CULTOUR+. AN ERASMUS+ STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ON CULTURAL TOURISM, ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND INNOVATION

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Abstract:

CULTOUR+ is an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership in the field of Higher Education with the mission of coaching and fostering innovative and creative business ideas in cultural management for pilgrimage and religious cultural and thermal tourism (lodgement services, guiding services, museums, complementary activities to pilgrimage and thermal experiences, souvenirs designing, etc).

We will present the innovative character of the project, its agenda and timeline and the first preliminary results of an international survey on pilgrimage and cultural routes in six different European Countries (Caminho Interior Portugues in Portugal, Vía de la Plata in Spain, Via Francigena in Italy, Radom-Jasna Gora in Poland, Krastova Gora in Bulgary, St. Paul's Footprints in Greece).

Questionnaires, field analysis units, protocols and scenarios will be presented in their general and more detailed traits from an interdisciplinary approach. Management aspects will be discussed as well as roadmaps for future actions.

Keywords: Cultour+, European Cultural Routes, Cultural Tourism, Cultural management, Entrepreneurship, Erasmus+, Social anthropology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the project Cultour+ framework, we are developing research in different case studies3 that share the condition of being pilgrimage routes. Despite this common condition, they have very different characteristics, what makes their comparative analysis more complex.

This challenge, nevertheless, may enrich the analysis being our aim, to explore in models and practices (good and bad) of cultural and tourism management of this kind of routes in order to:

- Do diagnosis and recommendations to cultural pilgrimage routes managers and users
- Foster entrepreneurship and business projects related with cultural routes and cultural tourism
- Transfer good practices between the case studies and other cultural routes

We are conducting anthropological research through participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, website analysis. Applied results of our research will produce white books on pilgrimage and recommendations reports in pilgrimage routes management, market studies for entrepreneurs and comparative international analysis.

Pilgrimage routes are mostly walking routes with many different starting points but a clear end, or at least a milestone where all pilgrims direct their footsteps. In terms of tourism and cultural management, there is a great complexity of stakeholders or agents with different complementary but also conflicting interests.

In this presentation we focus on St. James' Ways, mainly in the Via de la Plata (Silver Way) and the Caminho Interior Português a Santiago (Portuguese Inland Way to St. James) to draw some fundamental insights for the diagnosis and management of the route that can be transferred to other pilgrimage routes.

Potential for local development but also fragility are characteristics of the pilgrimage routes. They are not at all static, but in continuous change and adaptation.

We are conducting anthropological research through participant observation, in-depth interviews, website analysis. Applied results of our research will produce white books on pilgrimage and recommendations reports in pilgrimage routes management, market studies for entrepreneurs and comparative international analysis.

2. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY.

Within the framework of the project Cultour+ -we are conducting interdisciplinary international research on cultural routes. We have focused in Cultural Pilgrimage Routes and are analysing different declared and undeclared pilgrims' routes and sanctuaries. Portuguese Inland Way to Santiago, Vía de la Plata, Vía Francígena, Czestockchowa, St. Paul's footsteps, Cross forest.

Research is cross-disciplinary, and qualitative research techniques play a special role. In depth interviews, participant observation, mystery client, discussion groups,…

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[3]. Portuguese Inland Way to Santiago (Portugal), Vía de la Plata (Spain), Vía Francígena (Italy), Radom-Czestockchowa (Poland), St. Paul's footsteps (Greece), Cross forest (Bulgaria).

Comparative analysis is a backbone line of the research, for good practices are look for transfer and bad practices, look for diagnosis. Website analysis, hemerographical and bibliographical analysis complete the methodological framework.

The research aims to perform diagnosis and offer recommendations to cultural routes managers and to undertake market studies to best coach Cultour+ entrepreneurs.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF CULTURAL ROUTES

"Cultural routes" is a concept valid for many different complex sets of cultural heritage and tourism resources. Cultural routes "differ in their network and management structures, development approaches, geographical dimensions, target groups, capacities, and quality standards as regards products and services" (Khovanova-Rubicondo, 2010:7). Although they are known as "crossborder cultural connection paths" they can also be "a defined geographic area, which is connected by a common theme". (Häfele, 2013:6).

They can be classified following different criteria, attending to their:

3.1. Thematic focus

The most common and determinant classification. Since 1987, the Institute of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe has certified 33 routes, amog which 32 are disseminated and available in the European Cultural Routes Institute's site.

Although, difficult to categorize in subsets, we can find some that could be clearly called pilgrimage routes (The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, The Via Francigena, The Route of Saint Olav Ways)

3.2. Tourists' motivations

Cultural motivations are general to cultural routes, but there may be also, others. Among them:

a) professional
b) environmental
c) sport
d) wellness
e) educational
f) spiritual
g) religious

In pilgrimage routes, the spiritual motivation and/or a religious purpose is fundamental (see Graphic 1 about The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes) but there are other factors as important for pilgrim routes as the religious ones.
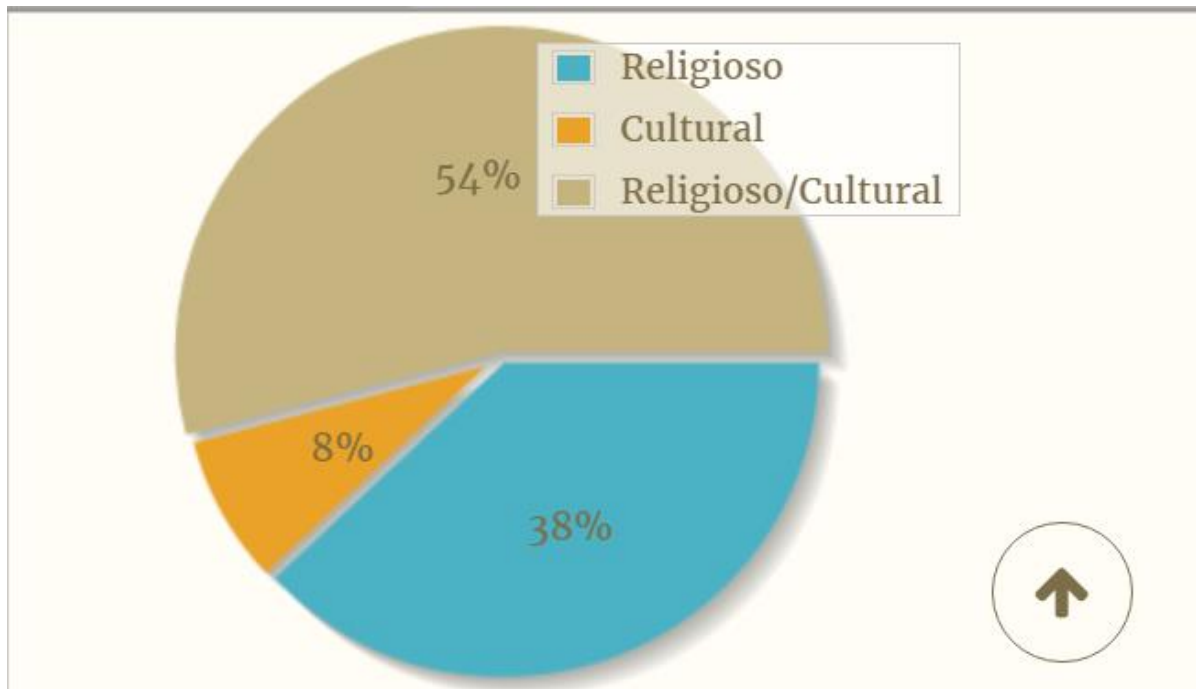
Graphic 1. Pilgrims by motivations. St James way. Year 2015 (Religious, Cultural, Religious/Cultural). Oficina del Peregrino. Cabildo de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela

These are statistics registered from pilgrims asking for the Compostela (262.459 in 2015), But there are a number of "pilgrims" that once they arrive at Santiago de Compostela they are not interested in the Compostela and therefore not counted in the statistics. Some journalists (Ramírez, 2016) estimate them as much as a 50% of those that arrive at Santiago walk by Xacobean ways, but our research in the Via de la Plata, taking in account hostels occupation numbers give us data closer from the Cabildo's registries. In any case, the percentage of pilgrims following cultural and not religious motivations is much higher than 8%.

