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Tourism and coastal & maritime cultural heritage: a dual relation

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Abstract

Coastal and Maritime Cultural Heritage (CMCH) is an important asset in coastal areas. However, this heritage has been exposed to several environmental and human-created threats. This paper presents three European coastal regions with relevant CMCH and important tourism destinations: Ria de Aveiro (Portugal), the Small Isles (Scotland, UK) and Marsaxlokk (Malta). The paper draws attention to the challenges to CMCH they face, the dynamics between tourism and CMCH and provides recommendations for sustainable tourism exploitation of CMCH. A comparative case-study approach was undertaken, based on 41 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Findings unveil that, despite the different demographics, socioeconomics and importance of tourism in each location, CMCH is seen as an important element to consider as tourism destination. Stakeholders identified economic, sociocultural and environmental dynamics between tourism and CMCH with positive and negative impacts on the regions. This study provides guidelines and recommendations that can be used as a reference to define a joint policy response for sustainable exploitation of CMCH in a tourism context.

Keywords

Intangible heritage; threats; sustainable tourism; Portugal; Scotland; Malta

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage is a significant resource in tourist destinations, for the desire to discover sites "*of cultural and natural significance has existed at least since the time of Greek antiquity as reflected by the Hellenistic world's invention of the Seven Wonders of the World" (NWHO 1999, p.1).* Heritage is a key determinant of place identity (Tuan, 2001; Relph, 1976) and is considered a relevant subject in spatial management processes (Khakzad et al., 2015; Tengberg, 2012; Urquhart, 2013). Visitors, residents, entrepreneurs, and local government officials, all recognize the unique cultural, historical and natural heritage of each region as a crucial element of its reinvention and protection (Katelieva et al., 2020). Visitors are attracted to regions that hold unique cultural heritage, providing competitive advantages to these locations (Pérez Guilarte and González, 2018; Lak et al.,2020).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has contributed to the evolution of the term "cultural heritage" (CH) over the last few decades,

initially defining CH as including only material aspects/elements (e.g. monuments, buildings, tools), but over time the concept evolved to also include intangible aspects (e.g. practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills). The relevance of intangible aspects is emphasized by The Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), which drew attention to the importance of protecting and preserving this heritage (Ounanian et al., 2021).

Such evolution is also highlighted by Gravari-Barbas (2014), who questions the adoption of rigid categories, such as those defined by UNESCO's major conventions (i.e. on World Heritage in 1972 and Intangible Heritage in 2003), and understands heritage as a transversal issue that includes both natural and cultural heritage, besides tangible and intangible aspects. Gravari-Barbas is also of the view that this change should be understood as a shift from valuing an object´s function into considering cultural heritage as an agent and process approach that incorporates social, cultural and environmental aspects. Several joint factors influenced the current conception and management of CH, such as globalization, lifestyle transformation, climate change risks, and technological progress, among others, that contribute to a dynamic and continuous process of heritage reinterpretation by key heritage stakeholders (Gravari-Barbas, 2014, 2020).

In coastal areas, where the majority of tourism activities take place, cultural heritage is strongly associated with maritime and coastal uses, activities and traditions. According to Ounanian et al. (2021), the past, the present and the imagined future regarding the activities and interactions taking place within coastal and marine (geographical or cultural) areas are framed as coastal and maritime cultural heritage (CMCH). In coastal and marine contexts natural and cultural heritage are often indissociable, being significant components of place identity, as coastal communities feel a sense of belonging, built on these particular landscapes and seascapes, with their traditions, stories and cultural practices (Delaney, 2020).

Heritage tourism is relevant as it promotes heritage protection, as well as a sense of pride and solidarity in communities, and is a key resource to develop local economies (Chen and Chen, 2010; Timothy, 2011). However, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has recently alerted that tourism could be both a promoter of heritage conservation as well as have negative impacts on cultural heritage if poorly managed (UNWTO, 2018). While there is evidence of the potential of marine and coastal

heritage of tourism development in specific locations, and the possible threats this brings, international comparative analyses are lacking. Moreover, identifying common threats and lessons would be highly valuable in the European context where a joint policy response would be possible.

This paper aims to examine the dynamic relation between tourism and CMCH risks in different European coastal destinations. For this purpose, a comparative case study approach was carried out in three European coastal regions: Ria de Aveiro (Portugal); the Small Isles (Scotland) and Marsaxlokk (Malta). The paper explores the following questions: How are synergies and threats between tourism and CMCH impacting the regions? What are the main opportunities and recommendations for sustainable exploitation of CMCH in a tourism context?

2. Opportunities and threats of tourism to CMCH

The academic literature has always recognised the dual relation between tourism and cultural heritage. Gravari-Barbas (2018, p.1) identified tourism as "a heritage producing machine", asserting that they influence and co-produce each other in a "virtuous or vicious cycle". Tourism development depends on heritage resources, raising their value and often attracting resources towards conservation (Brooks, 2001). Heritage tourism is regarded as a strategy in regional development that can help to stimulate declining regional economies by protecting existing jobs and creating new employment opportunities (Boyne et al., 2003). Tourism could help to diversify coastal economies and promote the development of alternative livelihood opportunities through innovative synergies between traditional sectors and tourism (Henderson, 2009, Ukaegbu et al., 2020). Heritage-based tourism is seen, by many coastal destinations, as an option to renew urban spaces, to diversify the economy, and to improve revenue and living standards (Lak et al., 2020). Authors have recognised the synergies between tourism and cultural heritage, wherein tourism drives economic growth, while culture allows for differentiating local and regional identities (Ashworth 2000; Garrod and Fyall 2000; UNWTO, 2018). Tourism is also seen as having the potential to strengthen identities and regenerate local heritage, promoting appreciation and conservation of local products, festivals or culinary traditions (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Katelieva et al. (2020) emphasize the positive impact of intangible cultural heritage on the construction of

identities and destination images and in the interaction of local communities with tourists, as visitors increase their interest in the local culture and in the interpretation of nature.

