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The Challenges of the First European Cultural Itinerary: the Way of St. James

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ABSTRACT

The pilgrimage route to St James is one of the oldest religious itineraries. The Camino (Way) came into being as a major pilgrim route in the Middle Ages. Although, in later centuries, it saw long periods of neglect, in the last fifty years, its potential has been rediscovered. It received formal and institutional recognition from the Council of Europe on 23 October 1987, as the first European Cultural Route, then, in 1993, it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Throughout this time, the final destination has remained the same, the city of Santiago de Compostela (declared a World Heritage Site in 1985), but the itinerary has turned into a polysemic cultural, tourist, monumental, spiritual and sport route.

In view of such complexity, we examine how its original religious essence is undergoing semantic changes, which make it attractive for groups of different faiths and creeds, and with varying motivations. For this purpose, we study the tangible (huge monumental heritage) and intangible heritage (rituals and practices) that enriches and characterises this pilgrimage route. In explaining its polysemy, we will demonstrate why and how the Camino can satisfy the needs of pilgrims and tourists with different motivations and expectations. Finally, we set out the factors that determine the transferability of practices from the Way of St James to other European Cultural Itineraries, for instance the Via Francigena.

Keywords: Way of St James; Pilgrimage; Territorial Polysemy; Heritage; Cultural Itineraries

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Introduction

The origin of St James's Way goes back to the 9th century, and follows the discovery of the remains of the body of the Apostle St James, an event known as the *inventio*¹, and their official recognition in the 12th century. The story that explains the existence of St James's relics in Galicia is that this close disciple of Jesus Christ had been preaching in the western lands, situated at the end of the world, and when he died, his followers transferred his relics from Jerusalem to these lands, in the north-western Iberian Peninsula. This description led to the development of routes to this sacred place of the Apostle, which was gradually transformed into a pilgrimage phenomenon. These paths would bring thousands of people from all over Europe to a small city in the north of Spain: Santiago de Compostela. That is why the Camino de Santiago, as the Way is known in Spanish, played an important role in the construction of Western European culture during the Middle Ages; as Goethe once stated "Europe was made on the pilgrim road to Santiago de Compostela". A major pilgrimage movement emerged, reaching its heyday in the 12th and 13th centuries (Santos & Lopez, 2015). For that reason, the Way of St James was also a very important structure for reinforcing Christian Europe, and contributed to the urban development of cities and villages along the route (Lois, 2000). After many years of intense pilgrimage movements, in the 15th century, the number of pilgrims walking the paths to Santiago de Compostela started to decrease, and the phenomenon of St James entered into a continuous decline, which lasted until the 19th century (Lois, 2013). The reasons for this diminishing importance of the Way in this period are associated with the Protestant Reformation and schism within the Church that condemned pilgrimages and the worship of relics. Despite the fact that the number of pilgrims on St James's Way never ceased (Pombo, 2007), by that time, the Camino had practically disappeared and even the image of St James underwent a change from how it was represented in medieval times, when he was associated with a pilgrim saint; he became a warrior saint fighting against the heathens, like Santiago Matamoros (St James the Moor-slayer) (Domínguez, 2009). It was in the second half of the 19th century when the first signals of the renewal of Santiago de Compostela as a place of pilgrimage emerged. Two important facts contributed to restitution of this city as a holy place: the counter-reformist spirit of Trent and the (re)discovery, in 1879, of the remains of the Apostle, which had been missing since the 16th century (Lois & Lopez, 2012). The Catholic Church immediately confirmed the authenticity of the Apostle's remains, calling the event the second *inventio*. The growth in the number of pilgrims coming to the city combined with the increasing importance of Santiago in the religious panorama of the 20th century, resulted in greater interest from various spheres, including the political, economic and religious sectors. Mainly following recognition of the historical centre of Santiago as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985, and declaration of the Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela as the first European Cultural Route in 1987, the touristic and cultural importance of this small city began to strengthen. Nowadays, the Camino de Santiago is a very important cultural route and Santiago de Compostela is a major tourist destination. This is the result of important political events to recover the