We would find different percentages in the peregrination to Fátima, where strong and unique religious motivations are present in a vast majority of visitors. Fátima has been inspired by St. James trails to signalize and develop pilgrimage routes. In this process, the Association of Friends of Ways of Fatima (Associação de Amigos do Caminho de Fatima) signalize with blue arrows, issue pilgrim credentials, organize pilgrimages, train pilgrim guides, lodge pilgrims in a hostel.

Image 1. Signal of the Caminho de Fátima. http://www.caminho.com.pt

Image 2. Signal of the Caminho de Fátima. http://www.caminho.com.pt

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Image 3. Compostela. Wikipedia. Author: Jonathan Jacobi . 2007

As inner transformation is a common effect in cultural routes, tourists' motivations are in these routes especially open, so at the end the tourist may have included new motivations than those before departure, or these can change weight or priority (See graphic 2).
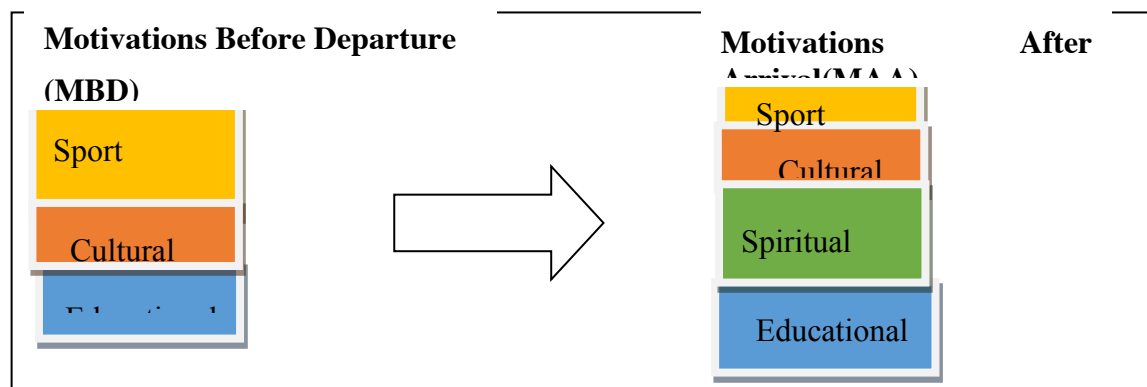
Graphic 2. Dynamic motivations in pilgrims. Source: Author.

The increasing importance on the process rather or as well as on the end marks their condition as walking trails (see Graphic 3). We can then, classify the routes by the means of transportation.
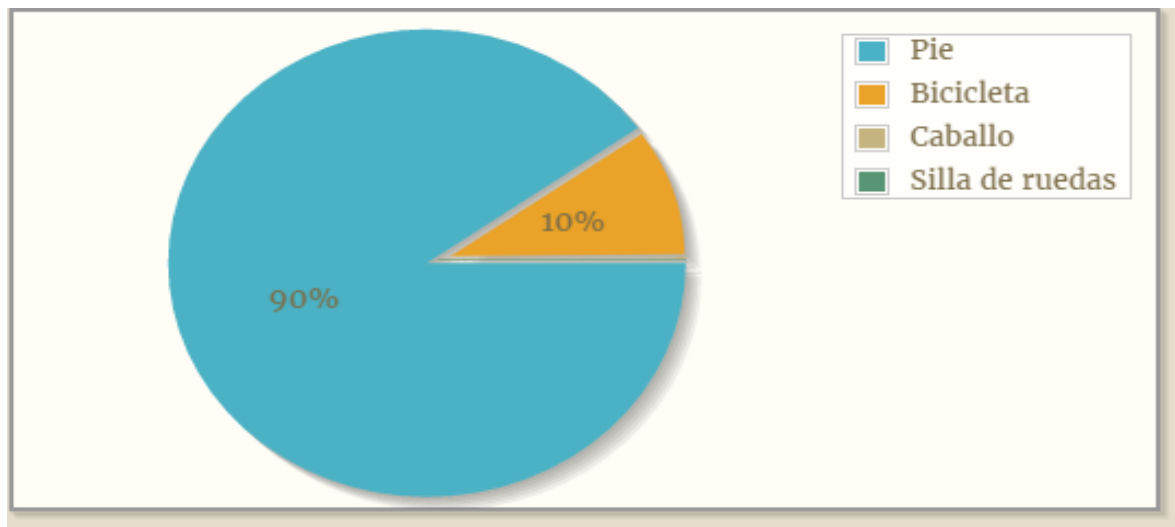
Graphic 3. Pilgrims by means. St James way. Year 2015 (Walking (90%), Cycle (10%), Horse, Wheel chair). Oficina del Peregrino. Cabildo de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela

3.3. Attending to their means of transportation

Normally routes can be crossed by almost all transportation means, butusually one of them prevails over the others. So, in touristic terms, we could talk of

a) Horse routes
b) Car routes
c) Train routes
d) Sailing routes
e) Walking routes
f) Cycling routes
g) Motorbike routes

Nowadays, pilgrim routes as The Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes are associated with the act of walking. The iconographical importance of the walking stick associated to the term "pilgrim" is a proof of that (see images 4 and 5).

Images 4 and 5. Official Signals of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes

However, from a semantic and anthropological point of view pilgrimage does not only refer to walk, and it has never done it. In the past, in the pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Rome, and nowadays, in cases such as Lourdes, Fátima or Czesctokchowa all transportation means are good enough in order to reach the sacred sanctuary as soon as possible, for usually, pilgrimage is the result of an inner urge stirred by an important moment in the life of the pilgrim or his/her family, normally the dramatic eruption of a disease. The joyfulness of the way is far from these pilgrimages' motivations.

The experience shows that the touristification of the routes and sanctuaries is compatible with their religious and spiritual role. Not without conflict, as it is the touristification of all religious heritage, that depends on respect, and not surpassing a critical mass or charge capacity. Although there are objections, in general, religious organizations support the touristification of pilgrimage routes and of religious heritage.

Cycling is rapidly growing as a major social trend and as a way of pilgrimage. It is a very different touristic and pilgrimage experience and way of travelling (roads and stages, risks undertaken and physical condition are different).

One of Cultour+ case studies, the "Vía de la Plata", shares its character as walking and cycling route (as a Santiago de Compostela route) and as motorbike route. In 2014, 3,300 fidelization cards for motorbikers were issued in the "Vía de la Plata" (see Images 1 and 2). (http://www.hosteltur.com/183990_moto-turismo-se-consolida-ruta-plata.html)

Images 6 and 7. Advertisement photo by Estefano Casati in the Ruta Vía de la Plata website and Moto Vía Card.

3.4. Attending to their network vs. itinerary character

1. Itinerary
2. Network

Even though the language used refers to the itinerary character of the routes (that cross countries) the majority of them are normally networks without fixed itineraries. The European Cultural Routes Programme acknowledges that the routes are grass-roots networks, promoting encounters and efforts sharing objectives in a common framework. With no fixed itineraries, they allow, of course, the design of routes at all levels, as the European routes of Emperor Charles V, that is celebrated in Extremadura, every February since the last sixteen years and gathering dozens of amateur theatre groups is recognized as a "Regional Tourism Interest" celebration.

Pilgrim routes are nonetheless always itineraries, normally with a fixed end. There are exceptions as Japanese pilgrim circular routes as Shikoku Henro. In the linear pilgrim routes the beginning is what remains open, at least in the Camino de Santiago routes and the Via de la Plata, now line of convergence of the Mozarabe routes, departing from Granada and Malaga first, and recently expanding later to Jaen, Almería and Cádiz. Living pilgrim routes enlarge and grow in branches. So we can say that our pilgrim route is a living itinerary, evolving with the years as a tree of growing roots.

