

The *burden* of the fieldwork:
experiences and skills in
the zones of ethnographic
knowledge

Participatory Research on Misplaced Heritage: Methodological Contributions and Impacts on the Community

This paper presents the course of interdisciplinary ethno(music)ological research with a dual focus, emphasizing the advantages of a participatory approach in terms of scientific contribution and in relation to the community and misplaced heritage that we deal with. We perceive research as a circular and open process in which the research discourse constantly intervenes in local narratives. Since both focuses are on the periphery of the research, everyday life and memories, we found female tellers using the snowball method. The research starts from a decorative object known by various names (roga, zvijezda, jež, šiška...) to which we link the musical dimension of a neglected traditional repertoire sung while making handicrafts. At the same time, we stimulate memories by actively permeating the tactile and aural dimensions, striving to understand the broader context of creative expression in former everyday life from a female perspective.

Keywords: *roga*, songs that accompanied the making of handicrafts, misplaced heritage, participatory research, applied ethnomusicology, female perspective

The presented transcript of the museum description of the object that in this article we named *roga* comes from the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum in Zadar. The *roga* from Pridraga is currently the only such object with an assigned inventory number in Croatia, at least as far as we were able to determine by consulting colleagues from relevant museum institutions near the localities where we conducted field research.¹

1 We have been conducting the field research described in the text in several phases since 2019. The localities that we have processed are listed below, while the names of the female tellers whose statements are quoted are not explicitly stated in order to protect their privacy.

INVENTORY NUMBER: 2425
NAME: Room decoration
TIME OF ORIGIN: After World War I
PRODUCTION SITE: Pridraga
WHEN AND HOW IT CAME TO THE MUSEUM: Gift from Mara Gusar, wife of Krsto, Pridraga, March 25, 1972
MATERIAL: Cardboard covered with various pieces of textile
HEIGHT: 20 cm
PCS: 1
DESCRIPTION: A room decoration made in school that later became a room decoration, hung from a ceiling beam. It consists of pyramidal shapes made of cardboard, covered with colorful and diverse pieces – textile scraps. The entire decoration looks like a spiky stylized flower. It is hung on a nail from a ceiling beam using a sewn loop. The decoration was made by Mara Gusar at school.

Jasenka Lulić Štorić, a long-time curator and until recently head of the Ethnographic Department, whose detailed knowledge of the collection was of crucial importance, pointed out to us the fact that this object was registered in the Zadar storage room.

Based on the museum description, it can be concluded that *roga* arrived at the Zadar museum as a “gift”, which leaves open the possibility that it was not a planned museological acquisition, but a donation. This is also supported by the generic, functional name given to the object – “room decoration” – instead of being recorded under one of the several local names we learned during our research throughout Croatia, such as *roga*, *zvijezda*, *šiška* or *jež*. Given the concise description of the function, as well as insufficiently precise information about the origin and dating, it can be assumed that this object was not the target of systematic research in the projects carried out by the museum in the Zadar County, as this would have provided a better insight into the usage practice and life of this object, but the basic characteristics were most likely obtained from the teller-donor.

By contextualizing the object within the museological system, we sought to point out its peripheral position in ethnological research in our country. The systematic neglect of experts and researchers probably occurred due to the unusual shape and technique of crafting *roga*, which fall outside the canon of recognizable and thoroughly researched Croatian handicrafts, most often related to folk costumes (e.g. lace, embroidery, textiles, footwear, etc.). Thus, the legitimation of the object's value from above, by experts, has been also missing. Although it is an object that may seem complex at first glance, especially to a hand that is not skilled in handicrafts, it is actually one of the simpler handicrafts. For most of our female tellers, *roga* was one of their first challenges in the world of handicrafts, created as a sideline to hone their fine motor skills and prove their own dexterity and meticulousness. Once finished, it was tucked away in some dusty corner of the house as a less important (female) decoration, and since it is made of delicate materials – cardboard and fabric, from which it is difficult to remove dust, few have survived to this day. Unrecognized from above and neglected from below, *roga* slowly slid to the periphery of everyday life and memory.

From the periphery of memory and research, it began to rise to the surface in 2019, encouraged from below. That year, in a tavern on their estate in Rodaljice near Benkovac, the Šunić family began organizing informal gatherings-workshops on crafting *roga*, all with the aim of reviving the tradition of crafting, and passing on the skill to new generations. At first, these gatherings brought together fellow villagers, friends and acquaintances of the family, to whom two local



Figure 1. Examples of *roga* (from the author's private archive)

women from Rodaljice, Roža and Kosa, in a warm atmosphere with the smells and tastes of local cuisine, taught the art of crafting this colorful object. It became clear from the first gathering that crafting *roga* awakened many memories of the gathered women, from shepherd's leisure and school days to the partisan star and overseas immigration, opening up new questions about the origin, function and life of the object. Dora's mother, a primary school teacher in Zadar, was deeply impressed by the first gathering, and soon, along with the Šunić family, she turned the story of *roga* into features for local newspapers and television. At the same time, Dora listened to stories from her mother about the mysterious object, as well as about Roža and Kosa from Rodaljice near Benkovac. Realizing that it was an object that was not limited to a specific location and whose production intertwined the diverse everyday lives of different generations, her curiosity for research and the desire to attend further workshops quickly ignited. She then showed *roga* to her colleague Joško at her workplace – the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research – and awakened in him old memories of numerous situations from his childhood when he had the opportunity to see it. Some of them were decorations in his family home, and were brought from school by Joško's mother, a teacher. It also evoked memories of the music performed every day and on holidays in the homes of his ancestors (Blizna, Vinovac, Trogiriska zagora). The endangered musical system of the Dalmatian hinterland eventually became the focus of Joško's research, and the memories of the time and way of life that *roga* evoked in him and in our tellers when they were crafting *roga* as girls encouraged him to join Dora in researching this unusual object. Since we both (Dora and Joško) come from the field of ethnomusicology, it was logical to include music in the research. Thus, the then traditional vocal repertoire related to handicrafts entered the story.

Although songs related to work (e.g., harvesting, picking, plowing, spinning, etc.) have been a regular part of the folklore festivals programs for almost a century, they have rarely been the focus of academic discussions. Until the second half of the 20th century, researchers and collectors of traditional music based their research on collecting material and categorizing it repertoire-wise, but it was rarely compared. Only a few researchers have treated this repertoire in a more systematic way.² In addition, in no paper have we come across a repertoire category of “songs that accompanied the making of handicrafts” that include some songs related to work and also a part of shepherd's and solitude songs, but depending on the context in which the handicraft was made – in solitude “*prid ćoricom*”, on a pasture with cattle, or in company. It was the neglect of this repertoire that prompted us to try to bring it back. The research approach was interdisciplinary and, in a methodological sense, experimental, adding the research of the ethnological object to the focus on music, sensing that the two in conjunction could yield more interesting, nuanced, and contextually meaningful results. Thus, as two ethnomusicologists whose expertise is primarily focused on the aural, sound part of heritage, we found ourselves behind the wheel of a disciplinary vehicle for which we do not have a license (as wittily put by Tagg 2011: 7).

