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Conservation of maritime cultural heritage: A discrete choice experiment in a European Atlantic Region



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ABSTRACT

The use of natural resources is often associated with a high component of cultural or passive values. Such is the case of the use of fishery resources using traditional techniques and the results in terms of heritage. Maritime cultural heritage as a public good requires public intervention to prevent deterioration that may lead to serious losses of social wellbeing. However, there are still few applications of economic valuation methods to quantify the social wellbeing derived from maritime conservation policies. Among the available techniques, discrete choice experiments seem to be a suitable methodology for the economic valuation of maritime cultural heritage, due to weight of non-use values on total value and to the multidimensional characteristic of the cultural heritage. The results obtained with this method to value a conservation policy of tangible and intangible heritage show positive willingness to pay towards the conservation of maritime cultural heritage, with higher willingness to pay for intangible attributes, although there is a significant heterogeneity in the values obtained depending upon the attitudes of individuals regarding culture. The results support public intervention to conserve maritime and fishing heritage and may be used to design appropriate policies and economic incentives for preservation.

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1. Introduction

Cultural heritage plays different roles in contemporary society. One of these roles is its contribution to a better understanding of the past and the sustainability of rural and urban communities [10]. The nature of cultural heritage as a public good implies that some cultural elements would not survive without some form of collective action, as the market does allocate resources properly, with a provision lower than socially optimal [8]. Furthermore, the difficulty of determining optimal provision, alongside a lack of reliable data on community demand, may lead to under-provision of cultural heritage services by the public sector [58]. Thus if there is no public intervention regarding cultural heritage, there is a potential risk of disappearance. The risk of disappearance has been exacerbated by recent threats, such as climate change, extreme phenomena such as flash floods and flooding, with a particular impact on sensitive areas¹, and globalization with power asymmetries [53]. And in the current economic situation, where public

resources are scarce, it is even more necessary to justify the allocation of funds to this purpose. Consequently, valuation methodologies are useful to achieve this objective because they provide information of the magnitude of changes in social wellbeing because of the implementation of specific policies.

Galicia is a region on the North-West of Spain where maritime and fishing heritage is particularly relevant, given its special relationship with the sea and the economic importance of fishing activities² [13,14,25,28]. Therefore, the analysis of effects from conservation of maritime and fishing heritage can provide understanding of the real interactions between maritime activities, the economy and social wellbeing. Although economic activities are important, there seems to be a sense of shared identity among those whose livelihood is related in some way to the sea [23]. These examples of maritime culture that feed the identity sense are rapidly deteriorating in Galicia, due, among other causes, to urban growth in coastal areas, housing pressure, new promenades constructed on top of old traditional ports or docks and the

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¹ “Case Studies on Climate Change and World Heritage” published in 2007 by UNESCO provides proof of this.

² The value of fresh fish unloaded in Galicia means the 57.4% of the whole value for Spain and 14.9% of UE-27. In terms of Gross Added Value of the fishing and aquaculture activities, it represents the 1.27% of the GDP in Galicia, a significantly higher percentage than in Spain and the UE-27, where it represents a 0.20% and 0.05%, respectively (Eurostat, INE).

modernization of the fisheries sector. The consequence is the transformation of social and community practices which form part of its intangible cultural heritage [15]. Moreover, as maritime and fishing cultural heritage share some characteristics with vernacular structures, this good becomes even more vulnerable [34].

Consequently, maritime and fishing heritage are important part in Galicia's history [14] and, therefore, in building the identity of Galicians [35], a characteristic shared with other European coastal regions. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the social benefits of a maritime and fishing cultural heritage public conservation plan in Galicia, to be included in a broader conservation policy in the frame of European Commission recommendations³. The methodology used is DCE (Discrete Choice Experiments), an economic valuation method to approach social preferences based on the analysis of stated preferences, that means preferences obtained through the design of a hypothetical or simulated market. This paper is structured as follows: first, the concept of maritime and fishing cultural heritage will be presented; then, an introduction of the methodology and a state-of-art of its use in similar goods; after that the study area is described; finally, in part 5 the results will be summarized, ending with the main conclusions.

2. Maritime and fishing cultural heritage

Different definitions of cultural heritage exist, depending on approach and scope. In fact the very name of "cultural heritage", understood as something different to "natural heritage", may be controversial and somehow erroneous [20], with "heritage" being the recommended term⁴. In general, it could be said that cultural heritage comprises everything inherited with a cultural significance⁵ [56]. Benhamou [6] highlights the elasticity of the term by saying that "heritage is a social construction whose boundaries are unstable and blurred, with a three-fold source of extensions: historical additions, enlarging the concept towards additional items (...) and to the intangible value of tangible assets".