traditional St James pilgrimage as a modern tourist product, and the implementation of measures to reconstruct the material and immaterial cultural resources of the Way. In this study, our aim is to examine its transformation from a place of religious essence to a tourist attraction, for groups of different faiths and creeds, who make use of it for different motivations. We aim to demonstrate why the Way of St James can satisfy the needs of pilgrims and tourists with different expectations. This process will support the concept of “polysemy of the Way” (Lois & Lopez, 2012). We will adopt a qualitative-analytical methodology, based on gathering and reinterpreting previous studies concerning the historical development of the Way of St James. To this end, we have structured our contribution into four main sections, in addition to the introduction and conclusions. We will start by reflecting on the origin and development of the Camino, its historical meaning, and the most significant events that led to the spread of this religious pilgrimage destination. Secondly, we will summarise the contemporary revitalisation of the Way of St James and valorisation of the cultural, religious and historical resources associated with this route. Next, we move on to the current meanings of walking to St James and the challenges associated with the Way and the city of Santiago. Finally, we will present a brief comparative analysis, in order to ponder and suggest factors that affect the transferability of practices from the Way of St James to the Via Francigena.

1. The Resurgence of the Camino in the 20th Century

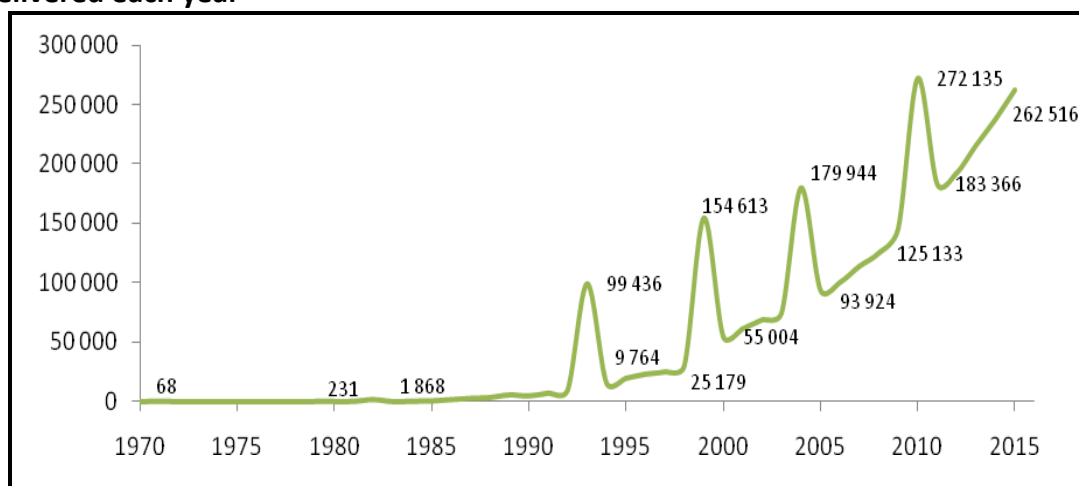
During the 20th century, the Way and its final destination, the city of Santiago de Compostela, were subject to significant transformations that radically changed their images and positions at a national and international level. During the regime of General Franco (1939–1975), St James was elevated to the status of patron saint of Spain (and remains so), with the main objective being to underpin the important religious nature of Spain, through an ultraconservative myth (Castro, 2010; Lois, 2013). According to Sasha Pack (2010: 337) "... Franco formally restored the symbolic association between St. James and the institutions of state". Moreover, a new strategy to monumentalise the city of Santiago de Compostela was implemented, and some of the landmarks along what now is known as the French Way were also reconstructed (Castro, 2010; Lois & Lopez, 2012). One important mark of this revitalisation was that the Cathedral, Fonseca College and the Hostal de los Reyes Católicos (one of the city's most prestigious hotels) were reclassified and declared national monuments (Castro & Lois, 2006), in addition to other symbolic places in the city. Over time, several buildings have been renovated.

Santiago's image as an important international landmark was boosted by ascribing different types of value to its resources. Affirmation of the religious importance of the city is related to Santiago joining the Holy Cities network, together with Rome and Jerusalem, and the Pope's visits in 1982, 1989 and 2010 (Santos & Lopez, 2015). These events effectively positioned the city as an important destination for religious tourism. It was at that time, especially in the 60s, that the Franco regime was trying to position Spain in the international panorama as a powerful, international economy and tourist

destination. The effects of this process on Santiago were related to ascribing value to the religious resources of the Camino and its transformation into a tourist product, to attract religious tourism. In the following decades, public actions in the cultural and tourist field have associated other images with this resource, thus producing a very attractive product for various types of tourists.