There is growing interest in such intangible and non-commodified forms of cultural heritage tourism. Timothy (2018) argues that stereotyped heritage is giving way to more accurate and diverse representations of the past in tourism narratives as demand expands beyond the normative heritage trope, in particular leaning towards vernacular heritage, intangible heritage and more recent heritage. Culturally-motivated tourists place value on the concepts of authenticity (Dominguez-Quintero et al., 2020; Pafi et al., 2020), and originality (Xie et al., 2020). Intangible cultural heritage, in particular, represents strong cultural authenticity and can be a unique selling point in the competitive tourism industry (Kim et al., 2019), providing a means for community heritage continuity and preservation of threatened cultural tradition (Ounanian et al.,2021). Even if there is no consensus regarding the concept of authenticity among researchers, some authors state that tourist satisfaction increases with what perceptions of authenticity when experiencing heritage (Chhabra et al., 2003; Ramkissoon and Usysal, 2018).

On the other hand, authors have questioned if tourism supports and contributes to cultural heritage protection, as it can have negative impacts when not managed sustainably (Peters 1999; García-Hernández et al., 2017). Heritage tourism concentrates on historically-relevant places where visitor influx overlaps with the activities of local workers and residents, resulting in tourism being viewed as problematic and stimulating various forms of resistance from groups of residents (Devine, 2016; García-Hernández et al., 2017). Unsustainable tourism, characterised by excessive visitors and poor management, risks damaging local cultural resources (Brooks, 2001; Coccossis, 2009; Vecco and Caust, 2019), and large numbers of visitors commonly result in deterioration of the social fabric of heritage sites (Comer and Willems, 2012; Thuestad et al., 2015; Vecco and Caust, 2019). While the drive to capitalise on both tangible and intangible heritage through tourism brings vital investment to often peripheral and disadvantaged communities, catering to tourist interests emphasises the exchange value of cultural heritage in ways that host communities fail to recognise or appreciate (Devine, 2016; Vecco and Caust, 2019). Tourism has been criticised for transforming collective cultural heritage into commodities for development and commercialisation by private enterprises (Berg 2017; Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Kim and Ellis, 2015), taking it out of the hands of local

communities. For example, tourism contributes to rising real estate prices and processes of gentrification, leading to the loss of identity (Khakzad and Griffith, 2016).

Cultural heritage, when produced and commodified for tourism, is often based on stereotypes of what is considered or desired to be authentic (Devine, 2016). The growing number of experiential, cultural and heritage 'consumers' has influenced 'producers' into shorthand, reductive and at times banal and inauthentic representations of identity, that threaten the integrity of local cultural heritage. Examples include rural food products packaged by marketers for lifestyle consumption, which has been shown to put culinary heritage at risk (Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2009), and cultural performances packaged to meet for the tourist gaze (Moosa, 2016) through 'traditional-style culture' as opposed to 'traditional culture' (Su, 2018). These cases exemplify insufficient nurturing of identity in the tourist brand for it to be socially inclusive and culturally representative, risking the loss of the original cultural heritage and the unique appeal of individual places. In other words, commodification can pose a risk by blocking heritage reinvention and protection (UNWTO, 2012).

The paradoxical relationship between tourism and cultural heritage makes tourism one of the greatest threats to heritage, and consequently to heritage tourism itself (Vecco and Caust, 2019). Cultural heritage has been claimed to be non-renewable and irreplaceable (Haugen and Mattsson, 2011). While it has an inestimable value for local coastal communities and is an important tourism asset in coastal areas, it is also increasingly at risk due to coastal development and environmental changes, including sea level rise, coastal erosion and pollution (Khakzad et al., 2015). CMCH is often a non-classified heritage, meaning it is without official designation and the prominence and protection that typically accompanies this; it is, therefore, more vulnerable to anthropogenic and environmental impacts. Such threats to heritage assets can be significant, especially in vulnerable coastal locations, placing CMCH at risk of damage or complete loss, both through sudden events and gradual deterioration from cumulative processes (Michalski and Pedersoli, 2016; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2016). This heritage often includes cultural and natural features that are interdependent; however cultural and natural heritage are not analysed as a whole in policies, but separately. European countries have similar protection measures to protect natural heritage, whilst this approach was not always been adopted for cultural heritage (Kortekaas, 2017). In addition, voluntary experiences regarding Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) processes often ignore or only minorly

consider the integration of cultural heritage, a situation that is more evident in the northern countries. However, some Southern European countries, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal, have tried to integrate cultural heritage into coastal management processes (Khakzad et al., 2015).