With this research, we have stepped into previously unexplored territory, fragmented both geographically and in memories, primarily those of our tellers. Our specific research positions and

2 For example, “harvest songs” by Kuhač (1906: 375–384) or “songs related to work” by Žganec (1961: 347–351) who already in the early sixties, due to accelerated agricultural mechanization, noticed that “these songs (...) have completely disappeared from life” and that “only the oldest people remember them, quite vaguely and partially”, concluding that during his research around Koprivnica he “actually found only the remains of remains” (1961: 349). So, our research “dug” through the remains of the remains of memories.

experiences guided us towards a methodology based on the understanding of memory as a cognitive, contextual and cultural construct composed of different dimensions of life (e.g. emotional, physical, multisensory, temporal, social, etc.). We approached the research by interweaving the tactile, kinetic, visual and aural dimensions of experience in order to evoke repressed and forgotten memories woven into the everyday life of women in the past through physical interaction with *roga*.³ Unlike common practices in cognitive sciences, where music is used as a means of recalling life episodes and even rehabilitating motor functions⁴, in our research the process was reversed: tactile, visual and kinetic experiences stimulated the recall of musical memories. Although there is research in the ethnomusicological literature that has addressed the ability of music to evoke memories (e.g. Kaufman Shelemay 2006: 17-37 and Becker 2004), we have not yet come across a paper that methodologically combines the aforementioned sensory and bodily dimensions for the purpose of retrieving musical memories. In this sense, our research departs from conventional ethnomusicological frameworks, approaching theoretically and methodologically the interdisciplinary field of sensory studies. These studies explore sensory experiences not only as physiological phenomena, but also as cultural, social, and historical constructs (cf. Howes 2022: 12-13), with the phenomenon of memory and recollection forming one of the fundamental research topics (ibid.: 16). Given the diversity of research topics within the field, it is not surprising that there are diverse methodological approaches, described by Howes within three main frameworks: “empathizing with others in what they experience” (sensory ethnography)⁵, ‘feeling between the lines’ (sensory history), and ‘research-creation’ (or art-based research), which lies ‘between art and science’ (Howes 2022: 13). Our research is closest to the latter method, following the ‘experimental practice’ in ethnographic research, as Clifford and Marcus (1986) call it. Within this framework, Howes and colleagues develop the concept of intermedia art, calling it a “performative sensory environment” in which objects are not presented passively, but rather stimulate and intertwine sensory experiences, transforming the audience from passive observers into active participants in the co-production of experiences (Howes 2022: 181). The aim of this approach is to unite artistic expression and scientific research in order to produce new knowledge (ibid.). Continuing their concept, but placing it in the context of the real lives of the rural area and individuals, our “performative sensory environment” involves the reconstruction of situations in which people used to socialize, make handicrafts and sing. Thus, by simply touching and observing *roga*, and especially through the processes of cutting out cardboard and sewing textiles, the tellers were able to return to the past more easily, remembering forgotten verses and melodies. In group interviews and organized workshops, the effect was even more pronounced because joint recollection enabled complementing and expanding the collection of memories.

This collection of memories can be understood within Assmann’s concept of collective memory, and in our case it is most clearly manifested in the form of communicative memory, transmitted

3 In this sense, music has long been recognized as a means that effectively evokes scenes from different periods of life, which in the fields of psychology, neuroscience and music therapy is defined by the concept of music-evoked autobiographical memories (MEAM, cf. Jakubowski and Gosh 2019: 649-666). Therefore, it has been used for many years with patients with cognitive memory difficulties, such as dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

4 For example, in patients with Parkinson’s disease (cf. Schiavio and Altenmüller 2015: 1-15).

5 Cf. Pink 2009; cf. Bagarić 2011: 83-94

directly through social interaction between generations (cf. Assmann 2010: 122).⁶ Due to the misplaced position of our research focus and emphasis on the processes of remembering from below, we are closer to the term social memory as used by Škrbić Alempijević (2012: 188-189). In her analyses of festival practices, the author defines social memory through individual narratives and performances that interpret history in a personal and locally colored way, contrasting it with collective memory as a form of institutionalized, politically shaped and socially authenticated system of representation of the past. Consequently, in this paper we will use the term social memory to emphasize the experiential, performative and participatory dimension of the remembering process, grounded in everyday practices and individual voices of female tellers.

In the following text, we strive to present in more detail the development and results of the presented methodology, which due to the active involvement of individuals from the community in research, its dissemination and joint production of knowledge, we recognize as participatory (cf. Cambria, Fonseca and Guazina 2016: 55-80). Furthermore, our methodology also has an applied character. This is manifested, for example, through connecting different institutions during research and, in some cases, reducing the social isolation of older female tellers from rural areas. This includes the valorization of the object from above and support for its eventual protection as a cultural property initiated from below, as well as the revitalization of forgotten musical repertoire and the skill of crafting *roga*, even among the youngest generation.

We divided the course of the research into three phases, although this is a circular framework that anticipates additional phases in the continuation of the research. The first phase included hundreds of kilometers traveled across fragmented terrain for the purpose of collecting information, memories, the objects themselves, and the musical repertoire. The second phase was marked by an exhibition and workshops on crafting *roga* in the central building of the Zadar City Library, networking of the bearers of the observed traditions, and dissemination of the collected knowledge through local media. We are currently in the third phase of the research, observing and recording the results of the methodology used, especially in terms of its contribution and limitations in the process of forming a new social memory under the strong influence of the media. Simultaneously, we are supplementing the field research with newly collected information and trying to arouse the interest of our colleagues at the international level, mainly with the aim of detailed research of an object that is found in identical form not only in the wider region, but, as far as we know, on at least four continents. By presenting the course of the research chronologically, we would like to point out the methodological advantages of combining two research focuses – objects and music – as well as the advantages of a participatory approach to the research itself, and the use of the snowball method in reaching the target group of tellers, not only with regard to the nuanced documentation and revitalization of heritage, but also to the active shaping of social memory and the joint production of knowledge.

6 Communicative memory usually lasts for about three generations or up to a hundred years. According to Assmann, it is constantly in dialogue with the political and cultural spheres, and their boundaries are extremely porous. Cultural memory is created through processes of externalization and objectification of communicative memory, is inscribed in broader cultural, religious and national identity frameworks, and can reach back up to three thousand years (in the West, to Homer and the biblical authors). Political memory is shaped by current and previous socio-political circumstances in the observed areas, and lasts as long as a corresponding political institution exists (cf. Assmann 2010: 122).



Figure 2: Wedding *roga* in Rodaljice (from the author's private archive)

FIRST STEPS: SEARCH AND COLLECTION

Those who know how, know it even in Bukovica, those who don't know how, don't know it even in America!

They say there's a grain of truth in every joke, and that applies to this saying too. The aforementioned tavern of the Šunić family in the small village of Rodaljice, with a population of about fifty, where the workshops of crafting *roga* are occasionally held, is today known as the agrotourism *Srce Bukovice*. Even when the long wooden tables are not fully covered with threads, cardboard rhombuses, textile scraps, scissors, and parts of half-finished *roga*, a visitor to the estate will not miss at least one of the numerous striking pieces of *roga* of various sizes that adorn the interior of the tavern placed on an antique chest of drawers or hanging from the ceiling. The white *roga* with red "pistils" in the centers of its twelve flowers tells a special story. Kosa made the same one for her daughter a few years ago with the intention of replacing her wedding bouquet. All the wedding guests took home a small *roga* as a gift crafted by Kosa. Roža's *roga* also left their home,



Figure 3: Gathering-workshop for crafting *roga* in *Srce Bukovice*, Rodaljice (from the author's private archive)

most often in a smaller format as a decoration for the car's interior rearview mirror. This is because every tenth day of the month for the past few years Roža has been offering *roga* at the fair in Benkovac filled with a variety of handicrafts. And while the car with Dalmatian license plates almost certainly got its *roga* from Roža, the one with Slavonian plates probably got it from the women in Bodovaljci. In Bodovaljci near Nova Gradiška for the past few years, at the instigation of the Women's Association for the Promotion of Active Participation Studio B, identical objects with slight differences in the crafting technique, have been made at weekly meetings, mostly intended for sale at fairs. There, the object is known by another name – *šiška*, and through the activities of the Association, it has become a recognizable symbol of the village, and as far as is known, unique in the region.