Only during the 80s did the city of Santiago and the phenomenon of St James start to become more popular, the latter being an important resource for the city's development (Santos & Lopez 2015). After the Franco era, a nationalistic, autarchic and religiously traditionalist discourse was replaced with democracy, and the phenomenon of St James, far from weakening, began enjoying a new golden era (Lois, Castro & Lopez, 2015). Through consolidated strategies, a new image and experience of the Camino de Santiago was created. In 1985, the process of valorising the historical heritage of Santiago that commenced during the Franco dictatorship was recognised by UNESCO, which declared its historical centre to be a World Heritage Site. Two years later, in 1987, the Council of Europe proclaimed the Camino to be the first European Cultural Route, and in 1993, the whole Camino was declared a World Heritage Site. Furthermore, preserving the built heritage of Santiago was, and remains, a very dynamic process involving different institutions, among them, Santiago City Council, created in 1992, with the main objective being to connect the three levels of government: national, regional and local. Besides the alliance between public bodies, there is a strong cooperation among many collectives related to the Way. All of this has built up a powerful movement, which explains the present success of the city and all that relates to the saint (Lois, Castro & Lopez, 2015). Among them, an alliance of experts on the Way, and associations of friends of St James scattered all over Europe are keen to contribute to promoting cultural and historical tourism for their towns and regions. Also, co-operation actions are taking place, not only within regional boundaries inside Spain, but also between nations—mainly Germany, France and Portugal. Since the pilgrimage has starting points in France and Portugal, bilateral efforts are being made to co-ordinate the entire route.

Fig. 1: Evolution of Pilgrims to St James based on the number of *Compostelas* delivered each year

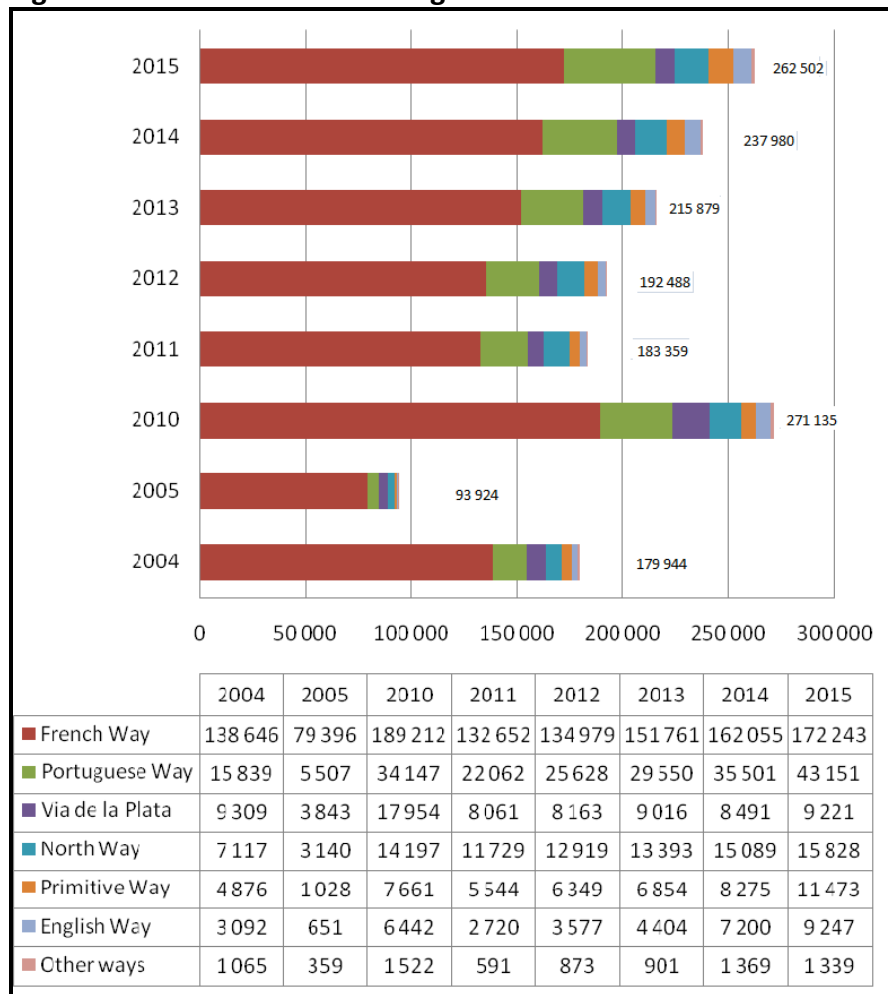


Source: own elaboration based on data from the Pilgrims' Office, Santiago de Compostela.