Coastal development, driven by uses such as tourism, second homes, retirement villages and waterfront redevelopment projects, can result in the removal of fixed assets and the displacement of indigenous communities and their cultural practices and memories, altering the character of local heritage (Murtagh et al., 2019). Any major shifts in the industry, stimulated, for example, by a decline in the fishing industry or rise in energy or tourism development, can project a different set of values on a place and disenfranchise communities from their heritage as traditional maritime industries are marginalised (Murtagh et al., 2019). Globalization and the resulting standardisation of waterfronts and coastal resorts undermine local cultural heritage and impact the uniqueness of coastal settlements (Ounanian et al., 2021). There can also be significant changes to both geographical space and cultural aspects, with increasing threats to traditions, the ways of life and cultures of people connected to the sea (Dagmara, 2019).

The growing impacts of climate change pose urgent environmental challenges, from physical effects on infrastructure and resources to socioeconomic impacts, although such effects differ between regions and therefore require tailored planning at regional or even local levels (Haugen and Mattsson, 2011). Climate change threats faced by coastal cultural heritage include sea-level rises, increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, melting permafrost, desertification, altered patterns of precipitation and changes in humidity (UNESCO et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2016). The consequences of these threats may be severe for both heritage and heritage-based tourism (Hall et al., 2016) as sites and structures are lost or damaged. Sea-level rise has the potential to submerge 136 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in coastal areas by 2100 (Perez-Alvaro, 2016), in addition to aggravating negative coastal processes that damage or deteriorate structures (Murphy et al., 2009). Meanwhile, changes to atmospheric moisture and temperature, as well as wet-dry and freeze-thaw cycles are also accelerating degradation (Murphy et al., 2009). Mass tourism can exacerbate environmental damage by putting additional visitor pressures on sensitive ecosystems and heritage assets. There is a need for heritage and tourism to adapt to changes and build resilience within the broader context of sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

Furthermore, the effects of climate change on intangible heritage are frequently overlooked but are claimed to have wide-ranging impacts on social interactions, cultural identity and community demographics, causing heritage to lose value and relevance (Henry and Jeffrey, 2008; Cassar, 2009). Some of the most extreme effects will be observed in small island states, some of which are predicted to become uninhabitable, with the loss of both tangible and intangible culture as land and structures are submerged and people relocate. Climate change impacts show a particularly strong interplay between natural and cultural heritage and between tangible and intangible cultural heritage in coastal landscapes. Coastal and maritime cultural heritage, however, is often not included in coastal policies or plans (Khazkzad et al., 2015; Ounanian et al., 2021). Perez-Alvaro (2016) proposes the qualification of cultural heritage as a natural resource as a means for its preservation, with a cooperative partnership in management and common measures taken against threats.

3. Methodology

3.1. Case study regions

This paper focuses on three European coastal regions (Figure 1) with different spatial scales and demographic contexts (Table 1). Ria de Aveiro (Portugal) integrates four coastal municipalities connected by a coastal lagoon, the Small Isles (Scotland, UK) comprises four islands situated just off the west coast and forming part of the larger archipelago of the Inner Hebrides, and Marsaxlokk (Malta) is a fishing village.

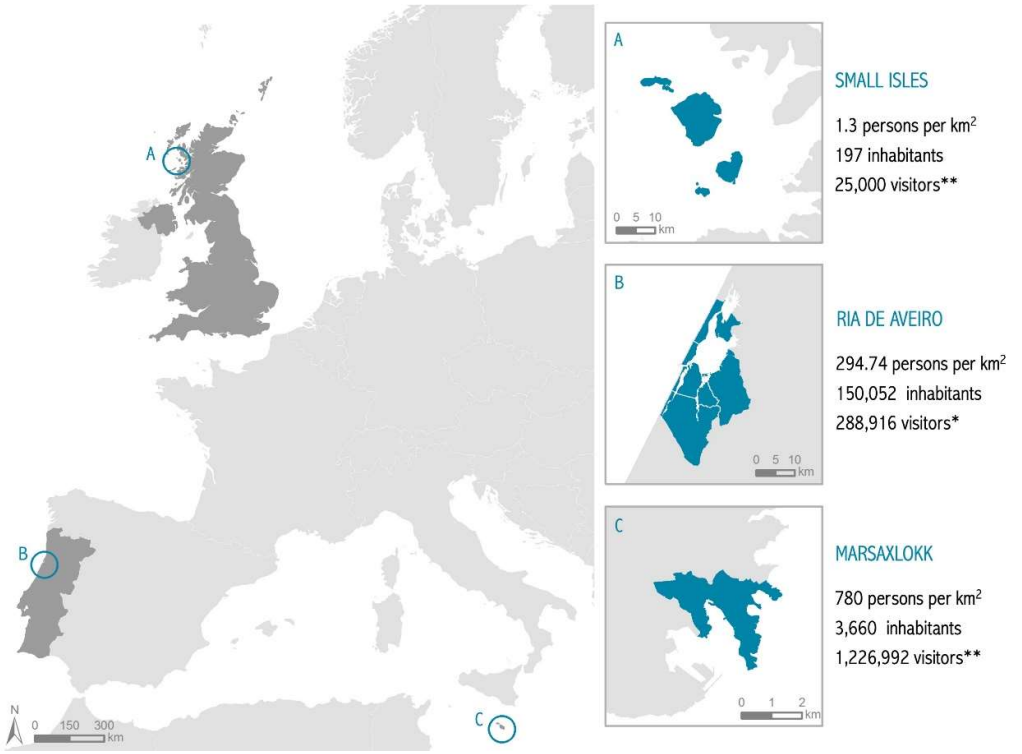

Figure 1. Case-regions location
Source: authors
*overnight visitors, ** same-day and overnight visitors