Apart from the small rural environment that limits their living space and the regular crafting of *roga*, or *šiška*, what the women from Rodaljice and Bodovaljci have in common is that they did not make this object when they were young, although some of them saw it in the houses of their homeland. Kosa (now in her sixties) learned the craft from an older fellow villager shortly before the Croatian War of Independence, and Roža (now in her eighties) then from Kosa. *Roga*

thus became just one of the numerous handicrafts made of wool, thread and fabric that both women make to pass the time at home or while herding their livestock. On the other hand, elderly women who spend their time together escape boredom and loneliness in Bodovaljci, Slavonia, also made their first pieces of *roga* only at gatherings organized by the Studio B Association,⁷ although *šiška* was made in Bodovaljci around the 1960s and earlier. For them, the initiative for the modern revitalization of the practice arose when a woman from the neighborhood showed one of the workshop participants the technique for crafting an object that they at that moment believed to be an indigenous decoration from Bodovaljci. They incorporated the crafting of *šiška* into the broader framework of making other traditional decorations in the workshops, often themed around the season or holiday, so in addition to *roga*, they also make, for example, flowers or decorative pumpkins from fabric.

Although only a few of them actually remember *roga* and *šiška* from their own childhood, like the owner of the tavern *Srce Bukovice*, whose mother was hiding money in her *roga* from curious household members, this object belongs to the category of those whose duration and function in the community is remembered through oral tradition. In other words, it is transmitted through oral, fragmented social memories that place it “in the past”, but without the possibility of a more precise determination of time. For example, the continuity of *šiška* in Bodovaljci is indicated by quotes such as: “Boriš’s grandfather is from the neighboring village... his mother, who has been dead for five hundred years, was from the village of Bodovaljci and he says that he remembers *šiška* from his childhood. So, it’s been almost a hundred years” or “my mother-in-law heard it from her mother-in-law”. Such communicative memory is shared and encouraged precisely at gatherings, and in the case of *roga*, it is diverse and often unique, intimate and nostalgic, intertwined with the context of former rural life from the position of a woman.

At the *roga*-crafting gatherings in Rodaljice, in addition to a few memories from the women present, we also collected a whole series of handicrafts that Roža and Kosa generously literally pushed into our hands, almost competing. With the examples of *roga* from Bukovica and traces of memories, we set off on a further search. We embraced the advantages of modern technology and expanded the inquiry about *roga* through telecommunications and digital channels, targeting addresses in Zadar County. In a short time, using the snowball method, our forwarded inquiry, through the engagement of informants⁸, resonated exponentially among folklore enthusiasts and lovers of tradition on *WhatsApp*, *Viber*, and *Facebook* groups. Joško’s many years of field experience and work with various folklore groups and musical ensembles proved to be a great advantage, thus he created a wide network of prompt informants who have a penchant for tradition. Some of them were so intrigued by *roga* that they began their own

7 The Studio B Association is an example of adapting tradition to the modern age, where making handicrafts continue as an activity related to women’s free time, among other things, for the purpose of socialization. Nowadays, such gatherings are not organized as part of community customs (spinning, gatherings, etc.), but are most often initiated by organized associations.

8 In this text, we refer to informants as key contacts, or long-term collaborators who enabled us to establish direct contact with our female tellers. It is important to emphasize that they did not necessarily possess the knowledge we sought to document. Typically younger than the tellers, these intermediaries are active members of their communities, often involved in local amateur initiatives related to tradition. As part of this research, we initially contacted them by telephone, bearing in mind the broad geographical area of the research that encompassed the entire country. These intermediaries played a key role in initiating the research “snowball” and increasing its visibility, as well as the visibility of the research topics within their own communities, developing the research in directions that we could not have foreseen in advance.

Danas sam bio u Svincima na terenskom snimanju, prikupljajući materijal o tradicijskom ukrasnom predmetu poznatom pod različitim nazivima roga, zvijezda, šiška.
Veliko hvala kazivačici i njezinoj obitelji na gostoprimstvu, vremenu i svim lijepim pričama koje su podijelili sa mnom.

Ako i vi imate slične priče na području od Marine do Rogoznice slobodno se javite u inbox.

Tanja Božan

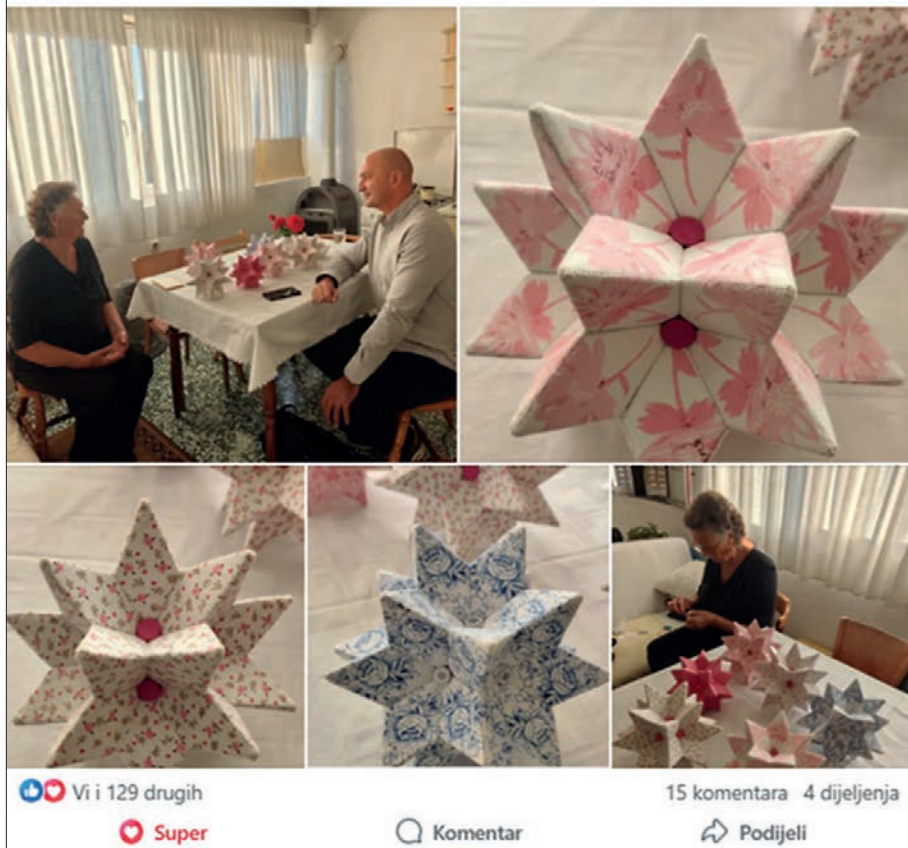


Figure 4: A Facebook post documenting the initiative of an informant in amateur research

research, forwarding us recorded or written interviews and discovered information.⁹ Thanks to this engagement of individuals and their communities, a chain reaction made it possible to collect new clues about the current and past presence of the *roga* every day, creating a map of the planned terrain. Throughout Zadar, Lika-Senj, Šibenik-Knin and Split-Dalmatia Counties, we found the sought-after object under various names – *roga*, *zviježda*, *jež*, and even *buzdovan*. As for Slavonia, at that time we were only familiar with Bodovaljci as a place where *roga* is still made today, but further research revealed other relevant locations, not only in Slavonia, but also in central Croatia. Little did we know that our inquiry prompted some of the women to recall making the unusual object, revitalizing a forgotten crafting technique.

