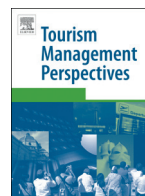




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Spiritual tourism on the way of Saint James the current situation

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the transformations of The Way of Saint James experience, between old dynamics and new feelings, and investigates the new features of spiritual tourism along its path. The study combines theoretical and empirical methodologies. In the latter case, primary sources and secondary sources are interpreted. The Way is a multi-faith spiritual experience that interprets post-secular trends. Some of its spiritual attractions are the possibility of breaking the routine, of finding mental renewal and as an anti-stress therapy. The very landscapes of The Way assume the nature of therapeutic landscapes in which the physical and built environment, social conditions and human perceptions produce an atmosphere favourable to spiritual healing. The study concludes by proposing an evaluation of the new impacts brought about by the shift from religiosity to spirituality.

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1. Introduction

In the eleventh century, The Way of Saint James was documented in many Christian European passages influencing customs, legends, art and spiritual life. Around this time, legends and Jacobean traditions emerged and spread and since then, the pilgrimage has largely assumed religious and spiritual meanings. Starting in the ninth century, with its founding, and continuing up until the early twentieth century, Santiago de Compostela was linked with religion and pilgrimage (Lois Gonzalez, 2013; Lois González, Paül Carril, Pazos Otón, & Santos Solla, 2015). This article analyses the spirituality and mobility duality along the pilgrimage route of The Way,¹ which is now a socio-territorial reality so complex that different tourism sectors have become interested in it. Its range of products has become diverse, especially concerning the enjoyment of landscapes and environmental elements that favour physical and spiritual health (Lois Gonzalez & Santos Solla, 2015; Milani, 2001; Santos & Lois, 2011; Sobrino & López, 2006). In regard to the relationship between spirituality and pilgrim mobility, among the numerous definitions of pilgrimage, it is worth remembering that it was originally a *quest* or spiritual journey that involved the search for one's self as part of an educational process (Morinis, 1992; Osterrieth, 1997; Turner & Turner, 1978). At the end of this process, and thanks to the encounter with the sacred, a new identity or a new status has developed. Since a spiritual experience affects the perception of the world at large

(Coleman, 2004; Frey, 1998), the pilgrim's experience does not usually end with the arrival at the destination or upon returning home. Spirituality unites pilgrims and tourists, especially since the latter are also searching for something (Fig. 1).

In previous studies the polysemy of The Way was analysed, valuing it as a key to its current success (Lois Gonzalez, 2013; Lois Gonzalez & Lopez, 2012). This paper intends to look deeper into one of the meanings of this polysemy: spirituality. Thus, its goal is to analyse the importance of "spiritual mobility" in the sacred and spiritual space and to point out the new features of Jacobean spiritual tourism. Among them, for example, the fact that the landscapes of The Way are becoming *therapeutic landscapes*, like those in which the physical and built environment, social conditions and human perceptions produce the right atmosphere for healing (Gesler, 1996). From the methodological point of view, primary and secondary statistic sources are considered. By means of qualitative methodology, the transformations of The Way experience have been investigated in order to define the patterns of Jacobean spiritual tourism. The study analyses the motivations of The Way, paying attention to the value of spirituality. Walking The Way is a spiritual experience close to nature and the origin of the sacred place.

2. Literature review

2.1. Towards a new concept of spirituality

The sacred space is a concept that has evolved over time, depending on the approaches that have been taken to interpret it; structuralist (Berger, 1971; Croatto, 2002; Eliade, 1955), postmodern (Grapard, 1998; Jacobs, 1993) and "more than representational" (Della Dora, 2011). Today, it is the stage for formalized symbolic performances

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¹ The abbreviation "The Way" will be used henceforth to refer to The Way of Saint James.



Fig. 1. The Way of St. James, 2016.

Source: Amparo Portabales Dobaño, José Manuel Pérez Pena and Carlos Chedas Fernández, members of the Fotoforum Compostela Cultural Association. Authorized reproduction.