Image 8. Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes in the Iberian Peninsule.
Source: http://cosasdeandroides.com/grandes-rutas/

3.5. Attending to their cross-border condition

1. Involving one to ten countries
2. Involving ten to twenty countries
3. Involving twenty to thirty countries
4. Involving more than thirty countries

European Cultural Routes with participation of more than 40 countries	1	3%
35-40 countries	0	0%
30-34	1	3%
25-29	0	0%
20-24	3	9%
15-19	4	13%
10-14	4	13%
5-9	11	34%
1-4	8	25%
Total	32	100%

Table 1. European Cultural Routes by participating countries. Source: Author.

This is a very important fact in European Cultural Routes, since the dynamics of a route (network) are very different when it involves 3 countries or 33. Concerning the countries participating in the programme we find more than fifty, with a more active role of the greatest EU partners, which are also coordinating most of the networks (Table 1).

France	28	Czech Republic	6	Cyprus	**2**
Italy	22	Ireland	6	Egypt	2
Spain[4]	22	Russian Federation	6	Georgia	2
Germany	21	Lithuania	5	Lebanon	2
Belgium	16	Serbia	5	Libya	2
United Kingdom	14	Turkey	5	Malta	2

[4]. Couriously Spain's info is not directly available from the European Cultural Routes website (it is the only country that when we click on it, it appears the message "You are not authorized to access this page", but counting indirectly it participates in 22 routes.

Croatia	11	Bulgaria	4	Morocco	2
Portugal	10	Estonia	4	Syria	2
Switzerland	10	Luxembourg	4	Tunisia	2
Netherlands	9	Belarus	3	Ukraine	2
Poland	9	Finland	3	Albania	1
Austria	8	Iceland	3	Armenia	1
Greece	8	Latvia	3	Israel	1
Norway	8	Slovak Republic	3	Republic of Moldova	1
Romania	8	Algeria	2	Palestinian Territories	1
Sweden	8	Andorra	2	Republic of Macedonia	1
Denmark	7	Azerbaijan	2		
Hungary	7	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2		
Slovenia	7				

Table 2. European Cultural Routes by participating countries. Source: Author.

Country	Routes	Percentage
France	9	28%
Italy	6	19%
Germany	5	16%
Spain	5	16%
Austria	2	6%
Belgium	1	3%
Greece	1	3%
Norway	1	3%
Serbia	1	3%

United Kingdom	1	3%
Total	32	100%

Table 3. Headquarters Countries of European Cultural Routes. Source: Author.

Only a 10% participate in more than 15 routes (See table 4).

Countries participating in 25-29 routes	1	2%
Countries participating in 20-24 routes	2	4%
Countries participating in 15-19 routes	2	4%
Countries participating in 10-14 routes	4	8%
Countries participating in 5-9 routes	16	30%
Countries participating in 1-4 routes	28	53%
Total countries	**53**	

Table 4. European Cultural Routes by participating countries
(by range and percentage). Source: Author.

3.6. Attending to their dynamism

Attending to their dynamism and agenda we can classify the routes with:

a) High level of activity
b) Medium level of activity
c) Low level of activity
d) Disqualified routes

4. STAKEHOLDERS, GOVERNANCE AND NETWORKING IN PILGRIM ROUTES

There are many different and diverse stakeholders participating in cultural routes. An overview of potential partners is enlisted in the Practical Guide for European Cultural Routes (Häfele, 2013), based on different sectors in all territorial levels

local/regional level	national level	international level
tourism and tourism-related providers		

▪ Hotels, restaurants, transportation, agencies ▪ Tour-Operators ▪ Travel Agents (packages) ▪ Special-Interest-Travel Agents ▪ Guides ▪ Cultural Guides ▪ Local tourist offices and tourist boards ▪ Provincial tourism organizations ▪ Destination Management Organizations	▪ National tourism organizations ▪ Tour operators and travel agencies	▪ International booking portals
culture and the arts		
▪ Attractions ▪ Regional and local cultural organizations from all sectors ▪ Interest groups from arts and culture ▪ Culture Travel Guides ▪ Historical and cultural associations (museums, customs, other) ▪ Libraries ▪ Institutes such as Architectural Institute	▪ Nationwide active cultural institutions ▪ Cultural associations ▪ Bilateral organizations in the cultural sector ▪ Nationwide interest groups from arts and culture	▪ Europe-wide associations of cultural institutions ▪ Europe-wide associations of cultural institutions ▪ Culturally oriented umbrella organizations
public facilities		
▪ responsible departments (Tourism and culture) in municipalities and in the provinces ▪ Regional Chambers of Commerce	▪ responsible ministries ▪ Chamber of Commerce	▪ Representative organizations abroad ▪ Representative Offices of the Chamber of Commerce ▪ Cultural forums abroad
private sector enterprises		

▪ Communications agencies (advertising companies) ▪ Publishers ▪ Merchandising-Providers ▪ Architects, landscape architects ▪ Spatial planning offices ▪ Cooperatives		
educational institutions		
▪ Schools ▪ Colleges ▪ Universities ▪ Research institutions ▪ Independent researchers ▪ Historical societies	▪ Colleges ▪ Universities ▪ Research institutions	

Table 5. Source: Häfele (2013:27)

For cultural pilgrim routes, we can be more specific with the kind of actors involved

a) Pilgrims/Tourists ("tourgrims")
b) Local residents
c) Tourism professionals
    a. Hotelier
    b. Hospitalier
    c. Restaurant managers
    d. Guides
    e. Other professionals (As National Mailbox or little companies with the Mochila Paq)
    f. Souvenirs shops
    g. Musems (i.e. Museum of pilgrimages, centres for interpretation of the silver route,…)
    h. Other services (Food shops, pharmacies)
d) Public agencies
    a. Municipal
    b. Regional (Xacobeo –Public-private mixed consortium)
    c. National
    d. International (Institute of European Cultural Routes), European Partnerships and projects
e) Catholic church (With different dioceses with convergent and conflicting interests)
f) Researchers (Archaeologists, Anthropologists, Sociologists, Psychologists, Cultural managers, Sport Scientists, Health scientists.
g) Friends of the Way Associations and federations

h) Guides
   a. Personal human guides
   b. Editorials (of paper guides, Internet guides, apps)
i) Writers, Film makers (opinion leaders and trend makers as Paulo Coelho, Shirley MacLaine, Hape Kerkeling)

There are different relevant interactions between these stakeholders and actors of pilgrimage routes. We will give some examples:

4.1. Pilgrim (Tourist or tourgrim) ⇔ Local residents

It is usually a commercial interaction that promotes local development of SMEs. Normally, very good relationships are reported, but there are also inhabitants negatively influenced by the route. This can be as we have registered because of very narrows parts of the route where pilgrims and tractors hardly fit at the same time. (Casanova, 2016).

There is a risk for pilgrims but also for drivers when the route goes along a national or regional road. The roadside's length decreases dramatically in some roads, so pilgrims have to be very aware when a lorry crosses in the opposite direction.

An Italian group of pilgrims could witness a terrifying accident in the "Vía de la Plata" resulting in the driver's death5 (Image 9), what shocked them completely for they were the first to assist.

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[5]. Original footnote in Italian: "Nella foto sopra riportata, e' immortalato l'incidente del camion betoniera, che si è schiantato contro la parete rocciosa. È stato veramente traumatizzante per chi l'ha visto» (Maurizio Morini) [In the photo, we see the cement truck's accident that have crushed against the rocky wall. It has been really traumatic for the ones that have seen it"]

Image 9. Accident in Via de la Plata, witnessed by Italian pilgrims from Joint Action Cultour+-I-Meet, Erasmus+ Key Actions. Author: Maurizio Morini

The discourses and images of pilgrims for the local inhabitants have changed during the last 20-30 years with the normalization of the pilgrims' presence. Cristina Sánchez Carretero has shown how they were conceived by local Galician inhabitants of the little villages crossed by it.

