The Cultural and Economic Implications of the Development of Wayside Kiosks for The Crooked Road: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail in Montgomery and Giles Counties, Virginia

The Appalachian Studies Program at Virginia Tech
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The Crooked Road

- **Mission:**
  - promote heritage music
  - support tourism and economic development

- **Accomplished in 3 ways:**
  - Major venues
  - Affiliated venues
  - Wayside kiosks
Research objective and findings:
- Collect traditional heritage music history of Montgomery and Giles County
- Different types of music played, definition of traditional music and how it surfaced, notable musicians in genre
- Assess economic impact of TCR in both counties
Potential Issues

• Sustainable communities
  – Balancing sociocultural capital and economic stimulation

• Tourism
  – Tourists seek authenticity
    • Neoliberalism – risk of bastardization
  – Ritual tourism practices
    • Can sometimes be performed “without thought for personal and social consequences” (MacCannell, 59)
    • Admiration vs voyeurism

• This year:
  – Addressing these issues
  – Emphasizing community involvement
Methods

• Systems-Functional-Holistic Approach
  – Maintains respect for autonomy of local culture
    • Focused primarily on people as opposed to economist perspective
  – Requires ongoing consent of participants
  – Concept of sacred cultural capital
    • Local stakeholders identified a deeply personal and emotional connection to traditional music

• We utilized the following research methods to engage local officials, business owners, musicians, and other informants
  – Participant observation
  – Focus groups
  – Interviews
Progress at this time

- **September-October**: Interviews with local people connected to traditional music in the area.
- **September 27**: Participant observation at Turkey Shoot in Giles County.
- **October 24**: Focus group meeting with Giles County and Montgomery county businesses.
- **October 25**: Focus group with Montgomery musicians at Bill Richardson’s memorial.
- **Nov 3**: Presentation for Montgomery County Tourism Committee.
- **Nov 4**: Presentation for Giles County Tourism Committee.
- **Dec 5-6**: Presentation for Appalachian Teaching Project in Washington.
Three Project Components:

Placement

Content

Design
Placement

• The Crooked Road Requirements: A wayside kiosk must be located
  – In a high traffic area
  – In a strategic cultural hearth
  – In a place geographically central to the county

• Montgomery County:
  – Due to county population density, two signs would be needed
  – Blacksburg - The Farmer’s Market in central downtown
  – Christiansburg - The New River Valley Mall

• Giles County:
  – Preferably somewhere natural
  – A wayside is justifiable if scenic overlooks are expanded
Content

• Determined through community input
  – Oral history interviews
  – Focus groups
• Communities determine:
  – Sacred vs commodifiable
  – Self-representation
• Findings:
  – Changeable content
  – Traditional music in the area transcends a single definition
  – Stakeholders' priorities vary
  – Montgomery County:
    • Diversity, adaptability, broad appeal
  – Giles County:
    • Passing down traditions
• Content must reflect community within the parameters of The Crooked Road's mission
Current Design:

Standard “Rustic” Construction
Two Information Panels
Crooked Road logo and Radio Signs
Shallow Roof

Other Variations
Stand-alone (pictured)
Single panel stand-alone,
Connected to non affiliated structures
Initial Designs

Community oriented with a trellis roof
Stand alone and modular
Sculptural for a park setting
Revised Design

- Dynamic component
- Emphasize local materials
- Involve local craftsmen and volunteer labor
- Fit within The Crooked Road’s design language
- Eye catching
- A place to rest and sit, shelter from the elements
Expected Progress

January-March
Meeting with county officials
to determine location and
revised design

February-April
Fundraising

April-June
Final determination of
design, placement, and
content

Dec 11
Presentation for The
Crooked Road Advisory
Board

June 2015
Completion of the
wayside for the Mountain
Homecoming Festival
Concluding Remarks

The Crooked Road’s past practices have not effectively met the needs of the Appalachian communities it serves.

“It is people who must determine a community’s development options, make decisions, and take actions.” (Flora & Flora, 126)

Our research method: Bridging social capital
Increase in community investment
Emphasis on social capital
Acknowledgements

The Crooked Road and its director, Mr. Jack Hinshelwood

Our stakeholders: those who invited us into their communities and offered insights for our research.

The Appalachian Regional Commission

The Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, East Tennessee University

The Montgomery County Tourism Development Council

Lisa Bleakley, Montgomery County Tourism Director

The Giles County Tourism Committee

Jennifer McCoy, Giles County Tourism Director

The Appalachian Studies Program at Virginia Tech
References