In all the three study regions, cultural heritage is strongly influenced by the proximity of the sea and, in the particular case of Ria de Aveiro, by the presence of a coastal lagoon. In the Ria de Aveiro region there is a long tradition of fishing, artisanal salt production, seaweed gathering and shipbuilding, among others, which helped to shape the socioeconomic development of the region and still defines its identity, even though some of these activities have already disappeared. Marsaxlokk is a fishing village in which traditional practices relating to fishing have been passed down for generations (Markwick, 1999). These activities are part of people's daily lives, and visible around the waterfront area, including the largest fleet of traditional fishing boats in Malta. The Small Isles – the islands of Canna, Muck, Eigg and Rum – host both tangible and intangible evidence of a rich historical past, Canna once a cultural and literary hub for example, while Eigg has a rich crofting history (Small Isles, nd). Numerous historical monuments and buildings litter the landscapes across the islands, while offshore lie a large number of wrecks (National Museums Scotland, nd).

These case regions are attractive tourism destinations, some of which rely heavily on CMCH exploitation for tourism activities, such as visiting traditional saltpans, colourful traditional buildings/houses, tours in traditional colourful boats, seafood gastronomy and natural heritage experiences. Although tourism has been increasing in all the study regions, they are at different stages of tourism development. While Marsaxlokk is a well-established tourism area, Ria de Aveiro and the Small Isles are emerging destinations. After the 2000s, Marsaxlokk experienced an impressive influx of international tourists from cruises and mass tourism because of a promotional campaign from the tourism authority to brand Marsaxlokk as the only operational fishing village left in Malta (Losco, 2015). In 2019, 1,226,992 visitors came to Marsaxlokk, which means that 45% of the tourists who came to Malta visited Marsaxlokk (Live News Malta, 2020). Ria de Aveiro felt an increase in tourism over the last seven years (INE, 2019), mainly due to boat tours and the proximity to Porto city. In 2019, there were 288,916 overnight visitors in the region, which represents an increase of 10% - a higher rate than the national increase (approximately 7%). This increase was not equally distributed in the region; Aveiro (i.e. district capital) and Ílhavo municipalities had a higher rate mainly due to CMCH of both municipalities and beaches in Ílhavo municipality (INE, 2019). In the Small Isles, the tourism sector has been embraced to varying degrees. Eigg is the most notable, enticing visitors with a range of accommodation and activity options. The tourism infrastructure is more limited on the other islands, but new forays into infrastructure development speak of the islands' desire to capitalise on their latent potential as a tourism destination.

The case studies' diversity regarding tourism development, and demographic, spatial, and economic contexts allow the analysis of the similarities and differences in the dynamics between tourism and CMCH perceived by stakeholders, as well as in the proposed guidelines to overcome the identified challenges (see table 1 for additional information).

Table 1. Case-regions key features

	Ria de Aveiro, Portugal	The Small Isles, Scotland	Marsaxlokk, Malta
Nature conservation legislative designation*	Natura 2000: Special Protected Area, Site of Community Importance. Natural Reserve (Dunas S. Jacinto)	Special Area of Conservation. National Scenic Area. Nature Conservation Marine Protected	Natura 2000; Site of Community Importance.; Special area of conservation

		Area. National Nature Reserve. Special Protection Area	
Key challenges	Need to balance cultural heritage with contemporary society needs; significant changes suffered in terms of visitor pressures; geographical imbalance of tourist numbers.	Limited infrastructure; remoteness; limited links to mainland - especially in winter; need to balance new development and existing island life	Tourism saturation, seasonality, and uncontrolled development of hospitality services. The local community is becoming voiceless and CMCH commodified.

Source: authors, based on Nature 2000 Network Viewer, 2021
* Nature conservation status variously covering all or part of the Small Isles

3.2. Research approach

The research approach comprised semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in order to assess their perceptions on CMCH and its relationship with tourism. Stakeholders were selected through purposive sampling, based on their relationship with CMCH, either because they are affected by its management and exploitation or because of their expertise. In each case study region key stakeholders of diverse types were selected, involved either in the management, exploitation or research of, or decisions affecting CMCH. The sample included 41 stakeholders, organized into three main categories: 1) decision-makers, including policy makers and planners (e.g. national, regional and local government advisory and statutory agencies with heritage remits); 2) industry, including businesses and other actors exploiting CH (e.g. bodies which promote and exploit the cultural heritage of an area, and including national and regional tourism organisations, port and harbour bodies, tourism businesses, business associations and experience providers who focus on heritage); 3) interest groups, including individuals/groups with a specific interest in cultural and natural heritage (e.g. heritage NGOs, organisations involved with cultural heritage and living heritage activities, researchers) and citizens and local communities (e.g. community groups, civil movements) (table 2) (case region detailed information available as supplementary material). Individual citizens were reached through existing networks such as the community groups.

It was ensured that each main category of stakeholders was represented in each region, and that decision-makers from multiple scales participated in the research (see Table 2). Individual citizens were reached through existing networks such as the community groups and CMCH interest groups. In the Small Isles, at least one stakeholder representing a community group from each island was interviewed (two in the case of Canna), in Ria de Aveiro the citizens and local communities were represented by three civil movements that defend and protect the region's CMCH, and in Marsaxlokk insights into the case were provided by two community representatives with an interest in CMCH, two local researchers, and two associations that aim to protect and highlight CMCH in Malta. Interviewees' identities were protected through coding.