Over the next few months, with the aim of collecting as many memories on *roga* as possible, but also the objects, mostly made in this century by our tellers, we covered hundreds of kilometers of terrain, visiting locations on the map that our informants pointed out to us (Bitelić, Bodovaljci, Dugopolje, Gospić, Kuterevo, Marina, Mitlo, Otočac, Sinj, Široka Kula, Švica, Trogir, Vinišće, Vrsine). The map covered predominantly rural parts of the Dinaric area (except Bodovaljci), which, with its natural location, resources and poorly developed transport infrastructure, in the past dictated a similar way of life from the mountainous areas of Istria, Gorski kotar and Velebit all the way to the south of Croatia.¹⁰

For the most part, in agreement with our informants, we organized individual and group interviews with elderly female tellers, bearers of the traditions in the focus of our research. Group interviews proved to be an effective means of evoking social memory not only about *roga* and the music, but also about the broader socio-cultural local life of the observed periods. For example, in Bitelić near Sinj, we were greeted by a group of female tellers and one male teller gathered around a table, ready to start crafting *roga* together. Skillful hands covered the cardboard rhombuses with scraps of old clothes, then sewed them in the form of flowers with five “petals”. Starting the story about *roga* and the process of acquiring materials in the past, memories of various handicrafts and the challenges of the humble life of that time emerged:

9 In this context, it is interesting to draw a parallel with the practice of the so-called “folk ethnographers” that we encounter in the beginnings of research efforts in Croatia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was founded by Antun Radić with the idea that “material is recorded by participants in the culture being researched – more literate and educated people of peasant origin since the subject of research is Croatian peasant culture”. Thus, the “first ethnographers” in our region were actually participants in that culture, often tellers who were not ethnologists by education (cf. Čapo Žmegač 1996: 10). Radić played the role of editor of the material collected according to his instructions (cf. Čaleta and Niemčić 2022: 11-12). A contemporary example of a folk ethnographer in our case is Dario Kosor from Poljice near Marina, a long-time collaborator and active folk dancer, singer and leader of folklore groups. Inspired by our research, he began collecting data on *roga*. He started in his own region, and then, using his contacts, expanded his research to other areas. In addition to his folklore societies (Marina, Vinišće), he managed to arouse the interest of other groups and folklore societies. The way he works follows the research models he adopted by observing and participating in our research.

10 This area nurtured a traditional nomadic form of pastoralism, the so-called transhumance. This practice involved shepherds migrating and staying away from their own place for longer periods during the summer and winter months in search of better grazing, following well-trodden shepherd paths. Since 2023, protected by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity with a multinational nomination (Albania, Andorra, Austria, France, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania and Spain), transhumance has been recognized as one of the polygons of development and transmission of the entire socio-economic system, from gastronomy to local handicrafts and rituals, contributing to the strengthening of the community, cultural identity and territory. See the official description of the nomination titled “Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock” (UNESCO 2023).

“It was bought by the meter and sewn at home. Whoever had a sewing machine sewed, one woman sewed for half a Bitelić. My mother also had a loom. She wove, and the other women sewed. They had machines, so they sewed for us, and my mother wove for them. If there were leftovers, we kept them.”

Since there were some good singers among them, we easily picked up the topic of songs that accompanied the making of handicrafts and sheep herding – for example, *Ovce moje mirujte po doli dok navezem maramicu loli*. Each of the songs prompted a new story that unraveled the context of rural life between the 1950s and 1970s. They told us about the “sharp tongue” and defiant character of that population, especially in the alternating singing, the so-called “pripivavanje”, but also about songs as “likarija” expressing “everything that troubles you”: *Grlo moje rasonodu voli, kad ne pivan oće da oboli*. And it doesn’t matter if in the evening “they jumped at each other’s throats” because “in the morning they were cow herding together again...”. They also told us about the wolf and the wolfhounds, about Christmas and prayers, about boys and girls, about names, nicknames, and various village anecdotes. In the example of Bitelić, our tellers used social memory to outline exemplary episodes from the lives of the peasants of the Sinj region in the second half of the last century, illustrating the close connection between the song and the making of various handicrafts:

“This singing is not simple, we started it maybe when we were eight years old...¹¹ and we were making handiworks, sewing... our mothers would give us needles, and we sewed. You are girls, it doesn’t matter if you go to school or not. Men went to school, women didn’t have to. That’s how it was in those days. You must embroider the sheets, you can’t go out into the world without knowing anything.¹² So we learned to do all sorts of things - knit, sing, spin, dig the ground, everything... there’s nothing we don’t know”.

This layered narrative suggests that gender-structured divisions of labor and strict social expectations formed the framework within which women acquired and transmitted handicraft techniques and musical skills from an early age (cf. Čapo Žmegač 1998: 271). Therefore, in the stories of our interlocutors, recollections of crafting *roga* or of songs related to work did not appear separately, but were consistently intertwined with personal narratives, from nostalgic childhood memories to experiences of illness or war. Moreover, at times it seemed as if in our semi-structured interviews both *roga* and songs appeared only incidentally, in the background, alongside handicrafts, which also reflects their peripheral position in social memory. Reaching such memories was a demanding task, especially in terms of musical repertoire. It has been shown that the networking of tactile and aural dimensions, with the occasional invocation of traditional songs from that place or region already familiar to us as contextual stimuli, can open up space for the spontaneous emergence of forgotten layers of memory. We emphasize that the objective of this research, and thus of this paper, is not to collect or analyze musical repertoire, but rather an attempt to reinterpret the cultural memory of everyday life in the past, as well as to examine the possibilities of a research method that connects the tactile, visual, kinetic and aural dimensions of experience. Such an approach assumes that memories of past practices and peripheral forms of everyday life can be activated through physical participation in, for example,

11 The singing technique initiated by this gathering belongs to the oldest layer of musical expression in this area called *ožkanje*, a voice-shaking technique, that only the most skilled singers can perform well.

12 This world after World War II also implied the reality of frequent guest working, “when my husband invited me to Germany, I was the happiest I could be... I ran away from the sheep!”