> The first pilgrims started to arrive around twenty years ago. People were not used to it and they used to say 'Look, here comes the bogeyman!' or 'that person must be poor or homeless,' but they were pilgrims… although they were called homeless. The locals were afraid of them' […] At the present many pilgrims dress 'as hikers, as if they just came out of a sports-store. (fieldnotes 20-10-2010). (2015:108)

Now, as this author has registered, pilgrims are considered by many as Galegos, an important part of their heritage.

However, pilgrims, as, in general, tourists are recognized by their positive contribution to local development until they reach a certain point of saturation. The subjective carrying capacity is reached when locals are fed up with the myriads of tourists "invading" their places and their negative effects.

4.2. Pilgrim ⇔ Pilgrim

One of the most special outputs of the pilgrimage experience are the links and relationships forged during the way. It is really an opportunity for people from diverse social backgrounds, regions, nationalities to meet and make friends.

A pilgrim from Cáceres relates in an interview how he joined a group of people in one of his pilgrimages to Santiago what made the trip very different to other occasions:

I met a group of sixteen or eighteen young lads, foreigners, Danish, Swedish, German, two Catalans that spoke fluent English, two brothers. I made very good friends with them, I was very young and I went with them. We made an awesome group. We got the attention in hostels, because we were partiers, the girls were very good looking, they were very prepared, they loved Spain, we got along very well, and besides, they were teachers and nurses[6]. (A, Male, 65 years-old)

In other of his 7 pilgrimages to Santiago, he was invited and hosted by another pilgrim, a friend from San Sebastian who gave him lodgement, introduced him to his friends and associates, cooked for him and took him to the starting point.

One of our interviewees met the woman that would become his wife while walking to Santiago, creating an intercultural Spanish-Dutch family.

Pilgrims join in Associations and Confederations of friends of the Camino and walk together frequently, keeping alive the flux of pilgrims along the way and doing its surveillance.

4.3. Local residents ⇔ Local residents

Cristina Sánchez-Carretero has shown some of the impacts of the Camino on the heritagization of the places and landscape it crosses, in processes ruled by "market logic, which focuses on developing the Camino as an economic resource; and the logic of identity politics" (2015:99).

Cultural routes are employment opportunities for many people. The Camino de Santiago Cultural Routes have impacted the economy and landscape of a good share of the populations where it passes by. The French Way is starting to give signals of saturation, decreasing in high season transferring pilgrims to other ways.

4.4. Local residents ⇔ Public Governments

Public governments are the ones designing and developing laws and means to implement them. They distribute local, regional, national and European funding to these processes of heritagization, promoting architectural models and transformations in the villages crossed by the way.

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[6]. Original in Spanish: "Ahí conocí a un grupo de 16-18 chavales, chavalas, extranjeros, daneses, suecos, alemanes, dos catalanes que hablaban inglés perfectamente, dos hermanos, bueno hice muy buena amistad con ellos, yo era muy joven y me fui con ellos. Hicimos un grupo que no veas, arrasábamos en los albergues, porque éramos muy juerguistas, las tías estaban muy buenas, eran unas chavalas muy preparadas, les gustaba España, tenían unos tipazos de miedo, nos llevábamos muy bien, y además eran profesoras y enfermeras".

Sometimes decisions taken by local authorities find public response as the campaign from Javier Ayuso Medina in a platform of signature raising, collecting 9,228 signatures (25/09/2016) to ask for the Government of Galicia to restore the milestones7.

Public governments are also owners of pilgrim hostels, and responsible of their proper management. At the present we have detected serious problems with hostel management in the province of Cáceres in the Vía de la Plata, three of them being at the time closed, something denounced and disseminated by pilgrims in social networks and having an impact on this route selection.

4.5. Public Governments ⇔ Public Governments

Sánchez-Carretero (2015) referring to Schrire and Murray shows the different entities and their different interests on the Camino legislation:

> "the Council of Europe aims to protect the route's intangible heritage; and the UNESCO designation of the Camino Francés attaches 'more weight to the tangible heritage of material related to places, structures and art along the Camino Francés' (Murray 2014: 25). As for the Cape Finisterre, the European Heritage List of the European Commission seeks 'to raise awareness of sites which have played a significant role in the history, culture and development of the European Union.'

Something very important inherent to pilgrimage cultural routes is that they have to be interconnected: however, this may also have the effect that problems in one part of the route can lead pilgrims to avoid it and chose another pathway. This forms part of the fragility of pilgrim routes.

Interconnections between private actors (hospitaliers and hosteliers) are fundamental as well as public. This has been expressed in a Seminar organized by us, in the University of Extremadura with funding of the Provincial Government of Cáceres (Diputación Provincial de Cáceres) and the project Cultour+ and registered and open access disseminated in the project's audio-visual channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP7yQXfItqE).

Instead of cultural routes' management, the concept that most adequately expresses the complex interactions between all these actors happening in successful active routes is governance, a key concept for these and other forms of sustainable tourism.

5. A CULTOUR+ CASE STUDY. "VÍA DE LA PLATA", MOZARABE WAY TO SANTIAGO

We are focusing attention in one of the more interesting routes to Santiago de Compostela (St. James). Crossing from south to north, in the west of Spain, it has been walked by Tartessian and Phoenicians, used as a transhumance way, as a roman main road (calzada), as a commercial road before and after Romanization of Iberia, a Mozarabic way to St. James, as a national motor road, as a highway and recently as a cultural touristic route for walking and cycling pilgrims, motor bikers and car and bus tourists.

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7. See https://www.change.org/p/xunta-de-galicia-devolved-los-mojones-al-camino-de-santiago. Last accesed 25/09/2016.

The Via de la Plata is sometimes translated into "Silver Route" though its etymology conducts to other meanings, via Delapidata (referring to lapide or silica, the material for roman ancient roads in latin and al-Balat that means "paved path" in Arabic). (Wikipedia, 2016). It is polemically based in one of the Antonino itineraries. The itinerary "Iter ab Emeritam Asturicam" stated by Roldán Hervás and contested as an invention by other authors (Rabanal Alonso, 1994; Sánchez et al., 2013).

> The name "Ab Emerita Asturicam" exists only from its invention in 1971 by Roldán Hervás. However it is not difficult to find it in the scientific literatura with no references as it would correspond to a classic original name. (Sánchez et al., 2013)

It was declared National Historic-Artistic Heritage from 1931, and promoted as a touristic itinerary along the national road N-630, from Seville till Avilés (Asturias) in 1968 by the Noticiario Turístico (Mariñas Otero, 1991), journal from the General Direction of Tourism Promotion, that published two year later a monographic for the Camino de Santiago. In 1998 a proposal was submited for its declaration as World Cultural Heritage.

We can see graphically in maps from different years, interests and tourism strategies, the changes it has suffered in its constitution as a cultural route. From the 1931 declaration comprehending the itinerary from Seville to Aviles to the actual route "Via de la Plata", which has included Gijón, a very important stakeholder and promotor of the Cooperation Network of the Towns on the Ruta de la Plata (http://www.rutadelaplata.com/en/pages/index/4445-ruta-via-de-la-plata-the-cooperation-network).

The cooperation network is composed by 26 big cities and towns8 of the Via de la Plata, with an added population of 1.461.125 focusing training, promotion and marketing in the field of tourism. This network finds historical bases in the Ravenna Cosmography, highlighted in 1998 by Fernández Ochoa's report in Via de la Plata stating a long itinerary from Merida to Irun, and another itinerary from Astorga to Luco Astorum in Asturias that has served the background for the Cooperation Network and for the proposal of the Asturian Via de la Plata to be recognized as "asset of cultural interest" in 2019.

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[8]. With the exception of three towns with less than 2000 people: Baños de Montemayor, Calzadilla de los Barros and Montemolín.

