing fresh and healthy Mediterranean food...) and build their hospitality on “genuine” relations with their visitors as Slovene fishermen who do this mainly in order to survive and in some cases even to share enjoyment with their guests. Instead of fishing for heritage, as Jane Nadel-Klein describes Scottish fishermen in her book *Fishing for Heritage* (2003), Slovene fishermen took almost the opposite direction and chose to ignore their heritage. As they do not claim their right to posterity on the basis of the original Slovene fishing, they are rather strongly rooted in the present circumstances as they fish for tourists, for new ideas, and for discourses that help them contrive and imagine new hospitable activities.

## DOBRODOŠLI V IZOLI! PONUDBA »AVTENTIČNEGA GOSTOLJUBJA« NA RIBIŠKIH BARKAH

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### POVZETEK

Članek sledi različne teoretične diskusije vezane na avtentičnost in gostoljubje, pri tem pa se ne spušča v teoretiziranje konceptov, kakor tudi ne v problematiziranje uporabe avtentičnosti v antropoloških analizah. Pričujoči tekst ima zmernejše in bolj osredotočene cilje, ki skušajo prikazati rabe avtentičnosti na današnji slovenski obali tako v turističnem diskurzu, kot tudi v vsakdanjem govoru in ob tem pokazati na aktivno vlogo posameznikov v procesu gostoljubja pri čemer so uporabljeni podatki pridobljeni z metodo opazovanja z udeležbo in z intervjuji. V središču zanimanja bo uporaba »avtentičnega gostoljubja« v povezavi z ribiškim turizmom, ki se je razvil zavoljo ekonomskih in drugih problemov v okviru slovenskega morskega ribiškega sektorja. Ob tem si bomo zastavili vprašanje: Kako avtentično je gostoljubje na ribiških barkah? Osrednja ugotovitev članka je, da lahko različna razumevanja »avtentičnega gostoljubja« vezanega na ribiški turizem ob Slovenski obali interpretiramo kot inovacijo, ki presega binarni okvir napetosti med avtentičnostjo in neavtentičnostjo. Ugotovitev bomo prikazali na primeru ribiškega turizma v enem izmed današnjih Slovenskih obalnih mest Izoli, kjer je ribištvo od nekdaj bila ena prvih in najpomembnejših lokalnih dejavnosti.

**Ključne besede:** ribiški turizem, avtentičnost, gostoljubje, Izola, Slovenska obala



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