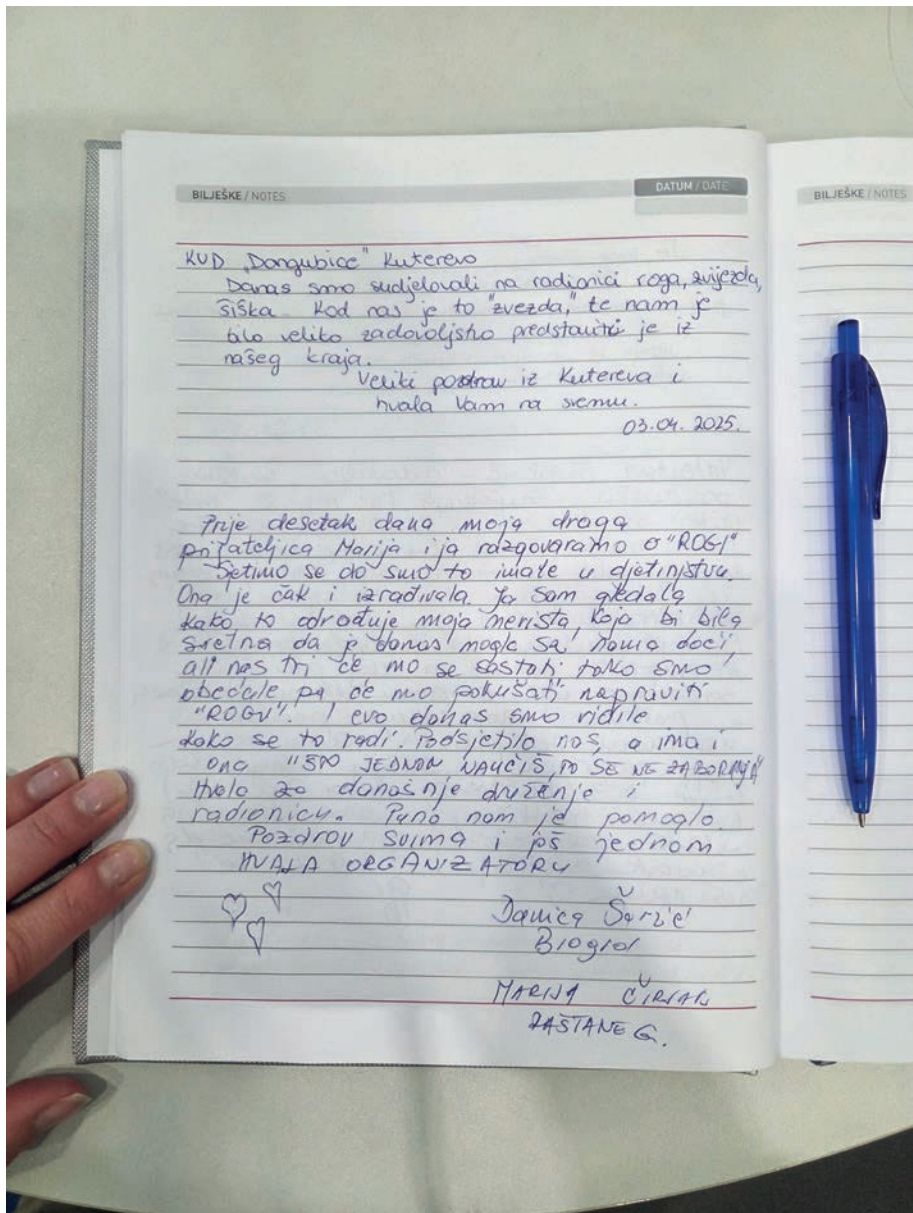
Figure 5: Field photo, Donji Bitelić (photo by Danijela Petričević Banović)

making handicrafts or singing songs from the past. Our research starts from women's experiences and knowledge, since it was women who were the bearers and transmitters of numerous traditional skills.

In addition to the network of informants, with whom communication has been facilitated in this century using mobile phones, the Internet, and especially social networks, have also been of great help in this research. For example, *Facebook* has connected the bearers of the tradition of crafting *roga* in Rodaljice with those in Bodovaljci in Slavonia, who have created on that platform a page dedicated to *šiška* from Bodovaljci.¹³ The tool *Google Lens*, which one of our informants referred us to, was also interesting as it allows searching online content using photos of *roga*. Such a search revealed a surprising fact: we find an identical object far beyond the borders of Croatia and the wider region, i.e. throughout Europe and the North and South American continents. In most cases, it appears under the word *star* in various languages (e.g. *Stern*, *star*, *estrella*), and digital traces are most often found on various online stores or forums dedicated to making handicrafts.¹⁴ It is also interesting that in the English-speaking countries of the

13 On Facebook, *šiška* is described as a "handmade decorative item that has been made since ancient times in the village of Bodovaljci" (Šiška 2024).

14 E.g. Laura's Kreativwelt [s.a.]



KUD "Dugubice" Kuterevo

Danas smo sudjelovali na radionici roga, zvijezda, šiška. Kod nas je to "zvezda," te nam je bilo veliko zadovoljstvo predstaviti je iz našeg kraja.

Veliki pozdrav iz Kutereva i
hvala vam na svemu.

03.04.2025.

Prve desetak dana moja draga prijateljica Marija i ja razgovaramo o "ROGI".
Setimo se da su to imale u djetinjstvu. Ona je čak i izradivala. Ja sam gledala kako to obrodjuje moja mami, koja bi bila sretna da je danas mogla sa, noua daci ali nas tri ce mo se sastati. tako smo obiciale pa de mo pokušati napraviti "ROGI". I evo danas smo vidile kako se to radi. Podsjetilo nas, a ima i ona "SPO JEONAM UACI'S PO SE NE ZABORAVI" Hvala za današnje druženje i radionicu. Puno nam je pomoglo.
Pozdrav svima i ps jednom
HVALA ORGANIZATORU



James Šerbić
Biograd

MARIJA ČIRIĆ
ZASTANEG.

Figure 6: Book of memories from the exhibition Roga, zvijezda, šiška... Handicraft on the margins of ethnological research at the Zadar City Library (from the author's private archive)

North American continent it is called the Moravian star, obviously alluding to the missionary Christian community known as the Moravian (Czech) Brethren and their recognizable symbol – a Christmas ornament which, however, apart from being star-shaped, bears no resemblance to *roga*, neither in terms of the crafting technique nor the color palette (cf. The Moravian Church [s.a.]). *Roga* with the title Moravian star is most often found in the form of ready-made craft kits.¹⁵ It can be assumed that the association with the original Moravian star is prompted by the fact that it was also sold in special ready-made craft kits so anyone could assemble it.¹⁶ Moreover, it is assumed that its beginnings date back to the first half of the 19th century, when boys at the German boarding school in Niesky made it as part of geometry lessons (cf. Petig 2015: 167). We can certainly draw an interesting parallel with our story since many of our tellers emphasized in the interview that they made their first *roga* in elementary school, most often as part of Home Economics or Technical Education classes. Despite this information, in the Croatian School Museum in Zagreb we have not yet been able to find any written or material information that would confirm *roga* as part of the curriculum. Thus, traces of its pedagogical use in the 1950s and 1960s have so far remained at the level of oral tradition, indicating the necessity of further research and archival insights.