[9]. See https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2015/07/24/pdfs/BOE-A-2015-8326.pdf

PLACE	POPULATION	PLACE	POPULATION
PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS		**EXTREMADURA**	
Gijón	274.290	Baños de Montemayor	774
Llanera	14.030	Hervás	4.194
Ribera de Arriba	2.009	Plasencia	40.755
Morcín	2.811	Casar de Cáceres	4.664
Riosa	2.307	Mérida	58.971
Mieres	40.338	Los Santos de Maimona	8.254
Aller	11.555	Calzadilla de los Barros	845
Lena	11654	Zafra	16.857
CASTILLA Y LEÓN		Fuente de Cantos	4.941
La Pola de Gordón	3.522	Montemolín	1.455
León	12.7817	**ANDALUCÍA**	
La Bañeza	10.443	Sevilla	693.878
Benavente	18.550	Carmona	28.656
Zamora	63.831	**TOTAL**	**1.461.125**
Béjar	13.724		

Table 6. Cities and towns in the Cooperation Network of the Towns on the Ruta de la Plata

Another inter-regional stakeholder, confronted to the former and defending thus another interpretation and action strategies over the route, is the "Association of Towns in Defence of the Silver Route" (http://www.laviadelaplata.es/) promoted and coordinated by the City Major of Astorga.

> The Roman road of the Silver Route, which linked the cities of Emerita Augusta (Merida) and Asturica Augusta (Astorga), has historically constituted the principal support of the Peninsular west . Against the self-interested actions of those, who under the protection of the spurious denomination of Silver Route, coinciding with the current A road N-630, try to usurp its identity, the organization "Association of Towns in Defence of the Silver Route" works for the recovery, respect and acknowledgement of its historical and heritage singularity, besides the promotion, help and collaboration of the small towns which form it and the commitment to the people who live there.

(http://www.laviadelaplata.es/la_via_de_la_plata.php?ididioma=2&tipo= asociacion)

Curiosly, both associations claim justification in historical fake or distorted roman itineraries. The invented "Iter ab Emerita Asturicam" is a combination of the "Iter ab Emerita Caesaraugustam" (South-North) with the "Iter ab Asturica Caesaraugustam" (North-South-East). Later, in 2013, the so-called Table of Astorga number 3 with the itinerary named "Via Asturica ad Emerita Augusta" (North-South) has been dated by experts 267 y 276 d.C., giving validity to the hypothesis of the roman route linking Mérida and Astorga.

Image 10. "Association of Towns in Defence of the Silver Route

In what respects to Gijon, there is no mention of a possible roman place in any of the Antonino or Ravenna Cosmography itineraries linking with Astorga or Mérida. This does not mean that the roads could expand to the coast before and after roman conquest of Iberia, but we have no proof of it in these cartographies.
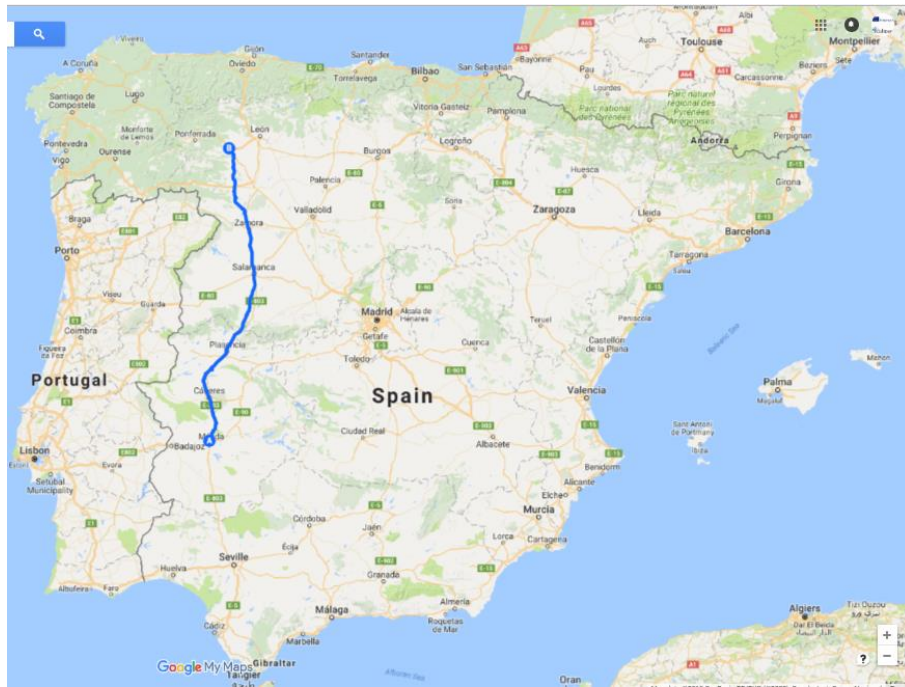
Map 1. Ancient Roman Road. Via Asturica ad Emerita Augusta.

Ancient Roman-Iberians built "mansio" separating the route in different stages, separated for larger distances than the ones now-a-days pilgrims walk. In Table 1 and Map 2, we can see the roman names and present equivalences.

| Ravennas Cosmography (700 a.D)[10]	Antonine Itinerary	Correspondence	Distance	
			Milia Passum	Kms (1 milia passum= 1,481 Kms)
Mérida-Irun (Item iuxta superius nominatam civitatem Ossaron (...) est civitas quae dicitur	Mérida-Zaragoza (Iter ad Emerita Caersaraugustam)			
...	Augusta Emerita	Mérida	-	0
Sorores	Ad Sorores	Casas de Don Antonio	XXVI	38,5
Castris	Castris Caecilia	Cáceres el Viejo, junto a Cáceres	XX	29,6
Turmulum	Turmulos	En las cercanías de Garrovillas de Alconétar	XX	29,6
Bustiana	Rusticiana	Galisteo	XXII	32,6
Cappara	Capara	Cáparra	XXII	32,6
Coloricum	Caecilio vico	Finca de la Vega, Peñacaballera	XXII	32,6
Appos	Ad Lippos	Valverde de Valdelacasa	XII	17,8
Sentice	Sentice	Pedrosillo de los Aires	XV	22,2
Salmantica	Salmatice	Salamanca	XXIV	35,5
Sebarium	Sibariam	Peñausende	XXI	31,1
Comeniaca				
Ocelodorum	Ocelo Duri	En los alrededores de Zamora	XXI	31,1
Vico Aquarum	Vico Aquario	Castrotorafe	XVI	23,7
Preterion	(Item ab Asturica Caesaraugusta)			

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[10]. by Geographus Ravennas; Guidodi Ravenna; Parthey, G (Gustav), 1798-1872; Pinder, Moritz, 1807-1871

Published 1860 Topics Geography, Ancient, Geography, Medieval

| Brigicon	Brigeco	Dehesa de Morales de las Cuevas, Castro Gonzalo, Zamora	XXXII	47,4
	Bedunia	San Martín de Torres	XX	29,6
	Asturica Augusta	Astorga	XX	29,6