The flexible nature of this concept, which is also in constant evolution [62,47,15,14] should be taken into account. Following the same structure established by UNESCO for cultural heritage in general, experts talk about tangible (movable and immovable) and intangible elements. In Galicia, 88 groups of tangible heritage, 26 different groups of immovable heritage (lighthouses, fish salting factories, fishermen's houses, etc.) and 62 groups of movable heritage (boats, gear, maps, etc.) as well as 35 groups of intangible heritage (stories, songs, fishermen's knowledge, shipbuilding, etc.) have been identified, in which hundreds of examples of heritage, that still remain nowadays, can be grouped together [46].

From an economic point of view, this cultural heritage contributes to individual and collective wellbeing, providing market and non market goods and services. Related to this, the estimation

of the economic value of cultural heritage has been recognised as a fundamental part of cultural policies [26,40,44,49,45,56,18]. But these economic values are not easy to estimate because market values do not capture all the attributes and dimensions of welfare gains derived from cultural heritage conservation, neither those approaches based upon market values through revealed preferences. Many of services derived from cultural heritage do not have associated market prices as there is no market for them (non-market values). Moreover, in the cases where there is a market, the prices are an underestimation of their economic value, because they are public goods [33,49,56,27,4,18]. The public good characteristic itself justifies intervention to correct market failure via regulation or fiscal measures [59]. But there are other characteristics which would also justify intervention, such as external effects (effects on tourism, education, etc.), the legacy for future generations or the need for expert opinion [5].

In order to obtain the economic value, a stated preferences methodology is applied based upon the neoclassical theory⁶, which defines the economic value of a policy or intervention as the willingness to pay of affected individuals for the change in the good derived [50].

3. Review of studies and methodology: Discrete Choice Experiments

3.1. Previous experiences with DCE (Discrete Choice Experiments) and cultural heritage

The methodology of DCE, which enables us to estimate the value associated with cultural heritage,⁷ has been widely used in other contexts, such as environmental, health, transport or marketing economics [37,9,3,60]. In general, some economic valuation methods (other than DCE) have been applied for almost 20 years in the field of cultural heritage. Reviews of applications in the field of culture and cultural heritage may be found in Noonan [63], Pearce et al. [64], Eftic [22], Provins et al. [48]. However, stated preference methods are the only ones that are able to estimate TEV (Total Economic Value). This TEV would include not only the use values (values related to the use of the good, i.e. visiting a monument) but also the passive use or non use values (those that reflect the preference for existence and conservation, or equivalently, those independent of current or future use)⁸. In the context of cultural heritage, where goods are unique, the magnitude of passive use values can exceed that of use values [48]. Finally, the complex and multidimensional nature of cultural heritage is an additional reason for choosing DCE for its analysis [8,44].

Among stated preference valuation methods, DCE are gradually being introduced into the field of culture, following the path of other contexts. However, there are few studies applying DCE to estimate social value for cultural heritage, and all of which were carried out recently, in the last decade. As far as we know, DCE has not been still applied in the context of fishing and maritime cultural heritage and this may be one of the first applications of this methodology to such a broad and complex heritage good, which includes elements or attributes from the three categories

³ It [the Integrated Maritime Policy] should also promote Europe's maritime heritage, supporting maritime communities, including port-cities and traditional fisheries communities, their artefacts and traditional skills, and promoting links between them that enhance their knowledge and visibility ([24]).

⁴ In this paper is used the term "cultural heritage" rather than only "heritage" because natural heritage is not considered.

⁵ 'Cultural significance' can be understood as it appears in the Burra Charter declared by ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) in 1979, last updated in 1999, where "cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations [...] embodied in the place itself, in its fabric, uses, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups". This last sentence is highly relevant for the methodology.

⁶ For a more detailed explanation of cultural values, see Throsby [56,57]. Cultural value would be inherent to the object, regardless of how the consumer responds to it. In this sense, Throsby [56,57] argues that the WTP would not be a suitable indicator of cultural value. A debate on Throsby's proposal (2001, 2006) can be found in Provins et al. [48].

⁷ Other approaches [26,57,42,41,56] suggest the existence of cultural values linked to cultural goods (and, by extension, to cultural heritage) different from the economic value. The economic valuation methods in no case aim to estimate the cultural values but the economic values associated with cultural heritage [44].

⁸ For a more detailed explanation of TEV see Bateman et al. [3].

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