Table 2. Case-regions interviews data

Typology of stakeholders		**No. of interviews**		
Main category	**Subcategory**	**Ria de Aveiro, Portugal**	**The Small Isles, Scotland**	**Marsaxlokk, Malta**
Decision makers	Policy makers and planners	2	4	1
Industry	Businesses and other actors exploiting CH	6	1	2
Interest groups	Individuals/groups with specific interest in cultural and natural heritage	11	5	6
	Citizens and local communities	3	5	2
Total		22	10	9

Although the number of interviewees in Marsaxlokk and Small Isles was limited, it was possible to collect information from a range of key stakeholders. These are small areas with a restricted population so the number of interviews represents the stakeholders of interest in these two locations.

The interviews were carried out face-to-face in Ria de Aveiro and by skype/zoom calls in the other case studies, between May 2019 and July 2020. Each stakeholder was individually interviewed for approximately one hour and recorded. They had the opportunity to articulate their perspectives regarding the relationship between CMCH

threats and potentialities for tourism purposes, guided by a set of semi-structured and open-ended questions (interview guide available as supplementary material).

The interviews were transcribed and the data analysed by employing a thematic analysis approach, i.e. the data were summarized and organized by themes using a deductive approach (Braun and Clark, 2006). Based on the analysis, two themes were defined: 1) dynamic relationships between tourism and CMCH; 2) recommendations for sustainable exploitation of CMCH in a tourism context.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1. Tourism and CMCH dynamics

During the interviews, the duality between tourism and CMCH was discussed in the three case study regions. Even though they have distinct demographic, spatial, economic and tourism contexts, interviewees from all study regions stated that tourism is both a threat and an opportunity to promote and safeguard CMCH.

In the Maltese and Portuguese case regions there is a discrepancy between the CMCH considered relevant by interviewees and the CMCH that has a formal, national or international heritage protection status, which in some case regions is minimal and only concerns certain buildings. The limited representation of CMCH in formal classified heritage may increase their exposure to environmental and human-caused threats and jeopardize its preservation.

In all case regions, stakeholders identified positive economic impacts of tourism activity for business and local development, as argued by Boyne et. al. (2003). They also recognised tangible and intangible threats to CMCH, associated with poor management of tourist flows, or other tourism pressures.

The majority of interviewees in the Ria de Aveiro region view tourism as an opportunity to value local heritage, which otherwise would probably be lost. This is the case of ‘moliceiros’ (the traditional boats) which almost disappeared from the lagoon before they started being used for tourism purposes. Interviewees from Marsaxlokk meanwhile see tourism as a key development opportunity as well as a way to connect the community with visitors. At the same time, case-regions with greater tourism pressures also referred to negative impacts of tourism activity, for example, environmental threats to the

Marsaxlokk shoreline and Aveiro lagoon. Small Isles´s stakeholders recognise that tourism can pose threats to community coherence and well-being, yet the islands are generally quite undeveloped tourism-wise and therefore CMCH is viewed more positively as an opportunity for sustainable exploitation. One Small Isles community representative did caution that it is important not to become complacent and be too reliant on the tourism industry, recognising that efforts had been made recently to diversify economically, through the establishment of new food and drink producers that draw upon the islands' natural and cultural resources.

In Ria de Aveiro and Marsaxlokk, interviewees from all stakeholder categories considered that tourism can be a threat due to the ways in which CMCH is promoted. In Ria de Aveiro, interest groups, such as researchers, civil movements, local cultural associations, and decision-makers (i.e. local authorities), are worried about tourism pressures affecting CMCH. Interest groups referred to the necessity of implementing regulations and sustainable management practices to preserve CMCH and its identity, as well as initiatives to promote locals' pride to help preserve CMCH, whilst decision makers mentioned that for tourism to continue being an opportunity it is necessary to control pressures on CMCH in the peak season by having alternative routes. The situation is more serious in Marsaxlokk where even stakeholders playing different roles commonly agree that commodification is threatening CMCH. Beyond decision-makers and interest groups, the tourism industry is critical to the way Marsaxlokk is promoted, being simplified to eating fish and wandering around, instead of using its potential to develop the place for cultural tourism, based on its fishing culture.

During the interviews, stakeholders identified several dynamics between tourism and CMCH, either affecting CMCH positively or negatively, organised into three categories: economic, social and cultural, and environmental.

Economic

Interviewees from all three case regions and stakeholder types recognised the positive economic effects of tourism in local businesses. It was a common opinion that the local CMCH is attractive and unique, positively contributing to tourism-related activities (See also Pérez Guilarte and González, 2018; Lak et al., 2020), namely the rapid growth of short-term accommodation, the creation of new restaurants and souvenir shops both in Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro, and the increasing number of cultural and natural

experiences offered in the Small Isles. Although it is recognised in all three study areas, it was given more emphasis by the tourism industry in both Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro case regions and by interest groups, such as community members and decision-makers, in the Small Isles.