Table 7. Mansio in Iter ab Emerita Caesaragustam, Iter ab Asturica Caesaragustam

Map 2. Roman Mansio in Via Asturica ad Emerita Augusta
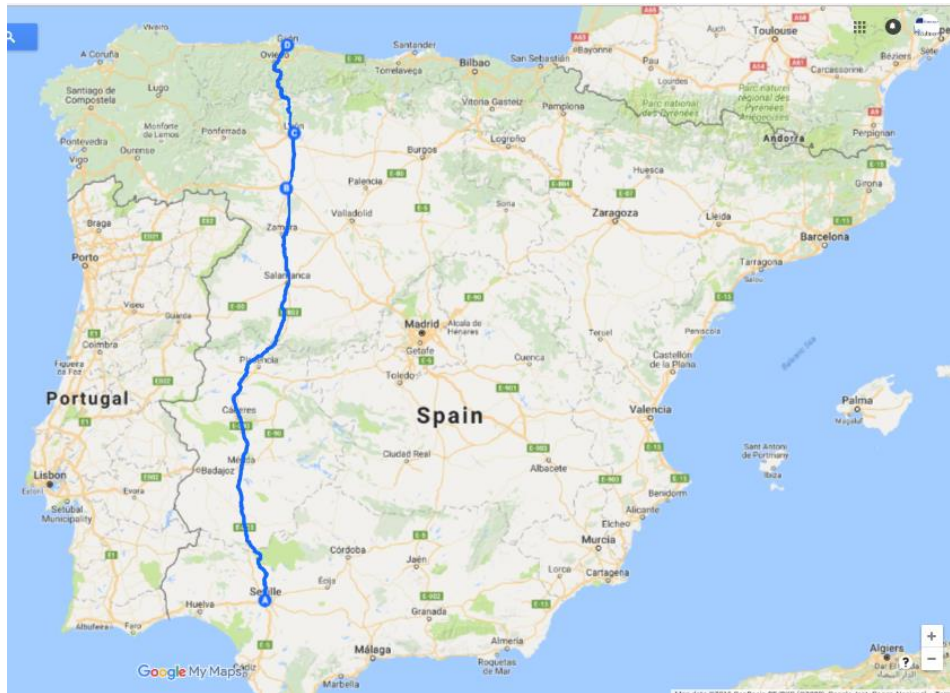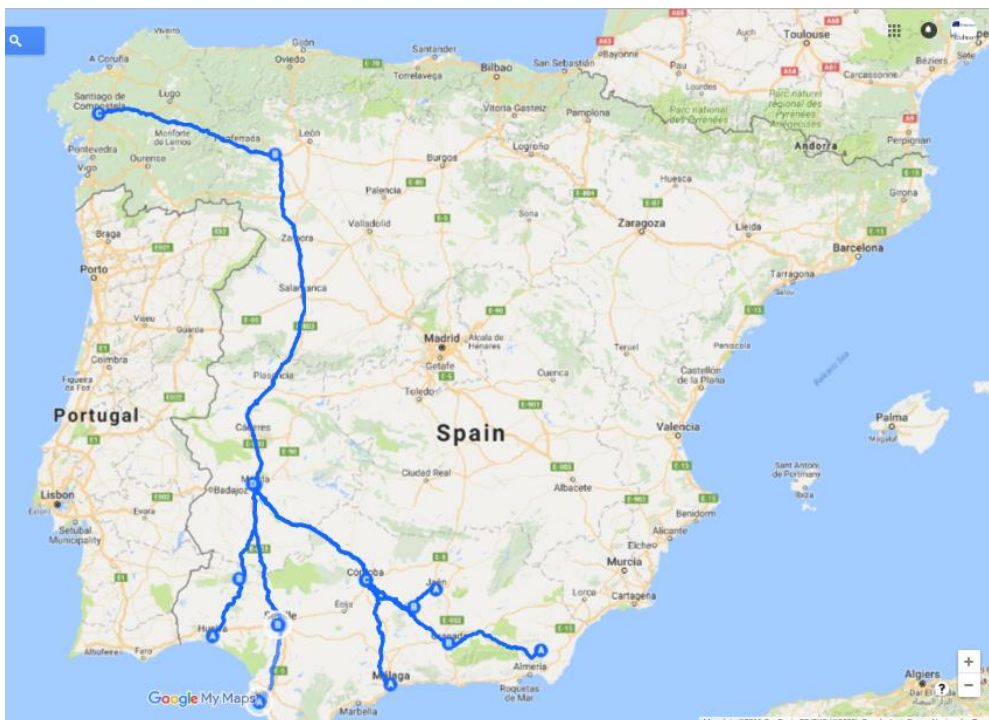
Map 3. Via de la Plata ancient and contemporary route. Special for motor bikers who extend it to Bilbao.
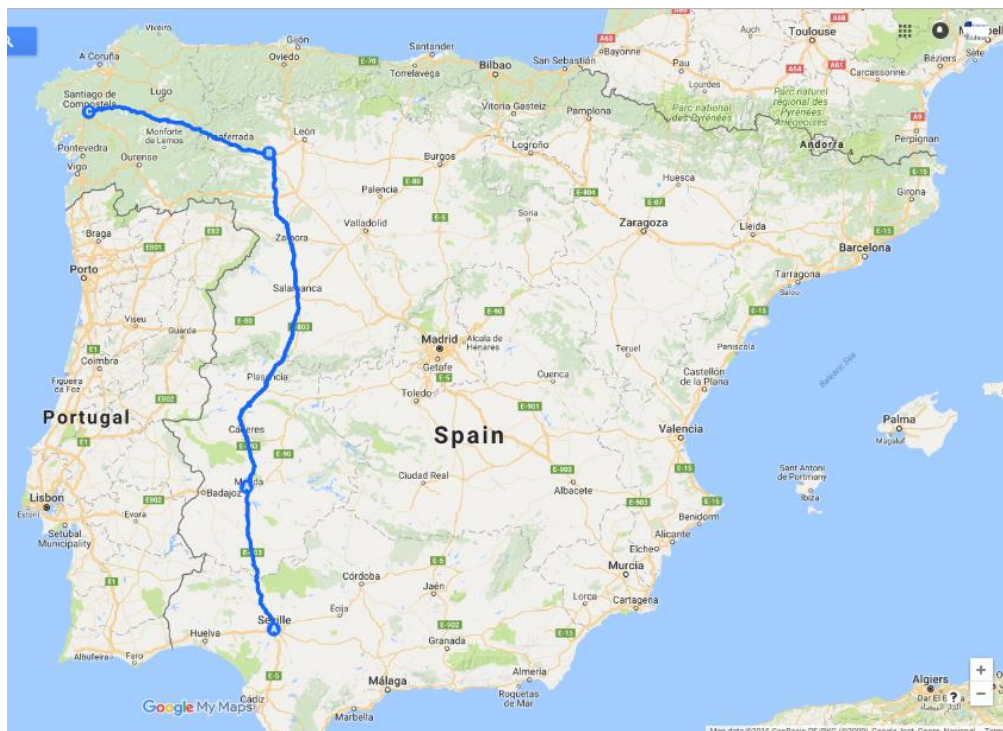
Map 4. Via de la Plata-Mozarabic Pilgrimage Way to St. James. (via Astorga)
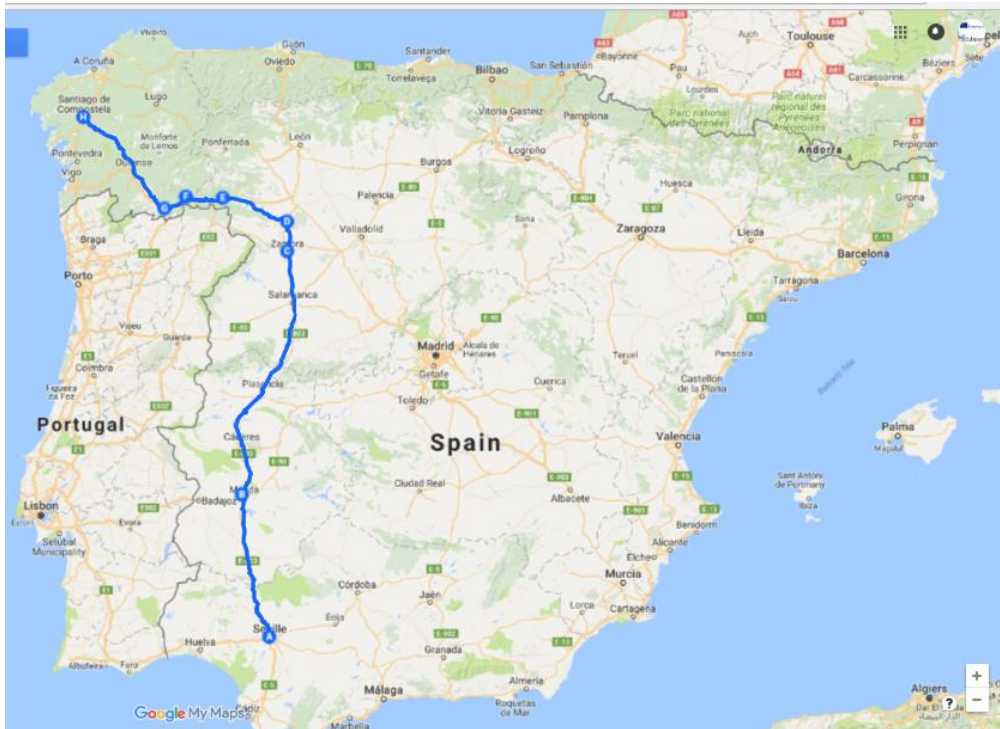
Map 5. Via de la Plata-Mozarabic Pilgrimage Way to St. James. (via Orense)

Map 6. Mozarabic Ways to St. James

The expansion of the Mozarabic Ways has been supported and fostered by a group of diverse stakeholders in which the Action Local Groups (Grupos de Acción Local), in particular the Centre for Rural Development (CEDER) "La Serena" has had particular relevance in the Extremadura region.