From figure 1, it is possible to verify that these measures have had strong impacts on the number of pilgrims arriving at the city. The first Holy Year² to record mass pilgrimages was 1993. This is considered the year that the Camino became the star product of Galicia, and a promotional campaign was set in motion to publicise the “Plan Xacobeo 93” (Celeiro, 2013). After this important year, there has been continuous, significant growth in the number of pilgrims arriving at the city, particularly in holy years. The dataset provided by the Pilgrims’ Office allows us to find out the approximate number of pilgrims and their origin, sex, age, employment status, mode of transport on the Way (walking, cycling or riding), the starting place of the chosen route and itinerary. Counting the number of pilgrims arriving at the city is based on the number of Compostelas; these are certificates issued by the Chapter of Santiago Cathedral, which certifies that a person has made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. However, this document is issued only to those who declare religious reasons, or religious and other reasons, and anyone giving only other reasons receives a less attractive non-historical certificate, so it is difficult to know the real significance of the religious motivations of the pilgrims. Also, to obtain it, it is necessary to show an officially stamped document, and complete a minimum of 100 kilometres on foot or horseback, or 200 kilometres by bicycle. According to these data, the vast majority of pilgrims who arrive at the city have walked the Way of St James (90% of the pilgrims in 2015) and almost 10% have done it on a bicycle. The growth rate between 2005 and 2015 of the total number of pilgrims arriving at the city is almost 180%, and last year, the total number of Compostelas awarded was 262,516.

As shown in Figure 2, the number of pilgrims has risen on all routes, although, among the six most used pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, the French Way is the one with the highest number of pilgrims. The reason for the concentration of pilgrims on the French Way may be related to the fact that this route has undergone more heritage recovery strategies. Furthermore, it is the best-known itinerary to Santiago internationally, and the one that was first recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and by the Council of Europe as the first European Cultural Route. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe through yearly trends that, in recent years, the French Way, in relative terms, is decreasing in popularity. For instance, in 2005, the French route represented 84.5% of the total pilgrimage, while in 2015, it was 65.6%. By contrast, all the others experienced growth, as can be observed in Fig. 3. Indeed, in July 2015, the Primitive Way and the North Way have been declared WHS; this recognition would contribute to determining pilgrims’ future decisions.

Fig. 2: Annual Distribution of Pilgrims on the Different Routes to St James



Source: own elaboration based on data from the Pilgrims' Office, Santiago de Compostela.

Regarding the age of pilgrims, in 2004 and 2005, more than half of the pilgrims were under 30, while in the following years; the most representative group was pilgrims aged between 30 and 60 years old. In the last three years, the number of pilgrims over 60 has increased, in relative terms.

2. Valorisation of the Cultural and Identity Resources of the Camino

As X. M. Santos (2006) states, the consolidation of the phenomenon of St James does not only increase the number of pilgrims but, and in particular, it increases the importance of Galicia and Santiago as tourist destinations. The renewal of the Camino de Santiago was an excellent opportunity to transform Galicia into an international tourist destination, and promote its traditions (Cerquetti et. al, 2014). The international recognition of both Santiago de Compostela and the French Route led the Galician authorities to implement policies aimed at protecting tangible and intangible heritage, and to ensure three main elements, according to L. Lopez & M. Pazos (2010: 254):

- a) Its uniqueness as an itinerary at the foundations of European Identity;
- b) Recovery of ideological heritage and of the St James pilgrimage tradition;
- c) Recovery of the ancient practice of hospitality, revitalised through this valorisation.

Over time, both Santiago de Compostela and the French Way were transformed into depositories for cultural landscapes and unique identity values that would give rise to development opportunities for spaces traversed by the Camino. Adaptation of classic elements of the pilgrimage to the needs and interests of current society allows consumers of tourist-related products of the Camino to feel connected to history, without the nature of the contemporary experience being lost.