Both the Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro case regions benefit from tours in traditional boats, that in Marsaxlokk are highly dependent on the imagery of traditional fishing communities that the tourism sector has been able to portray. Tourism industry members emphasized that the growth of tourism activity in the municipality of Aveiro, mainly due to boat trips, has attracted not only day visitors coming from nearby Porto but also overnight stays. This has increased the average stay in the city as well as tourists' loyalty.

On the Small Isles interest groups, such as community members, considered that sympathetic exploitation of cultural heritage could encourage visitors to 'dwell' in more peripheral communities, as a popular fascination with the islands' pasts, coupled with the opportunities these communities offer for an escape from urban inhabitants' often hectic lives, offers a 'rounded experience of a place'; the limited infrastructure on and between the islands encourages longer stays with less travel, and more time to enjoy island life.

The importance of CMCH to tourism was acknowledged by a Maltese cultural manager:

> "*I believe that CMCH is largely responsible for the tourism in the area. People come to witness typical Maltese fishing villages, sample the local cuisine and feel like they are part of the community even just for a few hours*."

Many Small Isles inhabitants recognise that the community can hugely benefit from tourist spending. One policymaker elucidated:

> *"if these islands need and want to survive and be sustainable, in addition to population they need to attract people with funds, with money, effectively, to spend it in these islands either doing activities or buying products or services."*

Potential threats to coastal cultural heritage associated with tourism development and visitor pressures (Vallega, 2003) are perceived to be higher by Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro stakeholders. Marsaxlokk is the case region where tourism pressures are highest, with the shoreline being used by the tourism industry to develop more hospitality and real estate activities that affect the village´s image and character. The Sunday market, for instance, receives 40,000 visitors on average, which increasingly adds pressure to the

locals' experience of their public spaces, as emphasized by the local council representative. In Ria de Aveiro, the pressure is mostly felt in the city of Aveiro during the peak season, where tourism industry representatives and interest groups, such as researchers and civil movements, emphasized the risk of pollution to the urban canals with impacts on Ria de Aveiro's coastal lagoon ecosystem. Decision-makers, meanwhile, pointed out an imbalance between urban and coastal municipalities due to poor accessibility, resulting in few opportunities for tourism development.

On Small Isles community members recognised that tourism can be a 'double-edged sword', as there can be summer days when ferries, cruise ships and smaller vessels can disgorge hundreds of people onto the islands, even if it was considered, at this stage, that the island's infrastructure could cope. There were mixed feelings on the islanders' ability to weather threats to their authenticity from mass tourism. On Canna, for example, it was felt that the islanders had a strong identity, which could resist the vicissitudes of visitor impacts. Decision-makers, however, felt that sudden influxes of visitors could threaten why visitors go there in the first place: their setting as a place for quiet enjoyment and appreciation of its natural and cultural values.

Social and cultural

The influence of tourism in transforming CMCH is another important dynamic raised by interviewees. As stated by Harrison (2013), tourism can rejuvenate or commodify CMCH as part of a heritagisation process, transforming the meanings or intangible heritage of CMCH elements. In Ria de Aveiro, some tourism industry interviewees and interest groups, such as researchers and local cultural associations, considered that tourism can complement traditional activities, such as boat building, shellfish harvesting and traditional fishing, since it acknowledges of cultural heritage. As one representative from a local cultural association stated:

> "*without this natural and cultural heritage, the city would no longer be attractive*".

Therefore, tourism is considered to contribute to CMCH maintenance and revitalization. Both tourism industry members and interest groups referred to the importance of tourism to traditional saltpans and artisanal salt production, highlighting that without tourism dynamics these activities would probably have disappeared. On the other hand, interest groups were concerned about the risk of decharacterisation of traditional saltpans, driven

by commoditisation into new commercialised uses (Halewood and Hannam, 2001), such as hypersaline water and mud baths.

Marsaxlokk decision-makers referred to its rapid development and importance as a tourism attraction to motivate new policies to preserve the waterfront, whereas in Ria de Aveiro decision-makers highlighted new regulations for boating activity in the urban canals, with specific conditions regarding traditional boats as cultural heritage. A degree of caution was expressed on the Small Isles about achieving the right balance between cultural exploitation, and its economic opportunities, and protecting the integrity of their culture and heritage. Decision-makers and community members argued that new developments having to take into account and be sensitive to both the needs of visitors and the social fabric and cultural identity of the local community, maximising positive consequences while negating local impacts.

Threats to the relevance or continuity of CMCH through ignorance or disassociation were also important concerns in all case studies, related to either tangible or intangible heritage, as mentioned by a Portuguese industry interviewee:

> *"there is an ignorance in the sense that even people who have some will [power], do not have enough consolidated knowledge, which combined with the cycles [political], with a determined time frame] makes them opt for turnkey solutions. There is a lack of strategic vision"*.

Both in Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro, interest groups are concerned regarding the traditional boat building industry. In Marsaxlokk, local cultural associations and community groups pointed to the replacement of wood by fibreglass on the boats, whereas in Ria de Aveiro some alterations were made to the original architecture, as identified by researchers and local cultural associations. For example, the bow is cut so that 'moliceiros' could pass through the urban canal-bridges; they no longer sail and use engines for navigating inside the narrow urban canals.