Still with moderate numbers of pilgrims a year (see table 2), the Mozarabic Ways will have a considerable impact in the Vía de la Plata pilgrimage route in the following years.

City	Pilgrims departing from it
Sevilla	2290
Huelva	37
Córdoba	34
Granada	94
Malaga	75
Resto Andalucia	248

Table 2. Source: Author with data from the Office of Pilgrim

Our case study centres in 200km from the city of Merida to Baños de Montemayor. In this 200 kms the route crosses by two world heritage cities, two important ancient thermal sites, the particular landscape of the Dehesa left aside by the mountains of the Sierra de Béjar after crossing the green and waterful Valey of Ambroz.
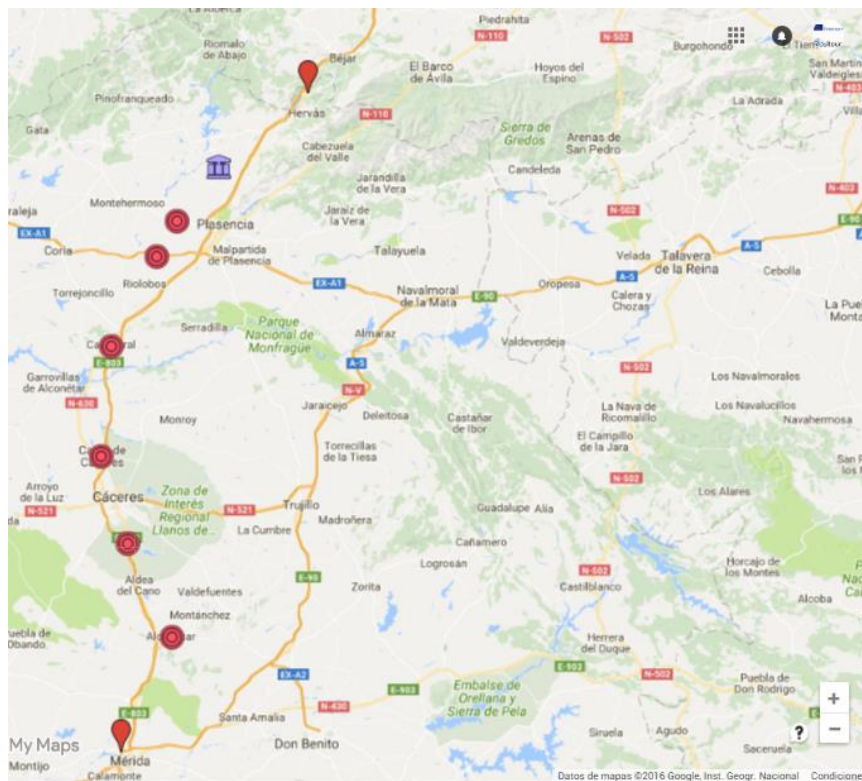
Map 6. Case Study. Studied part by stages.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

The most numerous set of references are works on the Via de la Plata as a Roman road. There is a predominant approach from the archeology and historiography of Iberia Romana. The miliaries, the circulation of coins, the mansio, the road, the bridges, etc. There are also references to the Tartessians, and of course, the Mozarabs ("via de la plata" + "Mozarabic" in the search engine, it gives 217 matches).

Among the travel literature, travel guides are numerous, we have counted about thirty almost all in Spanish, but a couple in Englush (on written by a Corean Author) and one in German. Personal or author travel guides or memoirs have sometimes extremely important impacts in pilgrimage routes. Very important for the St James Ways are the books by Shirley McLain and Paulo Coelho. Less known is the case of Hape Kerkeling, an extremely well known comedian in Germany. After a breakdown, he made the route to Santiago in June/July 2001, and published the book "Ich bin dann mal weg" in 2006. Until end of 2007, 3 million copies have been sold, and the book was 100 weeks top 1 of the German non-fiction bestseller list. He told from the trip in several talkshows, and the book has been translated into French, Italian, Dutch, Polish, Latvian, Spanish (Bueno, me largo) and Korean. A film adaptation was released December 2015. German Wikipedia says, the number of German pilgrims on the route rose +71% from 2006 to 2007 (what was equivalent to the total rise from 1999-2006)[11].

Of special interest and relevance to our objectives are the works based on experiences of pilgrimage, finding some recent and open access comparative studies, a priori, especially interesting to compare the Via de la Plata with other ways of pilgrimage. In this sense, Murray (2014) compares the French Way with the Via de la Plata as a consolidated route in front of an emerging one. Csák (2014), for his doctoral thesis, carries out fieldwork in the Via de la Plata and in the French Way to Santiago. They are, above all, ethnographic or auto-ethnographic monographs (Lyons, 2013) that deepen in the experience. Other articles analyse the phenomenon of pilgrimages and their dynamics, considering their sustainability (Sibireva, 2014).

An original article deals with an emerging research line in tourism studies, such as the evaluation of mobile applications and their mediation of tourism experience. The study by Nickerson & Mourato-Dussault (2015) analyzes two applications in the Vía de la Plata and others in the Camino de Santiago. The communication of the Camino de Santiago is also a research line with some literature on it. Especially interesting is also for our project the articles on the communication of the Camino de Santiago in the media and social networks (López & Fernández, 2011; Poyatos et al., 2012, Silva , 2012).

We are also interested in studies that address the relationship between tourism and rural development on cultural routes. In this sense, a document especially relevant for us is the one dedicated to the Alba Plata project (Belloso, 2007).

Not referring directly to the Via de la Plata, some references (Faus Gabandé, 2011) are still interesting for us, in their treatment of fundamental themes such as hospitality and hospitality. Especially interesting for its originality is the article by

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[11]. I thank for this information prof. Dr. Dr. Malte Helfer, from Institut de Géographie et Aménagement du Territoire, Unité de Recherche IPSE, Université du Luxembourg.

García Cantero (2010: 307) published in the Journal of Law of the UNED, which raises the legal protection of the pilgrim - "European citizenship, protection of the user of communication channels, hospital care International ".

Mozarabism is a very relevant term fundamental for the cultural management of the route. The relationship of the Via de la Plata with the Phoenicians is much less studied than the Roman or the Mozarabic, reason why the text of Celestino Pérez (2008) is valuable. The Tartessos also generate some literature in relation to the silver route. Mozárabes, Romans, Phoenicians, Tartessos, all are possible thematics for the cultural management

Particular elements of the cultural heritage are also object of monographs as "The Castle of the Arguijuelas de Abajo" (Cáceres) or the arch of Caparra, the iconic symbol selected to signalize the route and that is condensating symbolig charge and power ever since. (Fig.2)

Image 11. By Ángel M. Felicísimo from Mérida, España (Arco de Caparra) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

Especially important for cultural and museological management is the thesis of Carolina Martín Piñol (2011) on interpretation centers. However we find only one mention in the text to the Via de la Plata. It has a table (p.356) where it classifies research centres by topic.