All routes to Santiago de Compostela contain different and important elements of heritage, in its historical, cultural, natural, architectural and immaterial facets. Walkers of the Camino perform unique rituals and traditions; this gives the walking experience a symbolic significance, which emotionally connects the pilgrim to the route. Furthermore, one of the unique features of the Camino is the network of refuges and hostels available to the pilgrims, offered by religious institutions and private and public organisations. Nowadays, the Way also provides pilgrims with the opportunity to access renovated sites, such as churches, villages, sources, bridges and, at the same time, socialise with other tourists and local people. Indeed, along the Camino, there are cities with important historical centres and monuments, like Burgos, Astorga and León, which offer traditional food and wine. European Structural Funds LEADER I and II and PRODER have been very important tools in this recovery: they have financed projects and actions related to the rural development of areas along the Way (Pardellas, 2000; Andrade, Leira & Caramés, 2010).

Both in the case of the Camino and the city of Santiago de Compostela, the local and regional governments of Galicia have developed rehabilitation strategies in order to reconcile the valorisation and rehabilitation of material and immaterial heritage with maintaining the residential and administrative functions of spaces. Actions like naming Santiago de Compostela European City of Culture confirm the dynamic and lively culture of the city, which contributes to ensuring the sense of identity and community of Santiago's inhabitants (Lopez & Pazos, 2010). Other important elements for constructing and disseminating the image of the Camino at an international level are cultural products (books, films, etc.) because they are effective marketing and promotional tools (Lois, Lopez & Santos, 2014).

Contemporary media production is succeeding in expressing the combination of immaterial and material values of the Way. In fact, artistic use of this route supports fashionable use of the Way; an outstanding example has been analysed by L. Lopez, D. Santomil & R. Lois (2015), who show how the increase in the number of American pilgrims is a direct consequence of the film *The Way*, an example of film-induced tourism in the city.

Fig. 3: Pilgrims arriving to Pilgrims' Office in Santiago de Compostela



Source: Authors'

3. The Pilgrimage to St James in the 21st Century: Meanings and Challenges

Several centuries of intensive medieval religious fervour and the associated ideas of penitence, which boosted pilgrimage movements to Santiago de Compostela during the Middle Ages, have been replaced by the idea of a holiday period, and nowadays, the Camino is associated with leisure, contact with nature and creating social networks (Caillois, 1939; Hejduk, 2010). The city of Santiago has become a “universal goal”: the end point of branching routes and paths that make up the backbone of Europe, both in a territorial sense, as they run through it in its entirety, and in a religious sense, too (Lois González & Lopez, 2012). The first European Cultural Route harmoniously blends into its environmental context and is attentive to regional assets. It generates new and alternative types of tourism, including cultural, eco, slow, wellness and health tourism. According to surveys carried out by the Observatory of the Way of St James in 2007 (Informe do Perfil do Peregrino, 2007), which collected data on pilgrims' main motivations for doing the Camino, it is possible to identify the territorial elements along the Way that are recognised as pull factors. These include landscape, popular culture and heritage, in addition to religious, spiritual and recreational factors. The Way of St James is considered a polysemic space: it performs a number of different functions associated with a sacred space, in addition to being a modern-day pilgrimage route and cultural tourism itinerary (Lois & Lopez, 2012; Santos & Lois, 2011).

The historic city of Santiago and its routes are social and holy products that attract different types of visitors: tourists and pilgrims. These two social phenomena have similar dynamics and, particularly in modern times, it is difficult to distinguish between

them. According to R. Lois (2014: 18): “The attributes of the contemporary pilgrimage/journey along the Camino are its institutionalisation, in the form of a defined and delimited route, and travel, which is accompanied by the carrying out of a series of characteristic rites: movement towards a clearly recognisable goal or destination; motivation, always associated with spiritual matters, of finding one’s inner self, and a series of specific behaviour patterns”. Visitors to the city who are not considered pilgrims according to the criteria of the Church are classified as regular tourists and, even though they may have walked a stretch of the Way, are not considered pilgrims and are recorded as tourists (some 4–5 million people, who travel to Compostela every year, as opposed to the almost 300,000 real pilgrims) (Lois González, 2014). The success of the Camino de Santiago's revitalisation can thus be associated with the creation of a new product that is in line with the new motives for contemporary tourism, while the classic elements of pilgrimage have also been preserved.