Yet in Marsaxlokk tourism also influences CMCH more controversially, transforming the characteristic shoreline of fishing houses into a boulevard of restaurants and guest houses and threatening the loss of villages´ image and character due to the readaptation of CMCH to new uses (Garcia-Hernandez et al., 2017; Berg, 2017). In that sense, all interviewees, whatever stakeholder type, acknowledge the influence of tourism in transforming the uses and meanings of CMCH's tangible elements, correlating with Harrison´s (2013) findings

that regions cannot always find the right balance for how tourism rejuvenates or commodifies the heritage as part of a heritagisation process.

Threats to intangible heritage were also raised in all case studies. In Ria de Aveiro the loss or distortion of information during boat trips was mentioned by several representatives of interest groups (i.e. researchers and museum technicians), due to being focused on mass tourism, whereas in the Small Isles the erosion of indigenous language remains a concern: as one policymaker representative suggested:

> "*so much knowledge about our heritage is contained in the Gaelic language, and with this declining we risk losing this knowledge*".

Likewise, the loss of traditional wisdom means that there is a genuine risk of losing our understanding of people's perceptions of place identity (Delaney, 2020) and 'their place in the world'.

In Marsaxlokk, culinary heritage has been watered-down to meet growing tourist demand. The village is being transformed from a fishing village to a place to eat fish, with extensive use of tangible heritage elements such as fish or fishermen to portray Marsaxlokk as the place to eat fresh fish. It brings new meanings and practices around fish consumption according to the tourist's taste. This contrasts with the situation on the Small Isle of Eigg, where local produce - meat, beer and seaweed for example - is just beginning to form part of the tourism experience; local products' potential value, as a taste of island life, is widely acknowledged (Everett and Aitchison, 2008).

In the short term, tourism influences and transforms most of the tangible CMCH elements and introduces new elements used to represent CMCH. At the same time, the transformation of tangible heritage influences its meanings and uses, which might in the long run transform the core living-heritage of Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro, as mentioned by diverse interviewees in both regions

Environmental

In all case regions interviewees recognised important interactions between the environment, CMCH and tourism. In Ria de Aveiro, there have been measures to minimise the effect of more boats circulating in the lagoon for visitor purposes. Both tourism industry representatives and interest groups, from civil movements and researchers, mentioned the implementation of electric engines in traditional boats in the

near future as a means to contribute to a greener strategy for the lagoon. Hydrodynamic changes were also said to potentially cause negative impacts on CMCH, as strong currents inside the lagoon and the waves caused by boat movements are eroding the saltpan walls, tourism pressures exacerbating natural erosional processes (Coccossis, 2009). There are high and continuous maintenance costs associated with the reconstruction of walls, constraining new saltpan investments for tourism purposes, as mentioned by tourism industry interviewees.

On the Small Isles the greatest environmental threats were perceived by community members and decision-makers to be related to climate change and consequential impacts, while some concerning threats from human agency, for example from campfires.

A lack of awareness from Small Isles visitors was considered a concern, by both a community member and decision-maker the paradoxical potential for people to destroy or damage the very thing they might come to see without realizing it (Vecco and Caust, 2019). However, the local community did not consider them to be serious threats; as one interviewee from a community group suggested, visitor pollution is comparatively light as most arrive on foot anyway. It was felt that such threats might actually spur people to go to the Small Isles, visiting key sites before they are lost.

In Malta´s case, several interest groups, such as community members and an environmental organisation, acknowledged the significant transformation of the coastal landscape and traditional villages due to touristic development. Most of the traditional shoreline has been transformed into resorts areas with high-rise buildings to accommodate tourists and provide second residences, putting greater pressure on local resources and intensifying coastline degradation. In that sense, most of the environmental impact on CMCH is perceived to be caused by human threats. To deal with the unavoidable growth the local council has devised a plan to control the development of the area in phases, to maintain the place´s character and uniqueness and value cultural heritage (Berg, 2017) without compromising development opportunities.

4.2. Recommendations for sustainable exploitation of CMCH in a tourism context

To address the threats regarding the relationship between tourism and CMCH, while maximizing sustainable tourism-related opportunities, participants made a number of

suggestions or recommendations for governance, planning and marketing. In Ria de Aveiro for example, several interviewees from the tourism industry and interest groups, such as researchers, recommended deeper cooperation between business operators and municipalities to achieve a common vision and more efficient tourism planning. According to a local tourism entrepreneur it is essential:

> "*to have a public-private articulation, which does not exist - a convergent strategy and not a divergent one".*

To overcome the distribution imbalance of tourists throughout the region, more effective management of tourist influxes into the city of Aveiro and other peripheral municipalities was suggested. Decision-makers and several representatives from interest groups, such as civil movements, local cultural associations and researchers, proposed the creation of an entity to manage these tourist influxes and suggested that poor governance could contribute to a negative regional image, if difficulties of coordinating activities, municipalities and protection of CMCH are not overcome.

When asked about the balance between providing a good tourism experience and ensuring a community/regions sustainable development, interviewees from all study regions referred to the need to integrate local communities into tourism activities and decisions. One Scottish policymaker representative surmised this neatly:

> "*start with the perspective that the best people to decide on sustainable development are the communities who will have to live with the consequences*".