SECOND STEPS: PRESENTATION AND DISSEMINATION

The next step in this research was to strengthen cooperation with informants and tellers. In addition, we wanted to offer them what we could from our professional position – the valorization of the misplaced heritage “from above”. At the same time, we recognized the desire of the tellers to revive this practice that was once part of their everyday life. Based on the collected examples of *roga*, *zvijezda* and *šiška*, information and lyrics of songs that accompanied the making of handicrafts, we organized an exhibition and a workshop on crafting *roga* in the central building of the Zadar City Library. The two-week exhibition, held in early April 2025,¹⁷ presented selected examples of *roga* made in different locations, as well as a textual description of the object, its functions, its integration into rural everyday life and interweaving with musical expression, the process of transmission from the past to the present, and information on recent research. Along with *roga*, other, also misplaced handicrafts from the “workshops” of our female tellers were also displayed in the exhibition cases.¹⁸

Since the extreme peripherality and widespread nature of *roga* makes finding the female tellers quite challenging, we used the exhibition as an additional research field, especially in Zadar County, which we had not been able to research in more detail until that point. For this purpose, we prepared a “book of memories” intended to record evoked memories, and some visitors actually wrote them down. In this way, the exhibition achieved multiple functions, including the public presentation of neglected segments of heritage and the opening of space for their contemporary reception and potential revitalization, and it also served as a training ground for

15 See e.g. Quilt in a day [s.a.]

16 See e.g. Ebay [s.a.]

17 Announcement of the workshop and exhibition on the local Internet portal (Pejković 2025)

18 These include, for example, head pads, decorative small woolen socks, handbags and similar items. Along with *roga*, boxes and baskets made of postcards, as well as objects made of matches that were once made by soldiers during their military service, today are also on the periphery of memory and research.

participatory research, in which visitors to the City Library were not just passive “consumers” of the exhibition’s content, but also had the opportunity to actively contribute to new knowledge.

The idea for the exhibition and the workshop was formed during field research, as each new encounter opened up additional insights into the function, life and wide diffusion of *roga*. Of particular research significance were the group interviews, during which the tellers gradually freed themselves from the discomfort associated with performing songs in public and gained confidence in presenting their own handicraft skills. In such situations, prompted by mutual associations, numerous new information and anecdotal memories of life as it once was, significantly more vital than modern rural everyday life. It is important to emphasize that musical skill is not necessarily reciprocal to the skill of making handicrafts, as one might assume.¹⁹ Namely, while all of our tellers were skilled with various handicrafts, some of them did not see themselves in the role of singers. However, in group interviews, such women participated very actively in encouraging “recognized” singers to demonstrate their singing skills performing forgotten repertoires with associations in the form of verses. Trying to reconstruct similar conditions and dynamics of interaction, we decided that the central event within the exhibition would be a *roga*-crafting workshop, conceived as a meeting place for the bearers of forgotten traditions from four selected, and for our research, key regions. While preparing and holding a workshop, which was open to the public, our tellers and local informants slowly took on the role of active collaborators.²⁰ At the workshops, the tellers had the role of demonstrators. For this occasion, they prepared materials to teach visitors how to craft *roga*. The informants organized their arrival, and during the workshop they documented the events (cf. Kosor 2025). Our research contribution consisted of setting up an exhibition and holding a lecture. Some tellers included the presented information in their own narrative about the role and history of *roga* in their communities, although it did not necessarily relate to their homeland. This is a clear example of how research can actively shape and transform local narratives and social memory.

The afternoon meeting in the Zadar library provided the tellers and workshop visitors with an opportunity to exchange memories and personal experiences, with our presence as researchers partially influencing the way their memories were recognized and valued. For mostly elderly women with rural addresses in the interior of Croatia, the meeting also meant a literal escape from their often lonely everyday lives and an arrival in Zadar, a city by the sea. The workshop’s structure was reminiscent of past gatherings where women performed common chores or made handicrafts. At the same time, the song took on the role of a marker of identity and distinction between the participants, unlike the process of crafting *roga*, which is very similar in its basic elements in all four regions. Particularly noticeable was the effort of the workshop participants to establish new social connections through conversation and exchange of experiences that, at least potentially, could have been continued after the meeting.

19 Traditional ethnomusicological approaches to research are based on establishing contacts with skilled performers of traditional music. Since one of the focuses of this research is the skill of crafting a decorative object, we assumed that only some of the tellers would be able to demonstrate their singing abilities, which turned out to be correct. Recalling the skill of crafting in some singers triggered memories of the musical repertoires they sang in childhood while making various handicrafts. It was mostly an older, archaic layer of musical tradition.

20 Our informants were, in alphabetical order: Marijana Botić Rogošić for Split-Dalmatia County, Petar Gladović for Donji Bitelić, Dario Kosor for Vrsine, Valentina Stojaković for Bodovaljci, Matej and Alen Šporčić for Kuterevo, Ivan Starčević for Gospić and Široka Kula, and Marina Šunić for Rodaljice.

PRIČE PROŠLIH GENERACIJA DR. SC. DUNATOV I DR. SC. ČALETA VODE NAS KROZ IZLOŽBU

UKRAS IZ PROŠLOSTI VRAĆA SE U FOKUS

Iako na prvi pogled može djelovati složeno, roga pripada među lakše ručne radove. Mnogim našim kazivačicama bila je i jedan od prvih izlozava u svijetu ručnoga rada. Prisjećajući se dana kad su je izradivale, žene često evociraju uspomene na školske prijateljice, brizne učitelje, prve simpatije i udvaranja. Bili su to za njih bezbrižni dani kad se pjevalo, kad je kolo zaista bila igra i kad su pripovijedanja starijih bila i zabava i škola. Pa sjetete se onda i raznih anegdota, opjevanih u narodnim stihovima tzv. starovinskog pjevanja, govori Dunatov



Radionica je okupila čuvarice baštine

Durda BALJAK
Snimio Luka JELIČIĆ

Do 12. travnja na putu Gradske knjižnice Zadar može se razgledati izložba »Rukotvorina na margini etnoloških istraživanja« gdje je u središtu rukotvorina, odnosno ukrasni predmet poznat pod raznim imenima – roga, zvijezda, šiška, i tako dalje. Organizatori ove izložbe su istraživači dr. sc. Joško Čaleta i dr. sc. Dora Dunatov koji nastoje afirmirati i demarginalizirati rogu unutar etnološke struke, ali i same prakse izrade.

Proveli su nas kroz izložbu, a dr. sc. Dunatov pojašnjava nam je kako najraniji tragovi izrade roge u Hrvatskoj, koje su desetakstotinjak godina uspješno utvrdili, sežu do generacije rođene 1910-ih. – Jedan od problema kod utvrđivanja starosti je u tome što je roga ostala izvan fokusa etnoloških istraživanja. Nismo uspjeli pronaći ni u stručno-znanstvenim radovima, ni u većim privatnim kolekcionskim zbirkama

starina, a nisu je sačuvali ni muzejske institucije, osim Etnološkog odjela Narodnog muzeja Zadar – tamo se nalazi jedan primjerak. Također, problem je i to što su same izradivateljice roge doživljavale tek kao sporednu, jednu od mnogih rukotvorina koje su izradivale, započevši mlada istraživačica, te dodaje kako je roga negdje bila samo prozani trend, a drugdje uspomena iz ropotarnice prošlosti.

Spretna ruke

Njezinom je zaboravu pridonio i to što je tijekom 20. stoljeća struka nije prepoznata kao kulturno vrijedna, za razliku od primjerice narodne nošnje i tehnike vezivanja, čipkarsva te drugih kreativnih iznaha naroda. Uz to, kako navodi Dunatov, rijetko koja roga je mogla preživjeti do danas budući da se izraduje od osjetljivih materijala – karnosa i klanine.