(rites), whose presence enables it to maintain and renew the value of the sacred space (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995; Coleman & Eade, 2004; Holloway & Valins, 2002; Kong, 2001). It is a reality under construction and difficult to define where the sacred identity coexists with other identities (Kong, 2001). The revival of pilgrimage routes has helped to create a post-secularism logic according to which spirituality and religiosity maintain their prominence and take on new interpretations of the environment (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Eade, 2011; Habermas, 2008; Paddison, 2011). Dewsbury and Cloke (2009) propose an inclusive definition of spirituality that considers spirituality to be part of contexts that are not necessarily religious, leaving room for subjectivity. Spirituality is a keystone of the post-secular age (Blom, Nilsson, & Santos, 2016; Pace & Giordan, 2012) and societies are producing privatised religions in which power resides with the individual and not in what is transcendent, like for instance alternative religious movements (Blom, Nilsson, & Santos, 2008; Blom et al., 2016; Farias & Lalliee, 2008; Mikaelsson, 2012). These are “New Age” movements that, since the 1960s and 1970s, have interpreted the search for a new individually oriented spirituality and the need for introspection (Digance, 2003).

Emphasising the importance of autonomy and self-development, the New Age becomes an exemplary religion of modernity. This New Age attitude coincides in time with Land Art, a term chosen by Walter de María to describe his first landscape interventions in the 1960s. Nature becomes a space for personal experimentation, allowing creators to approach concepts such as absolute time, the sublime, the primitive or the supernatural (Raquejo, 1998). For artists of Land Art, the emphasis is on the relationship between the work (nature) and the subject experiencing it. Although it is not driven by a spiritual, metaphysical or religious concern, Land Art is not opposed to its spectator having an introspective experience in these terms. The new pilgrimages glorify remembrances or national martyr tombs or commemorate the diaspora (root-pilgrimage or diaspora tourism) to revive the ethnic roots of a population (Wagner, 1997). They are derived from new civil or secular religions that are founded on nationalist sentiments and continue to legitimize the reality through new places of worship (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

Some tendencies of contemporary spirituality can be explored in terms of place and performance (Blom et al., 2016); other forms are

linked to landscapes and interesting environmental conditions – one example is medical geography that investigates the relationships between the environment, physical and spiritual health (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009; Turner & Turner, 1978). Medical geography is also interested in the notion of *health in place*, i.e. to explain the relationship between the experiences of the sacred place of healing and the perception of health by pilgrims. This line of research has led Wil Gesler (1996) to define *therapeutic landscapes* as those in which the physical and built environment, social conditions and human perceptions produce a favourable atmosphere for healing. The term *healing* is broadly used to refer to cures in the biomedical sense (physical healing), a sensation of psychological well-being (mental healing) and feelings of spiritual renewal (spiritual healing). The focus being on latter meaning, insofar as it is the dimension that it is increasingly characteristic of tourism movements, and thus spiritual tourism. In places where spiritual potential is rediscovered, there is a *spiritual magnetism*, i.e. a power of attraction due to historical, geographical and social factors and human values that motivate the movement of pilgrims (Eade & Sallnow, 1991; Preston, 1992; Rinschede, 1997). It is a unique and exclusive place in the international context (Wagner, 1997) since it has something that is impossible to find in other places; this uniqueness is crucial for spiritual magnetism.

At the same time, these post-secular preferences help to develop new approaches to pilgrimage (Blom et al., 2016). Post-secular pilgrims are wholly contemporary individuals, very different to the medieval ones as far as their values and perceptions are concerned. While their behaviours reflect the characteristics of contemporary tourists, they form part of a clearly differentiated group (Harman, 2014; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Their motivations are varied, although returning to the place and a yearning to walk and reassert themselves in their environment are fundamental to their personality and endeavour (Lorimer, 2011). The post-secular situation is marked by a major shift from organized, normative religion to subjective and experiential spirituality (Geels, 2009; Heelas, 2008; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Partridge, 2004; Sutcliffe, 2003; Sutcliffe & Bowman, 2000; Taylor, 2007; Ward & Hoelzl, 2008).

The present resurgence of a spirituality-oriented pilgrimage in Europe demonstrates the relevance of this contention (Illman, 2010;

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