This idea was reiterated by Marsaxlokk decision-makers, researchers and community members who considered that with effective knowledge transfer, and tourism management with a place's sustainability as an objective, many opportunities can be created. In Ria de Aveiro it was mentioned by some representatives of interest groups (i.e. researchers) and industry members that locals should be given opportunities to create their own business by maintaining traditional activities, preserving natural and cultural heritage and thinking about the region more holistically. Interest groups from Marsaxlokk (i.e. local associations and researchers) and Ria de Aveiro (i.e. civil movements, cultural associations, researchers and CMCH museums technicians) emphasized the importance of avoiding tourism pressures of some areas and implementing measures/ strategies to obviate seasonality, for example by developing innovative concepts instead of imported

foreign models. On the other hand, decision-makers, both from Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro, are more focused on territorial development as a whole.

A common opinion among interviewees from two case studies was that some restrictions should be implemented in order to control tourist activity. In Ria de Aveiro this opinion was expressed by interest group representatives, such as from civil movements and cultural associations, as well as by researchers, whereas in Marsaxlokk it came from community members, decision-makers and tourism industry representatives. Examples included limiting the number of short-term accommodation lets in Marsaxlokk and Ria de Aveiro, controlling the number of boat operator's licences, and restricting new Marsaxlokk constructions to two storeys. On the Small Isles, however, the risks from tourism were generally not felt to be onerous. On Canna, for example, community members and decision-makers recognized that transportation constraints, in terms of ferry timetabling, could act as a self-limiting factor for most day visitors, while the lack of accommodation options generally precluded large influxes of tourists.

Many representatives from interest groups in the three case regions, such as local associations and interested individuals in Marsaxlokk, community members on the Small Isles and cultural associations and researchers in Ria de Aveiro, referred to potential opportunities to increase tourism revenues by offering higher quality experiences to attract cultural tourists. Such experiences should consider greater use of unused built heritage, and better inclusion of the community as part of the living heritage, to co-develop initiatives based on CMCH. This idea was also reiterated by some decision-makers and tourism industry interviewees in Ria de Aveiro.

When questioned about how tangible and intangible CMCH can contribute to sustainable tourism, interest groups and industry also referred to the importance of understanding tourist's behaviour to develop products and experiences that would contribute to using CMCH in a sustainable way. Examples included using more local fresh fish, providing access to historical sites and working together with the tourism authorities in Marsaxlokk. A common opinion among all types of stakeholders is the importance of developing an integrated strategy for the wider Ria de Aveiro region, as it allows combining sun, sea and sand mass tourism with more niche products based on CMCH. A Small Isles vision and masterplan exercise is being planned in partnership with local community to understand how to make the island infrastructure 'more rigorous' and how to interpret the

island to both inform and educate visitors and minimise the potential for disturbance ,as indicated by a regional decision-maker.

5. Conclusions

This study sought to compare the complex and dynamic relationship between tourism and CMCH in three coastal regions. Based on qualitative methods, this article represents the concerns and visions of key stakeholders and contributes specifically to fill a knowledge gap at the European scale. The nature of the findings suggest that they can be used to define a joint policy response for more sustainable exploitation of CMCH in a tourism context.

The findings point to the common experience across the cases and stakeholder groups of tourism as a doubled-edged sword, whereby it is perceived to both contribute to positive economic impacts and rejuvenation of tangible and intangible CMCH, as well as creating negative economic, social and environmental impacts. The way this impact balance is experienced appears to depend on the development stage of the destination. Stakeholders in a more nascent destination such as the Small Isles emphasize the positive impacts, particularly in economic terms. Conversely, more mature destinations, Marsaxlokk for example, are more likely to emphasize negative impacts, such as commodification, visitor or development pressures or a loss of local control.

This study highlights the relevance of intangible cultural heritage in all case regions and raises concern regarding particular threats, such as the loss or distortion of information during boat trips in Aveiro or Marsaxlokk´s culinary heritage being diluted to meet growing tourist demand. These findings support the contribution of UNESCO (2003) and other authors (Katelieva et al., 2020; Su, 2019) concerning the importance of intangible cultural heritage and how it contributes to regions' development as tourism destinations.

In terms of recommendations for sustainable tourism exploitation of CMCH the findings reveal the importance of cooperation among stakeholders, public and private, to achieve a common vision, as well as more efficient planning of tourist activities and the integration of local communities in projects and decisions. The analysis identifies useful practices that can be adopted to make these approaches more effective, such as re-

connecting CMCH with the community, raising awareness and education of visitors, and incentivising the participation of the hosting community and living-heritage in tourism-related experiences (Katelieva et al., 2020, Kim et al., 2019).

The findings and recommendations could also be useful for researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders exploring CMCH, although limitations of this study should be recognized, notably the limited number of stakeholders interviewed in two of the case regions potentially restricting the usefulness of the findings.

Future research in a wider set of coastal destinations with correlative CMCH could take account of these findings, thus contributing to broader examination of the issues.

Further research could also focus on following up on how different practices around CMCH are transformed due to the influence of tourism. It could provide insights of heritagisation processes concerning CMCH and include the study of different initiatives and policies to steer local governance of CMCH in tourism development. Additionally, it could explore the relevance of CMCH on destination image, since image is one of the key elements for regional differentiation and destination managers are continuously focused on improving it.

Ultimately, despite the different demographic, spatial, economic and tourism stages of each of the case studies, key stakeholders commonly recognised CMCH as being a crucial element to consider in tourism development. Management strategies and local efforts to promote and sustainably exploit CMCH, develop high-quality tourism experiences and regulate tourist flows, and consequent pressures, will all play a role in determining whether tourism represents a threat or an opportunity to the long-term future of coastal and maritime cultural heritage.

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