Our historical analysis shows that the Galician authorities have been working on policies to protect and promote the routes and destination, without forgetting the pivotal role of their cultural and historical value. Being a WHS implies responsibilities for all actors participating on/along it: the government, inhabitants, people working on it (or along it, in the case of the Way) and tourists, too (Lopez & Pazos, 2010). For these reasons, regional and local government bodies work continuously to ensure and improve the tourist performance of the Way, as well as to preserve its uniqueness. We believe that the future challenges of the Way might be summed up as follows:

1. Saturation: this relates to the Ways (routes and hostels) and the historical city of Santiago de Compostela. This problem requires more in-depth studies about the capacity of public hostels and, of course, the capacity of heritage elements. A successful study was carried out during Easter Week, 2010, when three million visitors were recorded; the results have been analysed by X. M. Santos and L. Pena (2014). They show that the physical and perceptual pressure on the Cathedral exceeded its capacity and that the Cathedral did not employ any defined management policies (Santos and Pena, 2014). Future management tools should therefore be designed to protect different areas against the risks of tourism saturation.
2. Seasonality: this is one of the reasons for saturation. Walking the Way is an activity strictly bound to climatic conditions, and considering its geographical extension, especially in the north of Spain, this may seem an obvious issue. It should be noted, however, that increasingly more pilgrims are coming to Santiago in autumn and winter, which is creating a less seasonal image of the Way.
3. Loss of uniqueness: the Way could potentially become fashionable and cheap. The increasing number of pilgrims reflects positive trends, but, at the same time, this could be considered a type of alarm about popularisation of the Way, which could take on trivial features and motivations. Concerning the city of Santiago de Compostela, escaping trivialisation means avoiding being considered only a pilgrimage destination, by revaluing its identity and historical and cultural heritage.

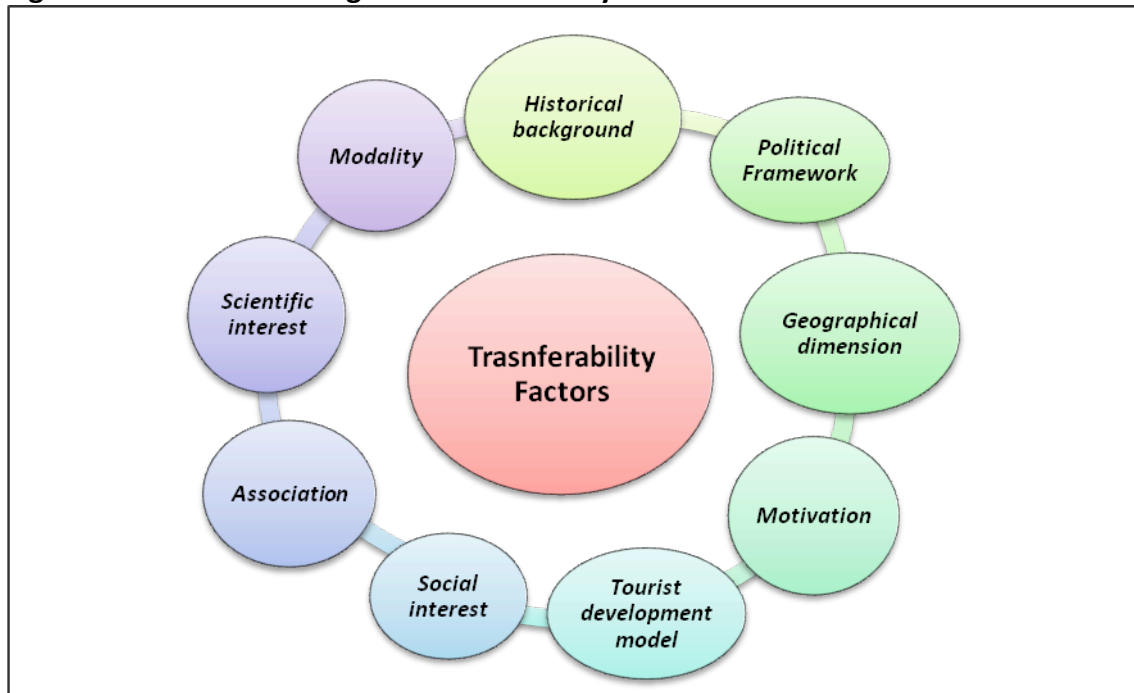
A future challenge for the city is therefore restoring its previous diverse functions, together with all the facilities and services required for daily life.