– Ipak, istraživanje ove rukotvorine otvorilo nam je čitav svijet nekadašnjeg seoskog života. Ona je neodvojivih zgoda i megdoda prilikom čuvanja ovača, čijanja perja, seoskih preta, kula ispunjenih pjesmom i smjehom, majčinim zagrljajima, mirisima domaćeg kruha i

tradicijskih ločaca, toplog miljeka i krampira putnog okusa, dragim prijateljima i starim, napola zaboravljenih lica... Sagledavajući rogu u širem kontekstu to je tradicija koja prelazi lokalne, regionalne i nacionalne okvire, stoga njezina vrijednost dobiva još više na težini. Njezin dvadeset Rogova pričaju složene priče prošlih generacija, prepriete žilbe zajedničkih i osobnih iskustava. A ovom izložbom predstavljamo najprecizniji rezultat našeg istraživanja roge koje provodimo u sklopu Instituta, gdje etnomuzikolog Joško Čaleta i ja nastojimo na temelju prikupljenih saznanja razmotriti mogućnost njezine zaštite kao kulturnog dobra Hrvatske.

Čaleta je podijelio kako ova izložba nije samo prilika za upoznavanje s rogom, nego ujedno i poziv na zajedničko istraživanje. – Želim prikupiti što više informacija o ovom zanimljivom ukrasu – gdje se izradivao, što ga je izradivao, u kakvim se prilikama koristio i što je simbolizirao. Možda ste ga negdje vidjeli? Možda ste ga imali u svojoj kući ili sam je o njemu pričala baka? Svaka informacija može biti dragocjena, poručio je Čaleta, te

dodao kako svi zainteresirani svoja sjećanja i saznanja mogu zapisati u Knjigu sjećanja pokraj izložbene vitrine ili razvati Institut i upitati za njih. Roga je ukrasni svježdasti sferični predmet izrađen od kartona i tkanina poznat pod raznim imenima – roga, zvijezda, šiška, kocka, buzdovan... Danas ga u Hrvatskoj izraduju još samo rijetke čuvarice te tradicije.

– U pravilu, roga je samo jedina od mnogih vještina rukotvorina nastalih spornim rukama koje njeguju umjetnici poput tkanja, vezanja, heklanja, pletenja i šivanja, prenošeci ih s koljena na koljeno. Iako na prvi pogled može djelovati složeno, posebno rade koja nije vječna rukotvorina, zapravo pripada među lakše ručne radove. Mnogim našim kazivačicama bila je zapravo i jedan od prvih vlastitih izlozava u svijetu ručnoga rada.

Prisjećajući se dana kad su je izradivale, žene često evociraju uspomene na školske prijateljice i prijatelje, brizne simpatije i udvaranja. Bili su to za njih bezbrižni dani kad se pjevalo svugdje i svugdje, kad je kolo zaista bila igra i kad su pripovijedanja starijih bila i zabava i škola. Pa



Duh prošlih vremena

sjetete se onda i raznih anegdota, opjevanih u narodnim stihovima tzv. starovinskog pjevanja koje ih je praćilo kroz mladost, govori Dunatov; dok Čaleta ističe kako stihovi radekavice i ojkavica, pjevanje često uz rad, i danas čuvaju duh prošlih vremena.

Opomene iz djetinjstva

Tijekom 1950-ih i 1960-ih izrada roge ušla je i u školske klupe, a mnoge djevojke iz dalmatinskog zaleđa i

Like prvi put su izradile ove rukotvorine baš na satu domaćinstva, dok su najranije u tehnički izrade ovisile o učiteljima koje su producirale. Danas izradu roge čuvaju tek rijetke žene vječne rukotvorinama, bilo kao uspomena iz mladosti, bilo kao novi kreativni izazov.

Jedna od njih je i učiteljica Nada iz Brinja, koja je ovu vještinu obnovila sa svojim učenicima, prisjećajući se, kako kaže, uspomena iz

Figure 7: Cover of *Zadarski list* with the topic of the roga exhibition and a photo from the workshop (from the author's private archive)

In addition to the exhibition, we sought to present and disseminate our research through the media, engaging a number of diverse local platforms (radio, newspapers, Internet portals, television).²¹ On the one hand, we aimed to achieve the greatest possible reach and potentially open up space for new knowledge through feedback, while on the other hand, the goal was to increase the visibility of the practice and its bearers. Such media coverage, in turn, contributed to increasing the symbolic capital of our tellers and informants, mostly within their own communities where their knowledge and participation in the research began to be recognized and respected.

We are also trying to disseminate information about *roga* in a scientific context by visiting and contacting museums and institutions related to heritage preservation, as well as by participating in domestic and international conferences, trying to arouse the interest of our colleagues with the aim of conducting as detailed and, if possible, international research. We established initial contacts with local museums (Museum of Lika in Gospić, Museum of the Cetina Region, Ethnographic Museum in Split), encouraging them to conduct possible research, but also to apply the revival of the art of crafting, for example through workshops. We also contacted the Conservation Department in Imotski, whose employees continued their research in the region, thus complementing our knowledge and expanding the map of *roga*, *zvijezda* and *šiška* to another interesting area.

THIRD STEPS: REFLECTION AND DEEPENING

The preparation of the first abstracts for the international conference on the research of *roga* and the songs that accompanied the making of handicrafts took place simultaneously with the fieldwork, but also with the organization and holding of the workshop and exhibition at the Zadar City Library. This simultaneity of research, analysis and presentation activities stems from the fragmentary nature of the research focuses, and therefore our research takes place in a circular and dialogic framework, constantly connecting the field, analysis, theory and demonstration. The semi-organized approach allows for flexibility in order to “capture” what is, in an analytical sense, unexpected and unforeseen, what we didn’t even think to ask. Therefore, we view the methodology of this research as experimental, building on the approach advocated by Ballestero and Winthereik (2021: 1-12). Instead of strictly separating the concepts that make up the “semantic cloud” of research – field work, theory, writing, method, analysis – the authors advocate their permeation through concrete practice, whereby analysis ceases to be just a transitional phase between the field and theory. Instead of focusing on the question “what is analysis”, they focus on the question “how is analysis” (2021: 5). At the same time, they recognize the analysis in a “creative and organized process of creating insight” (ibid: 3-5) which they call “experimental practice”, following the reflexive approach to ethnographic writing, thus apostrophizing the critical awareness of the role of the researcher in shaping cultural knowledge (cf. Clifford and Marcus, ed. 1986). This overcomes the problem of imposing the authoritative, unanimous hegemonic thought of the researcher in favor of multi-voiced ethnography in co-production with the participants, that is, the tellers. In our case, the participatory approach to research created the conditions for establishing a more meaningful collaboration with individual tellers and informants, which led to a certain redistribution of power. The gap between researchers and researched has

21 For example, a guest appearance on local Diadora TV showed faces and introduced some of the names from the workshops (Jurin 2025), as well as a double feature in Zadarski list, with the shortened version available on the website (Zadarski list 2025).

narrowed to some extent, but we should not harbor the illusion of equality, as it is important to emphasize that the researchers still retained full control over shaping the organizational, curatorial and interpretative framework. For this reason, we consider it inappropriate for our research to use the term “collaborative”, because it seems to us that it implies a more even redistribution of power and joint decision-making, while in our case this dynamic was clearly asymmetrical.²²

In conducting our research, the snowball method, i.e. chain sampling, proved to be crucial. It has been used in anthropology and related disciplines for decades to find and give voice to less accessible, marginalized, vulnerable and/or specific groups of people, as well as to document everyday and “banal” practices, which often form the basis of cultural patterns (cf. Gierczyk et al. 2023: 87-104). This method involves reaching respondents through recommendations from previously selected contacts, who thus become intermediaries in further networking and sample dissemination. In this research, these people are called “informants”. We applied this method in our research for two reasons. The first reason was the challenging task of locating female tellers who possessed knowledge about the topics of our research (craftsmanship, traditional singing, everyday life), and who were at the same time a neglected segment of both practice and ethno(-music)ological research. By reaching out to neglected topics, the “silent voices” and even “silent memories” of our tellers gradually emerged: elderly women from rural areas, often socially isolated and with only elementary education. These were women whose experiences were rarely recognized in their own communities and were mostly invisible or suppressed in social and scientific narratives. The second reason for applying the method was related to the very object of the research – *roga* – which we found randomly over a wide geographical area (across the country and beyond). The snowball method also proved to be effective in mapping dispersed local knowledge and objects.