The text of John B. Wright introduces us to the enormous literature on the Way of Saint James in general and, more broadly, pilgrimages or pilgrimage tourism. In this we can distinguish the stories of the pilgrims (like Wright himself) and the studies on them. There are particularly interesting works to construct and contextualize the theoretical framework of research, such as Lois and Cairo (2015). In the highly consolidated field of pilgrims & pilgrimages, international networks such as Atlas (Association for Tourism and Education and Leisure Research) which has a Special Interest Group in "Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage".

Experts of Extremadura have studied and promoted the cultural management of the Vía de la Plata from different disciplines –archaeology, geology, history, rural development, environmental sciences, education. Diego Muñoz Hidalgo (2010, 2016 hemerográfico), José María Corrales (2012), in the Faculty of Teacher Training, Juan Gil Montes (1988). Gil Montes recently participated in the Seminar for the promotion of tourism and cultural management of the Via de la Plata as a pilgrimage route to Santiago organized by the project Cultour+12.

Previously, Fundación Premysa, in 2010, also organized a Conference on Sustainable Tourism in the Vía de la Plata in the framework of the "Ecovía de la Plata" project, in which ideas were already collected that are still weighed as the project to reuse the railway from of Aldeanueva del Camino to Béjar with tourist aims.

Especially interesting for the study of the Vía de la Plata is also the effort that CEDER "La Serena" is carrying out along the Mozarabic ways to Santiago, having already held two congresses on the Camino Mozarabe de Santiago, having on its website The proceedings of the Second International Congress (http://www.caminomozarabedesantiago.es/documentos/actas_ii_congreso.pdf), in which local authorities participated in Mozzarism such as Jesús Sánchez Adalid or Miguel Alba Calzado.

7. NOTES FOR A SWOT ANALYSIS

Desk work, fieldwork and groups of experts have allowed us to outline a swot analysis of the Vía de la Plata as a cultural route to St. James. We can summarize the analysis so far, this way:

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[12]. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zP7yQXfItqE, http://eventos.unex.es/event_detail/7223/detail/jornadas-para-la-dinamizacion-turistica-y-la-gestion-cultural-de-la-via-de-la-plata.html

7.1. Strengths

- Cultural heritage along the route includes three important world heritage cities (Mérida, Cáceres, Salamanca) and very important monumental and historical heritage, particularly important the ancient Rome heritage for our case study.

- It crosses also important thermal sites, very diverse cultural and natural landscapes. Cultural and natural heritage besides the route is also very important.

- People's hospitality is a brand mark of the region, but also the highest indicator in tourism surveys.

- The route is one of the earliest promoted in Spain as a touristic route and one of the five routes now-a-days promoted also by national agencies.

- There are two strategic partnerships working in the promotion and safeguarding of the Via de la Plata and other for the Mozarabic ways.

- With more than 10,000 pilgrims a year, the route is one of the most consolidated, but still with space to grow in a sustainable way.

- Still is a flow of pilgrims that make them feel alone in the expected conditions for meditation.

- The management and governance of the Mozarabic ways is a model of good practices that will impact the flow of pilgrims going through the Via de la Plata.

- Cases of good practices of private cooperation between hospitaleros.

7.2. Weaknesses

- The route is too hard in hot season. There is a serious risk for health and some fatal accidents have happened because of heat strike.

- Cultural Heritage as the miliarios (milestones) or the ancient roman road are not safeguarded nor protected. There is not a public interest for it, and private interests often impose over the public rights. From the Association of Towns in Defence of The Silver Route, it is a constant reclaim over the years:

  > While some try to misappropriate and make a false story valid to claim tourist itineraries through roads of scarcely a hundred years ago, the Roman Road of The Silver Route disappears because of the abandonment of the administrations in such a way that the words of Father Moran, about it, are still valid 60 years after his researches:"I was following the old way with the pride of that one who is in good company, when I see an

unfortunate wall cutting the road perpendicularly, and on the other side a wheat sown field appears. This property, indicated by the wall, trapped the Road, hid it, broke it up, ploughed it and sowed it. Up to this point, I have always seen the rights of the passers-by respected when passing by the Road. Now, we are deprived of that right and we are forced to surround it by one side. We have to be apart from our beloved Road, as it would be too much sacrifice, a vain sacrifice, to jump over walls, go through ploughed fields, suitable to break in horses and to expose oneself to the anger of the landowner, who I do not know to what extent he has any right to block the way as it is nowadays".
(http://www.laviadelaplata.es/la_via_de_la_plata.php?tipo=viapl ata&ididioma=2)

- This Association highlights the following problems: "Wire fences, fences, and wrought-iron gates (open or closed); absence of bridges making the transit really difficult in certain rivers and streams, and even impossible in certain times of the year, crops and land consolidation; disappearance and re-use of milestones; wrong or poor signposting; water supply: the absence of fountains; provision of services" (http://www.laviadelaplata.es/la_via_de_la_plata.php?ididioma=2&tipo=aso ciacion)

- Lodgements are insufficient and spare. They are not well managed and/or rentable so they often close. This makes some journeys too long to get to the next lodgement.

- Slowness of legal procedures for tendering hostels is also a factor that makes them to be closed for months.

- Some parts of the route go by car roads, with narrow or none roadside for walking, making it risky for pilgrims.

- Governance is difficult and not collaborative. The two Strategic Partnerships compete and do not *co*-work. The Cooperation Network of the Towns on the Ruta de la Plata do not specially support the route as a pilgrim way because of northern towns and cities interests.

- Local inhabitants are not aware of the value and importance of their cultural heritage.

7.3. Opportunities

- The saturation of the French Way that expulses pilgrims to other routes in high season

- The growing worldwide attraction of the St. James ways

- The great amount of resources still unexploited for tourism.

- The insertion of the route in national and international programmes for joint marketing.

- Entrepreneurship measures and support may have an impact in the services provision.

7.4. Threats

- Lodgements can close for their precarious profit and lack of profitability.

- Weather conditions can cause more fatal accidents.

- Cultural Heritage can be more spoiled and eroded.

- Big numbers of pilgrims can change the quite character of the way.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Association of Towns in Defence of The Silver Route highlights some proposals for action regarding the signposting, the installation of information points for walkers, cyclists and people who want to make the journey by car using the conventional routes, and the provision of a rational infrastructure of accommodation in the form of lodgings.

We think that the most important work to do is in governance, working for generating common interests between public and private stakeholders in ways that they are really heard and represented.

Education and awareness raising is always very important, aiming to do local inhabitants much more conscious and respectful of their luck to have such an incredible and rich heritage and history.

There are many different actors and stakeholders influencing pilgrim routes' management. Their coordination is very important to overcome the routes' fragility and threats such as beds' scarcity, closed hostels, saturation, extra-commercialization.

We have given some examples of the different significant interactions between actors and agents in the Camino de Santiago route. There are also significant relationships between associations and public governments, hostel managers and pilgrims, hostel managers and public governments that form the object of study of a complex diagnosis in which we are researching.

Stakeholders develop actions and strategies in both directions, bottom-up or top-down depending on the stakeholder coordinating the action. Although routes are managed mainly by local, regional, national and international funding and legislation, actions from individuals or SMEs have significant impact on the route dynamics. Due to this shift in dynamics, a village, for example, can cease being an end of stage for pilgrims and travelers and its functions may be assumed by another village, more active and rich in services.

Cultural routes thus change externally, with new branches growing like the roots of a tree, and internally, adding or changing stage ends, something that changes completely the impact on the place.

The sustainability of pilgrim cultural routes and its right management depends on a fluid communication, guidance and agreement between all involved actors and their capacity for networking. If this is accomplished then cultural routes lead to local development and employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Projects such as Cultour+ (www.cultourplus.info, https://www.facebook.com/cultourplus/) work in the knowledge triangle and as a link between cultural (pilgrim) routes research and diagnosis and detecting, coaching entrepreneurship and innovative and creative business projects.

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