4. From the Way of St James to the Via Francigena: Factors Determining the Transferability of Practices

Cultural routes have become keystones for tourism; in fact, they are based on the relationship between tourism and culture, the enrichment of travellers' experiences and respect for cultural heritage and tourist activities (Dallari & Mariotti, 2011; Mariotti, 2012; Trono, 2012; Cerutti & Dioli, 2013). The Camino has become a referential within the worldwide rise in sacred or spiritual routes, Peter Margy defines this phenomenon as 'caminonization', that is the "worldwide rise in sacred or spiritual footpaths, primarily stimulated by the success of the Camino, which cannot simply be equated with what is nowadays called spiritual tourism" (2015: 185). According to him: "Caminonization cannot simply be equated with what is nowadays called 'spiritual tourism,' which usually implies more a mixed program on the part of regional administrators and organizations, stimulated by policies on heritage and tourism, with a stronger focus on tourism than spirituality " (2015: 186).

We aim to highlight the importance of a comparative approach between the European Cultural Routes of different countries that have numerous territorial elements in common. In order to establish the factors that determine the transferability of strategies and actions developed along the Way of St James, we have performed a brief investigation into the status quo on the Via Francigena, adopting the geographic boundaries of Italy as our criterion. This way, we have identified points in common with the itinerary of the Way of St James, and present our reflections based on nine factors that determine the transferability of practices.

Fig. 4. Factors Determining the Transferability of Practices



Source: own elaboration.

- 1) *Historical background*: these itineraries stand out because they represent European history and identity, in addition to the cultural diversity of the towns and regions they traverse. The Way of St James and the Via Francigena are both certified cultural routes, with a wealth of history and spirituality. They both cover different geographical areas within the framework of a large transnational project to recover ancient pilgrimage pathways, in order to foster local economic and tourist systems (Berti, 2012).
- 2) *Geographical dimension*: the Way of St James and the Via Francigena are inter-cultural and inter-generational journeys (Rizzo & Trono, 2012; Cerutti & Dioli, 2013). Looking at their geographical extension, the Way of St James crosses Spain from east to west, for over 900 kilometres, while the Via Francigena crosses Italy from north to south, for 1,000 kilometres. Both pass through different landscapes, regions, cities and villages, which results in them having rich tangible and intangible heritage (Hans, 2012). A further aspect they share as regards their urban role is that both have been territorial systems of relationships, trade and transformations that have contributed to creating European urban networks, over time (Berti, 2012; Diti, Torreggiani & Cassinari, 2015).
- 3) *Motivation*: people follow the Way of St James for different reasons (as explained earlier). Along the Via Francigena, it is also possible to find different motivations, including religion, sport, culture, environment and landscape (Diti, Torreggiani & Tassinari, 2015). Concerning landscape, the diversity of this factor adds value to both itineraries, as mentioned above.

- 4) *Modality*: the majority of pilgrims and travellers still prefer the traditional act of walking, followed by using a bike and riding a horse. This means hostels have an obligation to offer adequate services. The wealth of heritage discussed earlier should be considered an opportunity to start a process to refurbish ancient monuments and renovate ancient structures, to create hostels for pilgrims, in addition to rehabilitating the oldest routes and improving road infrastructures. These actions would satisfy the increasing desire of pilgrims to enjoy their experience. In the case of the Way of St James, the necessary services have been incorporated into the pilgrimage landscape (Lopez, 2015). In the case of the Via Francigena: "the Italian regions crossed by the Via Francigena (among them, in particular: Tuscany, Emilia Romagna and Piedmont) have developed, across their territory, a number of projects to improve alternative pedestrian routes, such as horse lanes and bike lanes, with concern for sustainability and slow tourism" (Mariotti, 2012: 91). Unfortunately, the Francigena Way has no equestrian options or staging points for horses to enable overnight and short stops (Bambi et. al., 2015).
- 5) *Scientific interest*: one of the strengths of the phenomenon of St James is the growing attention it is receiving from the international academic community. In recent years, more interest in the Via Francigena has also been recorded. The latest research reconstructs the history of the route, as it crosses the different Italian regions, in order to establish an itinerary and stops in the region, and thereby enhance heritage protection (Copeta & Marzulli, 2010; Bartolini & D'Alessio, 2015; Otranto et. al, 2015) and propose tourist projects aimed at fostering potential (Cerutti & Dioli, 2013; Bambi et. al., 2015).
- 6) *Association*: one of the strengths of the Way of St James has been the work performed by associations and confraternities to promote internationalisation of the itinerary. The Association of 34 Italian Municipalities of Via Francigena was founded in Fidenza in April 2001, to promote the ancient pilgrimage route. In 2006, it was renamed European Association of Via Francigena. A. Mariotti (2012: 90) underlines that the EAVF: "has been acknowledged by the CoE as a unique European reference model for the development and protection of the Vie Francigene, and has qualified as a réseau porteur (leading network)".
- 7) *Social interest*: the growing presence in mass media of the itinerary of St James is a contributor to its contemporary success (as explained). This phenomenon is a key factor in promoting cultural itineraries, as the Via Francigena is currently experiencing. Indeed, the recent production of books and films reveals that it is an interesting setting for writers and directors.
- 8) *Tourist development model*: in recent years, extensive investments (financial and political) have been made in the Via Francigena (Mariotti, 2012). Among the regions it traverses, the Tuscan one is considered an example of good practice in creating a transregional investment network and guiding interventions for multi-sectoral local