Although the limitations of the snowball method are often emphasized in social sciences, such as the impossibility of generalization, the risk of bias due to selective sampling, and the tendency towards scientific description at the expense of objectivity and precision (cf. Gierczyk et al. 2023: 97), in this ethno(music)ological research, the method has proven to have significant advantages. It facilitated our access to tellers who would otherwise be difficult to identify, since most do not use social media and are not inclined towards sharing their own experiences on their own initiative. It also provided us with the opportunity to record in detail fragments of everyday life and nuanced individual narratives. In this sense, the observed – locally diverse – musical repertoire proved to be an important guide because it requires a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and directs the research towards the intimate, local, contextual, and subjective dimensions of identity, social memory and symbols, enabling a deeper understanding of the complex social and cultural processes that shape communities.

22 The use of the terms participatory and collaborative research in the scientific literature is still not fully systematized. Although these terms are often used as synonyms, in this paper they are distinguished. By participatory research we mean a form of collaboration in which informants and tellers participate not only as sources of information, but also as active participants in the application of research results, for example as demonstrators, organizational collaborators, or promoters of research in the context of media, cultural and educational events such as workshops and exhibitions. In contrast, the term “collaborative ethnography” denotes a deeper level of joint action in which researchers and the researched participate together not only in the production, but also in the interpretation of knowledge through, for example, co-authorship. In Croatian ethnological and ethnomusicological literature, such an approach is still rare. Recent examples such as the research on the Lastovo Carnival (cf. Čaleta and Niemčić 2022) and research on the topic of LGBTIQ+ activism in Zagreb (Krizmanić 2025: 119-136) show a shift towards collaborative forms of research practice.

The presented methodological framework encouraged the development of participatory research that gradually took on the contours of a joint production of knowledge. The involvement of the media opened up a new dimension of the research process, which not only involves documentation, but also the creation of a new social memory related to the researched object – *roga*. An interesting example was provided by an article in *Slobodna Dalmacija*, written on the initiative of the participants with the intention of presenting their own experiences and identities within the wider local community to the public.²³ The women's statements revealed satisfaction and pride in participating in a series of events that encouraged them to revive memories of the "old days", revitalize the practice of crafting *roga*, and strengthen the practice of folk singing. It is particularly indicative that certain locally-specific data collected during the research, and later published in the exhibition catalog at the Zadar City Library, today appear in the narratives of the tellers, although they are often unaware that this data originates from other localities. This points to a complex process of knowledge circulation simultaneously reinforced and distorted by media mediation, raising the question of the extent to which research discourse can transform local narratives.

The activity of our tellers, as well as their media presence, have not ended with this project, but seems to mark only the beginning of a new and open process. Thanks to such initiatives, some excellent singers and craftswomen, as well as members of their communities, are becoming more aware of the value of their skills, and are striving to present them with particular enthusiasm within folklore groups. This process contributes to the durability and visibility of traditional practices in contemporary society, but at the same time points to the phenomenon of the formation of new "professional tellers", i.e. individuals whose rich experience has been legitimized by the local community and who act on its behalf (cf. Čaleta and Niemčić 2011: 65-67). Thus, the research entered the field of applied ethnomusicology, with the segment of transferring knowledge to younger generations being of particular importance. The key role in this was played by teachers – one of them involved in the project from the very beginning – who, with our support, conveyed knowledge about traditional handicrafts and actively participated in the dissemination of research findings. Specifically, two children's workshops were organized as part of the exhibition in the Zadar library with first and second grade students of the Šime Budinić Elementary School.²⁴ In this context, the school proves to be an important place for the formation and transmission of social memory, which further deepens the connection between the community, educational institutions and research work. For this reason, we continued this practice within the following exhibitions of *roga* in other environments.

The circular, nonlinear and dialogic methodological framework of this research returned to itself in the presented reflexive analytical process, representing an example of experimental practice in which the boundaries between fieldwork, interpretation and public presentation are necessarily porous. It resembles an unfinished puzzle whose purpose is not to be completed, but rather a process of constant assembly, disassembly, and reassembly.

23 Article available on the website of *Slobodna Dalmacija* (Nejašmić 2025).

24 See the article about the workshops held by teacher Jadranka Dunatov (2025).

KEY INSIGHTS

“Unfortunately, we don’t know how to put together a story, here...” – in our search for misplaced memories, we often came across such seemingly banal statements. They raise key questions: how do communities decide what is worth remembering and molding into the broader framework of the national narrative, and what remains aside, and why? Such statements also point to the vulnerability of neglected and forgotten memories, susceptible to manipulation, reconstruction and reinterpretation for the purpose of shaping shared narratives within dominant social, political, and cultural frameworks. They also remind us that research discourse actively encourages, raises awareness, shapes and transforms local narratives, i.e., social memory.

Our research emphasized precisely the dialogue between the researchers and the researched. With the participatory framework, we sought to open up space for joint production of knowledge and increase the visibility of the “silent” voices of women whose practices and memories often remained unrecognized in the broader social context. The snowball method proved to be crucial. In addition to being useful in finding female tellers with rare and specific skills in crafting *roga* and/or singing while making of handicrafts that would otherwise be difficult to identify, it also opened the way to a more nuanced approach to fragmentary and difficult-to-access memories, precisely because it covered a multitude of individual voices from a wide geographical area marked by local specificities. This gave the research depth, and the story itself, through media visibility and academic exchange, expanded beyond the local framework to the national and even transnational level.

We approached fragmentary memories in an attempt to understand the broader function of creative expression in former everyday life. Therefore, we entered the research experimentally, combining two focuses from the periphery of research, everyday life and memory: the skill of creating an ethnographic object and musical repertoire. The different sensory properties of these focuses helped to evoke the most vivid memories, with the tactile, kinetic and visual qualities of crafting *roga* often evoking fragments of songs, texts, melodies and performance practices. This approach, which started from touch, sight and movement, and led towards the invocation of sound memories, is not common in ethnomusicology, but it is part of the canon of sensory studies. In this research, it proved to be stimulating for the investigation of the interrelationships between material objects and immaterial cultural practices.

The research was designed in a nonlinear and dialogic methodological framework with the character of applied science whose effects go beyond scientific production per se. Its value is not primarily in documenting the practices, but in the process in which neglected voices became more audible, forgotten traditional practices have been revitalized, and individuals in the community have been affirmed. Although the participatory approach reduced the gap between the researchers and the researched, their relationship remained asymmetrical. However, the subsequently established dialogue expanded the boundaries of research beyond scientific circles, leaving a mark on the communities. This made the research not only analytically but also socially relevant, reviving forgotten memories through contemporary interpretations and practices, reinforced by strong media coverage. Returning to the idea of research as a circular and open process, and especially in combination with applied action, in which the research discourse constantly and unpredictably intervenes in local narratives, this approach requires continuous reflexivity and monitoring of the development of the “snowball” that has been set in motion.

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