development (Conti, Iommi, Piccinni & Rosignoli, 2015). Generally speaking, developing and promoting the Via Francigena for tourists aims to satisfy the needs of a demand oriented towards the cultural and spiritual aspects of life: a responsible, slow and captivating type of tourism. The tourist model is based on contact with local people, so visitors can get to know places intimately. As in the case of the Way of St James, the cultural axis that passes through the Italian Peninsula is being viewed as a valid tourist product. It enhances connections with local culture (landscape, historical buildings, traditions, typical products and crafts) and nourishes: “a sort of ‘heritage production chain’. An entrepreneurial network connected to the heritage of the region should be developed, with the aim of achieving this evolution” (Lemmi & Siena Tangheroni, 2015: 438).

- 9) *Political Framework*: from a political point of view, touristic development of the Way of St James has taken place under Spanish national territorial administration. According to this, the autonomous communities produce their own local and development policies. As a result, the domestic image of the Way is the sum of these regional policies; among which, the Galician ones have been the most successful. In the case of the Via Francigena, fragmentation still exists among policies of the regional authorities, which is impeding the launch of a unified image of the Via Francigena in Italy (Mariotti, 2012).

Conclusions

The Way of St James is the first great example of the contemporary recovery of pilgrimage in the West. This centenary route has been a way of communication for cultural, social, artistic and literary interchange. In just fifty years, it has emerged from the obscurity where it was immersed in the early 20th century, and its celebrity has grown to encompass first a Spanish dimension and later a European one, to finally achieve universal recognition. As stated in the declaration adopted in Santiago on 23 October 1987: “This route, highly symbolic in the process of the construction of Europe, will serve as a reference point and an example for future initiatives”.

The Way of St James is considered a model. It was developed by integrating the territorial components (culture, landscape, heritage, economical and social sectors, etc.) and local actors involved (institutional or otherwise), to generate a process to enhance the cultural and identity values of the Camino. In view of the increasing importance of modern forms of tourism, like cultural, slow and natural tourism, among others, projects like St James’s Way and Via Francigena afford significant future opportunities. In fact, the most recent forms of cultural tourism highlight successful contact and interrelation with local cultures and communities, and contact between visitors and the authentic face of regions. It is therefore fundamental that the development of these two routes focuses on authenticity, experience and tradition.

The case study of the Way of St James and positive expectations for the Via Francigena confirm that investing in cultural routes gives rise to useful tools to promote understanding and communication between people from different cultures. This is useful to obtain cooperation in heritage conservation and, above all, to enhance sustainable social and economic development (Trono & Oliva, 2013). Both cultural itineraries are rich in natural resources (natural spaces, rivers, lakes, etc.) that can be used for recreational activities (tourist resources). Given these aspects, the tourist pluripotentiality that has been a strength for the Way, can be improved on the Via Francigena, a promising and diverse cultural and tourist product. Some of the practices used to develop St James's Way, mainly on the French Way, are the same as those being used on Via Francigena, although many other successful practices could be applied to the Italian route. Of course, this is made possible through dialogues among local agents, political actors, associations and confraternities. All of them have to be willing to strengthen the potentialities through international cooperation. Finally, it is also important to be aware of the challenges that St James's Way is facing nowadays, and implement protection mechanisms to avoid certain problems, such as those related to massification of the touristic product and loss of authentic elements in certain parts of the Camino.

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¹ The term *invention* means the discovery of the relics of a martyr in a place where there is no previous tradition of their existence.

² When the feast day of St James falls on a Sunday, the Church extends its indulgences and the Spanish authorities launch massive campaigns to promote the Camino.